



**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 69 (QUALICUM)**

**SPECIAL PUBLIC BOARD MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2020  
6:00 PM**

**VIA ZOOM**

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## **AGENDA**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. SEPTEMBER RESTART UPDATE AND CONSIDERATIONS** p 1-5
- 3. PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD**
- 4. ADJOURNMENT**



## Briefing Note

**Date:** August 12, 2020  
**To:** Board of Education  
**From:** Dr. Keven Elder, Superintendent of Schools  
**RE:** **September Restart Update and Considerations**

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This briefing note is provided for the Board as background information in support of awareness and planning at the governance level as we move toward a September restart of school for all students. A comprehensive overview of government's restart plan is available at [www2.gov.bc.ca](http://www2.gov.bc.ca) (highlights are provided below).

Having children back in school comes with the benefits as described in the restart plan and by Dr. Bonnie Henry in her regular briefings. At the same time, we are faced with a significant number of challenges including:

1. Ensuring that parents are comfortable with the restart plan and prepared to have their children engage safely in school on site or through some other option.
2. Ensuring that staff are supported in returning to schools and worksites in ways that support health and safety as well as a manageable work environment.
3. Establishing learning groups of no more than 60 students in elementary schools and no more than 120 students in secondary schools, within which students are accessing as full a range of learning experiences as possible.
4. Supporting our administrator as they re-engage mid-summer in what equates to a complete reorganization of schools and a revamping of health and safety plans.
5. Ensuring effective collaboration within our leadership team and with unions, First Nations, employees and, as appropriate, community partners.

### **The Ministry's Restart Plan**

As you know, the restart plan has been framed as follows:

*In September 2020 all schools in British Columbia will start up in Stage 2 with the goal of maximizing in-class instruction for all students within the revised public health guidelines to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Having students in the classroom helps to minimize learning gaps and provide the academic, social and emotional supports essential for learning. Schools and school districts will also have the necessary plans in place to be able to shift quickly between stages if and when required.*

*The Ministry of Education Five Stage Framework for K-12 includes comprehensive COVID-19 health and safety measures and aligns with B.C.'s Restart Plan. Based on new public health guidance for K-12 schools from the Provincial Health Officer, the Five Stages have been updated to outline expectations for B.C. elementary, middle and secondary schools for the 2020/21 school year. This includes organizing students into cohorts (Learning Groups) to help limit contact and potential exposure.*

Government's four foundational principles remain the same, those being:

- *Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students, families, teachers and staff*
- *Provide the services needed to support the children of our essential workers (ESWs)*
- *Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance*  
*Provide continuity of educational opportunity for all students*

Having prepared for a five-stage approach to re-opening in September, we received word on July 29 that the five-stage model was amended to the following:

### **Stage 1: In-Class**

All students in class with no density limits and full-time in-class instruction for all students in all grades (or students in Distributed Learning, known as DL, or registered as home-schoolers).

### **Stage 2: In-Class (Scheduled for September 2020)**

- Elementary learning groups of no more than 60
- Secondary learning groups of no more than 120
- Density targets not applicable, classes may be full sized
- In-class instruction "full-time for all students for maximum instructional time possible within cohort limits . . . self-directed and remote learning supplements in-class instruction, if required."
- Not specifically stated is that if parents choose not to have students attend school they can apply for DL or choose to home school.

### **Stage 3: Hybrid**

- Elementary learning groups of no more than 30
- Secondary learning groups of no more than 60
- Density targets are 50% for all schools (we assume that this means half-sized classes, not half of the students in the school in their whole class groups).
- In-class instruction "full-time for children of essential service workers and students with diverse abilities, or whom require additional supports, and for all other students for maximum instructional time possible within cohorts and density limits . . . self-directed and remote learning supplements in-class instruction, if required."
- Not specifically stated is that if parents choose not to have students attend school they can apply for DL or choose to home school.

### **Stage 4: Hybrid**

- Elementary learning groups of no more than 30
- Secondary learning groups of no more than 30

- Density targets are 25% for all schools (we assume that this means quarter-sized classes, not 25% of the students in the school but in their whole class groups).
- In-class instruction “full-time for children of essential service workers and students with diverse abilities, or whom require additional supports, and for all other students for maximum instructional time possible within cohorts and density limits . . . self-directed and remote learning supplements in-class instruction, if required.”
- Not specifically stated is that if parents choose not to have students attend school they can apply for DL or choose to home school.

### **Stage 5: Remote**

No students in school. In-class learning is suspended for all students. Self-directed and remote learning in place of in-class instruction.

### **Current Status of Planning**

As our district leadership staff make operational and health and safety plans, our principals and vice-principals are working on the reorganization of their classes, staffing and student schedules to align with the requirements of Stage 2. Senior staff is also working with representatives of CUPE 3570 and MATA, as well as the Qualicum and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations, in our quest for collaboration on the emerging plan.

In terms of a documented restart plan, by the time of the receipt of this briefing note by the Board we will have received the template for our restart plan that is to be submitted to government by August 21. Also important to note is that a key element of our planning is preparing for outreach to families of unique and vulnerable learners in order to develop plans of support that work for those children.

