



BC Confederation of
Parent Advisory Councils

June 25, 2020

Ref: 225743

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As we come to the end of an unprecedented school year and enter summer break, we want to acknowledge and thank you for your extraordinary efforts over the past several months.

We commend and appreciate the dedication families, teachers, support staff, education leaders and school districts have shown since March 17, 2020, when government made the difficult decision to suspend in-class learning. Teachers quickly embraced new and innovative ways to engage students, adapting their entire curriculum for Zoom and other digital platforms while offering additional resources to students who need them.

We want to acknowledge the incredible job families have done working with educators to support your children through so much uncertainty. Some of you also had to learn alongside your kids — becoming familiar with new remote learning tools and supporting their education in ways you may never have before. Balancing your child's learning with other responsibilities has required you to make sacrifices. We know it has not always been easy.

We have also heard from many of you regarding the start of the 2020/21 school year in September. We know you are concerned with the health and safety of your children and with ensuring your children continue to learn and thrive in a dynamic education environment, and that you have questions on both of these fronts.

When we expanded in-class learning on June 1, almost 200,000 students returned to the classroom. During this critical four-week period, we have heard tremendously positive stories from parents, students and educators. Students have jumped back into their schoolwork, enjoying the chance to see their friends and teachers again in person. Throughout this process, educators have been responsible for ensuring that health and safety standards are strictly followed. These include greater space between desks, minimal physical contact, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning of high-contact surfaces twice a day and clear protocols for drop-offs and lunch and recess breaks, to name only a few.

All British Columbians have done their part to help flatten the curve. We have learned much over this past month that will help us be better prepared for September.

We know you are wondering what the return to school will look like in September. Our goal is to have even more students in class in September, as long as it is safe to do so based on the advice of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. It is important you know that we are prepared for several return to school scenarios based on how the situation evolves over the summer and the science-based advice of Dr. Henry. More information is available in our [year end news release](#) published today, June 25th.

.../2



BC Confederation of
Parent Advisory Councils

The Ministry of Education has developed a [five-stage approach](#) to operate schools depending on the risk of transmission of COVID-19. We would encourage you to familiarize yourself with this five-stage approach if you have not already done so, as it provides a useful framework for understanding what the September restart will look like under different circumstances of COVID-19 transmission in our province. Schools have plans in place for each stage, while also ensuring that they will remain flexible if changes are needed in the event of a second wave. We are also paying close attention to similar sized global jurisdictions like New Zealand and Denmark and using their lessons and experiences to inform our decisions.

We are working very closely with all our education partners to ensure that our back-to-school plan for September supports students, teachers and staff throughout British Columbia. This work with our partners will continue, without pause, into the summer. We know there is no substitute for in-class instruction and as we continue to take steps toward recovery, it is important that we get kids back into the classroom to the greatest extent that it is safe to do so.

While recognizing that the situation in our province is constantly evolving, we understand that in these highly uncertain times, parents, children and families are looking for certainty. You can expect further communication from the Ministry in the coming weeks and months on what to expect for September. We know that you and your family want to be prepared for fall learning, and our commitment to communicate openly with you about the collective challenges we are facing remains constant.

British Columbia is on the right track, and we have tremendous experience from our time in schools this June, but there is still much more that we must do. We are so grateful and heartened by the resilience and strength you and your families have demonstrated throughout this crisis already. Remember, this is not forever; this is just for now. We will overcome this by working together.

We send our warmest wishes for a safe and happy summer and look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Appreciatively,

Rob Fleming,
Minister of Education

Andrea Sinclair, President,
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils



BC Confederation of
Parent Advisory Councils

More Information

- 5-stage K-12 Education Restart plan:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf>
- Accurate, timely information about schools, programs and educational services, including regularly updated frequently asked questions in multiple languages, is available at: www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools.
- For the provincial health officer's orders, notices and guidance, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance.
- The best source of COVID-19 health information can be found at the BC Centre for Disease Control website <http://www.bccdc.ca>.
- For mental health and online safety support, all families have access to ERASE – Expect Respect and a Safe Education – available here: www.erase.gov.bc.ca.
- If your child is struggling with a problem big or small, they can also call the Kids Help Line, a free resource available to them at: 1-800-668-6868.