



February 5, 2021

**RE: Provincial Updates to K-12 Health & Safety Guidelines**

Dear Families,

Thank you for your courage, patience, and dedication to safety for our students and staff through the school year thus far. We know that being at school is essential to the overall health and wellbeing of students, and we continue to work with provincial and regional authorities to make sure schools remain safe and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The changes announced by the Ministry of Education yesterday strengthen the safety measures you have helped us take to keep schools safe since September. The updated guidelines take our experience in the past months into account, and redoubles our efforts to limit gatherings, maintain physical distance, and wear personal protective equipment when required.

While we encourage you to review [the specific updates](#) and discuss them with your children where they are applicable, please avoid being overwhelmed; again, these updates build on existing practices. In addition to the updated guidance on music programs and physical education program delivery announced by the Ministry, you may have heard of the following changes to mask use:

- All staff, middle school, and secondary school students must wear a mask indoors (including on buses) except when sitting or standing at their desk/workstation in a classroom or learning space.
- Elementary students are still not required to wear masks.
- Staff and students do not have to wear masks if they cannot tolerate it for health and/or behavioural reasons. No medical note is required.
- All school visitors must always wear a mask indoors. If the visitor cannot tolerate a mask, they should not be allowed entry.

As always, we remind you that masks are not a replacement for other prevention measures such as physical distancing – they are part of the many layers of protection that we all used this past year to make schools among the safest places in our community.

Our educators will continue to provide clear, consistent instruction for students of all ages, and all staff will model responsible behaviour. As always, we will remember that everyone learns in their own way and we will approach these changes the same way we approached changes to learning in the fall: inclusively, positively, and courageously.

The best action we can collectively take is to follow Dr. Bonnie Henry's orders and guidance at home and in the community and stay home if you feel sick. A safe community means even safer schools.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kaardal  
Superintendent of Schools/CEO