The main operational challenge right now is reorganizing our schools for September. Elementary principals and vice-principals are looking for ways to keep classes together while having those classes interact with children from no more than one other class. We are also needing to maintain consistent adult contact within those learning groups, which creates a significant challenge for teacher assignments that may bridge multiple classes (for example, PE teachers, music teachers, learning support teachers, teacher-librarians and counsellors) and for involvement of other professionals such as speech and language pathologists, occupational or physical therapists, and other specialty supports related to unique conditions that students may have. Maintaining a strict cohort of 60 children and a small number of adults may be impossible.

Accordingly, where adults from beyond the learning group are involved with students there is an expectation that physical distancing and hygiene measures will be front and centre. Also, part of our planning for elementary is looking for ways that teachers can be assigned to home support for children for the cases as described below under “A Key Consideration”.

Secondary school reorganization presents some of the same challenges in terms of maintaining the integrity of the cohort. Additionally, the timetables at our neighbourhood schools, KSS and BSS, are proving to be inconsistent with the requirements of the restart program, as is the case with all schools in BC. As they were designed, with students remixing for four blocks throughout the day, while each student may only be in classes with no more than 120 students per day, those students have interacted with other students in other classes such that the cohort of connection is essentially the entire school. With a limit of 120 students in a cohort or learning group, we are having to reorganized with roughly seven learning groups at KSS and nine learning

groups at BSS. As the students in those groups may only be scheduled within that cohort, we are faced with creating new timetables for 19 “schools within a school”.

Learning groups of 120 students is feasible, to an extent, for grades 8, 9 and 10 where students take predominantly the same subjects. Reorganizing those grades into groupings that can stay together within a cohort of 120 is, while challenging, at least possible. Student electives may be impacted, and students may have to leave the cohort with distancing and hygiene primary considerations. For grades 11 and 12, creating cohorts that stay together while providing students with the courses they have chosen, and creating reasonable teacher assignments, is a challenge.

One way to move in that direction is to have schools operate on a quarter system, rather than semester, meaning that students would take two classes every day, not four. On the surface, that could mean simply have block A in the morning and block B in the afternoon for ten weeks, with C and D moving to second quarter that would start in November. However, although each student would only see fewer than 60 other students, in the second block those students would have come from having been all over the school in the first block. Afternoon classes would be well outside the rule of no more than 120 in a cohort.

Secondary principals and vice-principals have been working over the past days on finding ways to reset their entire schedules within the rules of Stage 2 while keeping students with their chosen courses and teachers with their assigned timetables. One way to do this may be to have students work outside their cohorts using physical distancing and hygiene. This planning is currently in progress with some ideas emerging about how the quarter system with a combination of face to face and remote learning may be the best way forward.

It is important to note that another layer of complexity is added when we consider our need to shift on short notice to Stage 3 or Stage 4 where the learning group maximum sizes are 60 and 30 students respectively. I cannot express strongly enough how grateful we are to our elementary and secondary administrative teams for working on this during the summer when they are supposed to be on well-deserved down time.

I also realize that while we have not called our teachers and support staff back into work, they are all very mindful of the challenges of this time that we are in and the stress they are feeling as we move toward an uncertain September. We will do everything we can to serve our employees with the right supports and working environments even as we face the need to be somewhat creative in our approach to the year.

### **A Key Consideration – Remote Learning**

One key area of concern is the number parents who are expressing concern about having to choose between their children return to school or withdrawing their children from their neighbourhood school to either register with DL or as home schoolers. While parents are expressing appreciation that our provincial medical health officials have science-based confidence that a full return to school will be at very low risk, there are many who have a great deal of trepidation in relation to their own children. Still others are indicating concern for members of their immediate families, including themselves, who have immunity or health concerns that they see as making their children’s attendance at school a serious health risk for their families.

These parents are asking for the option to have their children remain connected to their current school, as opposed to withdrawing for DL or home schooling, and be supported by their school

with home-based learning. The Board may want to consider ways to support these families. Having neighbourhood schools provide some support for home-based learning is an option that will in fact be needed in Stages 3 through 5, but it will also be needed in Stage 2 for children who are required to be at home for reasons of illness or quarantine. To expand on that, since we will require all students to be at home with any of the myriad symptoms on the COVID list of symptoms, there will be an unusually high number of students needing home support. The question is, should parents be able to keep their children home and ask for home supports from their neighbourhood schools based on concerns they have for family well-being and health, even in the absence of symptoms?

Whether for reasons of student illness, quarantine or a cautionary approach by parents, the need for remote support will present itself early in the school year and we will need to be ready for that. We will work with our principals and vice-principals, and engage with MATA, as we explore options for staffing to see if there are teachers who can be assigned this work rather than expecting classroom teachers to be responsible for full classes as well as outreach. At this point this is a very preliminary consideration but one that we will pursue.

### **Considerations for the Board**

I know that Trustees have wondered about the implications of Stage 2 planning, particularly as it relates to children who may not be able to attend school and whose parents are reluctant to move them from their neighbourhood school to DL or home schooling. The Board may wish to pursue this concern through provincial channels or to provide some local direction as we continue with planning and prepare to submit our restart plan to government.

Submitted with respect,

Keven Elder  
Superintendent of Schools