



January 8, 2022

Dear Staff and Families,

Thank you for your patience and continued support as we navigate the latest information in relation to the pandemic. I am writing to provide you with some important updates, including district contingency plans to ensure that learning is supported for all students in the event of a functional school closure due to staffing shortages. With the high transmissibility of the Omicron COVID-19 variant, it is anticipated we will have higher than average infection rates and sickness levels in our workforce and student population. Please note that all schools have been planning and updating their continuity of learning plans and enhancing their school's safety plans this past week.

**Changes to contact tracing for COVID-19 in K-12 settings:**

The Omicron variant spreads rapidly and has a shorter incubation period compared to previous variants. As a result, contact tracing is a less effective measure in the timely management of COVID-19. Consequently, Public Health is no longer able to contact everyone who tests positive. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow advice from the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), including:

- How long to self-isolate depending on vaccination status
- How to report a positive test result
- How to notify close contacts

As Public Health is not contacting every person who tests positive, school exposure letters will not be issued by Public Health for individual cases. In the event of a declared outbreak, Public Health will issue a public notification.

**Functional Closures and Process:**

A functional closure is the temporary closure of a school determined by the School District due to a lack of available staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. While every effort will be made to deploy all available resources to cover staff absences, there does exist the possibility that at some point, we will experience a functional closure of a school.

The district will communicate information regarding a school functional closure the same day it determines that staffing levels are insufficient to operate the school safely. Parents/guardians will be requested to keep their students home the next day (Day 1), and staff will communicate with parents/guardians and prepare for online/remote learning. Online/remote learning will take place the following five school days (Day 2 to 7), while staff absence levels are reviewed with anticipation of returning to face-to-face instruction on Day 8. Note that in the event of a school functional closure, each school will communicate information regarding the functional closure to the school community.

### **Enhanced safety measures for schools:**

[Enhanced measures](#) have been added to school safety plans to prevent and limit COVID-19 transmission in school settings. It remains important that staff and students continue following public health measures, such as good hand hygiene, staying home when sick, wearing a mask that fits well and covers both the nose and the mouth, and getting vaccinated. Parents are encouraged to review the attached [reusable mask care document](#) to ensure their students care for their masks.

During yesterday's press conference, the Ministry of Education announced that K-12 schools will have access to rapid antigen tests. The Ministry will be providing directions to districts regarding distribution and guidelines for the use of rapid antigen tests in a school environment. The Ministry is also in the process of aligning the K-12 Daily Health Check app with updated public health guidance. In the meantime, parents/guardians, please continue to use the [BC COVID-19 Thrive app](#) for daily health check information.

Please be reassured that with the implementation of the enhanced safety measures and our continuity of learning plans, we can continue to maximize face-to-face learning opportunities for the students in the Chilliwack School District as well as support all students in the event of possible school closures. We once again thank you for your support and look forward to our continued work in this new year. Welcome back!

Sincerely,



Rohan Arul-pragasam  
School Superintendent

### **Additional Resources For Consideration:**

[BC's Health and Safety Guidelines](#)  
[To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines for children](#)  
[BC Health Check Document](#)  
[Most up-to-date quarantine and testing requirements](#)