



## SCHOOL DISTRICT No.69 (QUALICUM)

Greetings everyone!

I will start by saying it is an honour to be your new superintendent of schools. I come to you from Salmon Arm, British Columbia, where I served as superintendent of the North-Okanagan-Shuswap School District for the last four years, and I can say with absolute sincerity that it is great to be back on Vancouver Island and be given the opportunity to lead the Qualicum School District and live in the very best region of the province. I have spent the last month learning as much as I can about the District and have had the chance to tour all of our sites (yes, including False Bay) and meet all of our principals and a number of teaching and support staff. I am pleased to report that everyone has been helpful and welcoming and that the senior team and I are looking forward to a great start to the year.

Our schools are looking to be in great shape and ready to receive students. School principals will be sharing their start-up newsletters this week and describing what the opening days will look like at their sites, which will include all the typical information along with the expected emphasis on the updated COVID-19 protocols. Though a number of restrictions remain in place this year, many have also been lifted, which will allow significantly more opportunities for students to enjoy the school environment. I have attached the Ministry backgrounder from August 24<sup>th</sup> that gives the latest guidelines for the province, and will only mention a few items that may be specific to the Qualicum School District:

- The provincial mask mandate is back for all adults and students in grades four through twelve. The Qualicum School District will again be exceeding that requirement on our buses and we ask that all riders, including students in kindergarten through grade three, wear masks while on board. As before, masks will be available for those who do not have them. We thank you for your support and cooperation in making this work.
- Our District does have current HVAC units in all main sites, and will have fresh MERV-13 filters in place. Please note that other measures will likely have greater impact on student comfort and safety, and that respectful spacing, masks, open windows, and generous outside time will all contribute to a positive and healthy school environment.
- We have hired the equivalent of two additional custodians compared to our pre-pandemic staffing levels for additional cleaning of high touch surfaces across the District. This is more of a holistic health and wellness measure than a direct response to COVID-19, as the virus has proven to be very short-lived on any typical surface in school or workplace.
- Visitors to our school site will still be restricted at start-up this year but will gradually be re-invited as we develop new protocols and comfort increases. We are hopeful that parent volunteers and group rentals will again be a part of normal school culture very soon.

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- Island Health will continue to promote the vaccination of all residents ages twelve and up as it is the most effective strategy to limit virus impact. Pop-up clinics will be hosted at Kwalikum Secondary on September 13<sup>th</sup>, at Ballenas Secondary on September 16<sup>th</sup>, and Winchelsea Place on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Additional information and a chance for questions and conversation will occur at an upcoming back to school online Town Hall session. Feedback from past year indicated that parents found this very helpful, and the Board has asked staff to arrange another event for this September. The date and time will be shared as soon as these are known, along with a link to the virtual meeting.

Please check our District website for the most current updates, and be encouraged to reach out to your local school for any site specific information regarding COVID-19 protocols or any other items of interest.

There is one other matter to mention, and that is to confirm that September 30<sup>th</sup> will be a statutory holiday in British Columbia to honour Truth and Reconciliation. I hope you have the opportunity to join an in-person or virtual event, or at least take some time to reflect on the terrible impact of the Indian Act and Residential School system on the Indigenous people of our country. September 30<sup>th</sup> was previously scheduled to be a non-instructional day in our District (to support Truth and Reconciliation in our schools, actually) so we will be entering a calendar process to find another date for those learning events. A draft calendar will be shared soon along with a link to a form to collect your comments.

Have a safe, fun, and relaxing final week before school, and I look forward to meeting you all very soon.



Peter Jory  
Superintendent of Schools  
Qualicum School District

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## BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Education

### Updated COVID-19 guidelines for K-12 schools

The updated provincial COVID-19 communicable disease guidelines for K-12 schools in the 2021-22 school year include, but are not limited to, the following changes:

- The mask mandate in place at the end of the 2020-21 school year will stay in place to start this school year. All K-12 staff visitors, and students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas of the school and on school buses. Students in kindergarten to Grade 3 will be strongly encouraged to wear masks.
- The mask guidance will also be supported by a provincial health order on mask wearing.
- Cohorts, also known as learning groups, are no longer recommended by public health as a COVID-19 mitigation measure and will not be used.
- Local public health orders may be put in place for entire regions or communities, including schools. For schools, the local medical health officer may issue a recommendation for an individual school, a grouping of schools, a school district, all schools within the health authority region or some combination thereof, to implement specific additional health and safety measures during times of elevated risk.
- Any additional regional measures put in place by local medical health officers are likely to be similar to those in place during the 2020-21 school year, and may include:
  - limits on gatherings and events;
  - changing room arrangements or incorporating more activities that maximize space between people and reduce face-to-face contact; and
  - limiting visitors.
- The following cleaning frequency guidelines must be adhered to when cleaning and disinfecting schools:
  - General cleaning of the premises, and cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces, at least once in a 24-hour period and when visibly dirty.
- Extracurricular activities are allowed in line with any local, regional, provincial or federal health orders in the community.
- Although physical distancing of two metres is no longer a recommended public health measure for the K-12 setting, there are strategies that schools can continue to use to create space between people and to support students and staff going back to school. Examples include:
  - reminding students and staff about respecting others personal space, and using visual supports, signage, prompts, video modelling, etc., as necessary;
  - using available space to spread people out where possible for gatherings and events;
  - taking students outside more often, where and when possible; and
  - managing flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.

- Food programs (e.g., meal programs, cafeterias and fundraisers) can proceed under normal and regular operation.
- Water fountain use will no longer be restricted.
- Outdoor classes will still be encouraged, based on their health and learning benefits.

Public health continues to support the BC Centre for Disease Control's current health and safety guidelines for child care settings.

- The child care guidance recommends staff should wear non-medical masks when interacting with adults in indoor areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Children may wear a mask based on personal or family choice. However, infants under two years old should not wear masks, as it may make it difficult for them to breathe.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Education  
Government Communications and Public  
Engagement  
250 356-5963

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