



December 17, 2021

Ref: 252455

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

As we reach the end of 2021, I want to express how deeply grateful I am for your support of children in schools across British Columbia. We have made it through another year full of challenges—from the ongoing uncertainty brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, to extreme weather with wildfires and flooding that significantly impacted many parts of our province. While many will have the opportunity to enjoy the holiday season in their own homes, others are not so fortunate, and my thoughts are with them at this time.

Throughout the pandemic, I have heard your concerns about the importance of education and seen your dedication to ensuring your children continue to progress. I have also taken heart in how students have adapted to challenging circumstances. As adults, we sometimes forget the daily struggles that our children face, and that while they are more resilient than we sometimes give them credit for, we also need to be responsive to the impact of the pandemic on their mental and emotional health.

We know how important it is for children to stay connected to their schools for their intellectual development, and also for their social and emotional well-being. We remain committed to ensuring all students are able to learn and be fully supported. And with the arrival of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, we will continue to be vigilant.

I want to assure you that we are working closely with public health, led by the direction of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control and will continue to do so over the winter break. We are closely monitoring the emerging evidence and impact of the Omicron variant in BC and will adapt as needed to ensure the on-going safety of students and staff.

Vaccination is the best way to protect our children and our communities. With the vaccination campaign underway for children aged 5–11, and with a rising vaccination rate among youth aged 12–17, we are all thankful for an additional layer of protection for our children and community.

I wish for you all a restful and restorative break for you and your family and that you are able to celebrate in ways that are safe and meaningful to you.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Whiteside".

Jennifer Whiteside
Minister