

## **Masks to be required for all K-12 staff and all students in grades 4-12**

Dear staff,

As this pandemic continues to evolve and as we learn more about the virus and variants of concern, the health and safety protocols in our schools must evolve too.

As you know, we have been working closely with public health, and our Board of Education and district rely on the advice and guidance of our medical health experts to guide the safe operation of our schools. These experts include the Provincial Health Officer and our local Medical Health Officers with our regional health authority (Fraser Health).

Prior to Spring Break, our district, in partnership with Fraser Health, established a series of [targeted measures](#) designed to limit the spread of COVID-19. Some of these measures include:

- limiting adult contact in schools
- scheduling specific times for schools to review and adjust site-specific health and safety plans
- working with school administrators and families to ensure all students and parents vacate school grounds immediately after school
- adjusting our maintenance schedules and routines.

Fraser Health is also actively immunizing school-based staff in our district. We are working closely with the regional health authority to coordinate schedules and are on track to vaccinate over 8500 staff members by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

With the increasing trend in community incidence of COVID-19 in the Surrey region, and the corresponding likelihood of increasing exposures in Surrey schools, our district will begin implementation of an additional measure, mandated by public health for our schools.

**Effective today (Saturday, March 27) our district will begin implementation of an Order of the Medical Health Officer, specific to Face Coverings in Surrey Schools.**

This Order is specific to our district and requires all K-12 staff and all students in grades 4 to 12 to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas, including when they are with their learning groups.

Exceptions include:

- If an individual is unable to wear a face covering because of a psychological, behavioral or health condition; or a physical, cognitive or intellectual impairment.
- If an individual is unable to put on or remove a face covering without the assistance of another person.
- While communicating with a person who has a hearing impairment.
- when an individual is actively eating or drinking.
- For teachers – if the face covering is removed while providing direct instruction at a distance of more than two metres from others.

For K-3 students, the Medical Health Officer strongly recommends and encourages the wearing of a non-medical mask, consistent with the above exceptions.

This Order was developed by Fraser Health's Chief Medical Health Officer, in consultation with the Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Education and our Board of Education.

This is welcome news and will offer an additional layer of protection for our staff and students. This mandate, in addition to the targeted measures announced earlier by our district, will allow our schools to safely continue face-to-face learning by following all appropriate measures to limit the spread of illness.

We recognize this will be a significant change for our elementary students in grades 4 – 7. We will work closely with schools to communicate these new measures with parents, and we will continue to work with staff and families to ensure all of our students continue to have access to non-medical face masks.

Thank you and I hope everyone enjoys the rest of their weekend.

Sincerely,



Superintendent of Schools