



December 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

Re: COVID-19 At LA Matheson

With two weeks left until Winter Break, I wanted to share important information with Matheson students and families to ensure we all stay healthy and safe in this final stretch of 2020.

But first, I want to thank everyone, including students, staff, and the Matheson school community, for your commitment to following our protocols and modelling good behaviour. We continue to work our way through the Pandemic because of your ongoing support.

Where Are We Now? COVID-19 School Exposures

We know this has been an extremely challenging time for the education system. We acknowledge that many of you may be anxious, which is understandable. As you know, we have had confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Matheson. As Fraser Health directed, we have sent several Notification, Self-Monitoring, and Isolation letters to students, staff, and families in the community to alert them of confirmed cases at Matheson. We have assisted Fraser Health in providing vital information to support them in carrying on the critical work of contact tracing. We are committed to being accurate, timely, transparent, and protecting privacy in our communications to our Matheson community.

From the moment Fraser Health informs the District about a case, a series of communications protocols are activated beginning with reporting to:

- Partner Groups (unions) > School Staff > Students/Families > and the Matheson Community (via our website/MathesonMustang App/MyEd email phone calls and some social media)

We do our best to prepare our staff to answer your questions when Matheson sends a notification letter.

Why is it taking so long to find out about COVID-19 at Matheson?

This is one of the main questions we receive concerning the length of time from the date of exposure to when Matheson families receive a Notification letter. Below is an example to help explain why this process takes time:

Day 1	A Matheson student attends school as they are feeling well.
Day 2	The student starts to feel unwell and so stays home from school.
Day 3-4	A day or two later, the Matheson student has enough symptoms that their family takes them for a COVID-19 test.
Days 5-7	The student self-isolates while waiting for their test result (generally 1-3 days).
Days 6+	Suppose the Matheson student tests positive, and Fraser Health believe they were potentially infectious while at school. In that case, Fraser Health will contact the student's close contacts (those who could have been exposed to the student's respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing or speaking) and ask them to self-isolate. Fraser Health will contact the school district, and the District will contact Matheson Administration to send an Early Notification letter to all Matheson staff and families at the school. If the student tests positive and Fraser Health believe they weren't potentially infectious while at school, we won't hear from Fraser Health. This is why we may sometimes hear that a student has tested positive, yet no letter is sent out.



I want to remind everyone that we take our lead from Fraser Health and trust their expertise. We are confident in the process and will continue to collaborate with their staff in communicating public health matters.

What do we need to do? Be Prepared for Potential Remote Learning

As we have stated from the beginning of this Pandemic, we are encouraging Matheson students and families to be prepared for the possibility of remote learning. We have seen at Matheson, and in other schools, students may be asked to continue learning at home. We intend to ensure our students are well equipped and prepared in the event this happens. We plan for this contingency and will be ready to communicate any information specific to you if this should occur.

In the meantime, please do the following:

- Be prepared for remote learning at any time
- Continue to read emails and newsletters from Matheson/teachers and follow instructions
- Have personal learning materials which may be helpful for at-home learning

What do we need to do? Continue Following Health and Safety Protocols

We encourage students and families to continue everything you are doing concerning following our health and safety protocols.

While at school, please encourage your child to continue to:

- Wash hands
- Maintain physical distance from others during lunch and walking in the hallways
- Wear a mask! Only take off your mask to eat or drink

While outside of school, parents/guardians, please continue to:

- Conduct the daily health check and keep children who are sick at home
- Wear a mask and maintain physical distance from others while not at school
- Model health and safety best practices as directed by Dr. Bonnie Henry

Moving Forward

As always, health and safety are our priority. As has been the case since March, our District and Matheson staff will continue to work behind the scenes to address food security, mental health and wellness, or any other supports needed to mitigate the impacts COVID-19 has had on our families.

I want to close on a positive note that we have a lot to celebrate as a school. Our learners are finding ways to be successful in this new normal. We know this is a tough time, but there is a lot to be grateful for as a school community.

We look forward to continuing our relationship with students and our families, listening and working with all of you to do what's best for Matheson students.

Have a safe and restful Winter break (December 21 – January 4).

Sincerely,

Peter Johnston
Principal