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**January 7, 2022**

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Staff,

First of all, I would like to express how much we are looking forward to welcoming back all students on Monday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. We appreciated our families' patience and support as we worked through the recent changes this week.

The January return to school for students in K-12 education was delayed in order to give public health additional time to assess the impacts of the Omicron variant on communities and schools and to give B.C. schools time to implement enhanced safety plans to support the safe continuation of in-class learning. Discovery School used this administrative time to understand and determine staff coverage plans, implement continuity of learning planning, develop communications plans for families in the event of school closures, respond to students and families inquiries, and to develop lesson plans and materials in the event of workforce issues or closures.

Discovery reviewed and prepared additional preventive measures by following the revised [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#). Schools were asked to develop enhanced safety measures and update their Communicable Disease Prevention Plans that include:

- Strategies that prevent crowding during class transition times, such as staggered breaks.
  - Discovery will be implementing three different recess and lunch breaks during January, and reassessing at the end of the month.
- Holding school gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, etc.) virtually; if they must be in-person, limit the number of people to no more than 50% operating capacity.
  - Discovery has been and will continue to hold assemblies and school-wide events virtually until Public Health Orders change.
- Limiting visitors to those who are supporting activities that directly benefit student learning and wellbeing (e.g., teacher candidates, immunizers, meal program volunteers, etc.)
  - Discovery has been and will continue to limit visitors. Discovery will implement a closed campus for January. This means no off-site lunch privileges.
- Pausing extra-curricular sports tournaments and review other extra-curricular events.
  - Discovery will pause all extra-curricular activities for the next two weeks, while evaluating and restructuring for safe delivery of clubs, etc.



- Holding staff-only gatherings (e.g., meetings, training, professional development activities) virtually where possible.
  - Discovery has been and will continue to hold staff meetings and professional development virtually.

Enhanced safety measures build on existing protocols that have succeeded in minimizing the spread of the virus in schools such as:

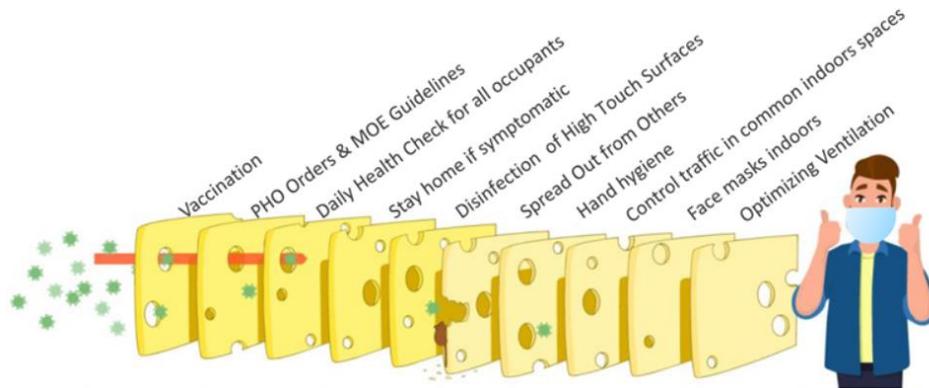
- Doing daily health checks, and staying home when sick.
  - While work is underway to update the K-12 Daily Health Check app for alignment with updated public health guidance, parents, students, and staff are to use the [BC COVID-19 Thrive app](#) for daily health checks.
- Using available space to spread out, and to respect others' personal space.
  - Rooms have been reorganized to support this.
  - Break times, dismissals, entrance and exits, between class movements have all been reviewed and tweaked.
  - Signage, hallway and stairwell crowding, reduced locker use and increased bin use, assigning of individual tools/fidgets/manipulative/materials/technology/ Kleenex have all been reviewed and addressed as needed this week.
- Wearing masks in accordance with the Provincial Health Officer Order on Face Coverings.
  - Wearing masks/types of masks in accordance with the Provincial Health Officer Order has been reviewed by staff.
  - A do's and don'ts fact sheet for mask wearing has been developed for parents and students.
  - Teachers will be reviewing mask wearing with inclusive and positive approaches.
  - 3ply masks have been restocked for students and staff that arrive at school in need.
- Cleaning hands regularly
  - All supplies have been restocked and hand sanitizer stations checked.
  - Teachers will be giving a review/ reminders for when to address hand hygiene.
- Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces at least once a day
  - The Board is reintroducing mid-day janitorial cleaning of washrooms and high touch surfaces throughout the school.
  - All air filtration systems have had their filters checked and changed as needed.

For all of the health and safety measures being implemented in our school, please review the updated Communicable Disease Prevention Plan, which will be issued this weekend via email. It will also be posted in the newsletter section of our website on Monday.

### **Layers of Protection**

With the spread of the more transmissible Omicron virus, parents have an important partnership role with the School in helping develop your child's develop the layers of

prevention: vaccines, daily health checks, endorsing distancing and hygiene habits with your child, and providing well-fitting masks, as illustrated in the Swiss Cheese Prevention Model.



Swiss Cheese Prevention Model

The public health officials have stressed that vaccines are the best form of protection against COVID-19. It is important for all eligible students, parents, and staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (i.e., receive 2 doses) and booster to protect themselves and those around them, including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated. Parents, be aware that students who are not at least 14 days past receiving their second dose (i.e., aren't fully immunized) and are more likely to be asked to self-isolate and/or for longer periods of time. If you, or your child, are able to be vaccinated against COVID-19 but have not yet been, we strongly encourage that you make an appointment at the first opportunity. Register for vaccinations at [BCCDC Vaccination Registration](#).

### What to Expect if a School Has to Close

As the context of the COVID-19 pandemic changes, disruptions to school operations are possible. Each decision about a school closure is made separately based on what is happening in terms of student and staffing attendance levels. For our essential health care working parents, we will maintain daily attendance for your child if at all possible.

These are the different types of closures possible if schools or district operations are impacted by disruptions for health or staffing issues:

- **Health closure** of a school determined by the local health authority due to the COVID-19 case count in, or related to, a school.
- **Functional closure** of a school is determined by the school, in consultation with the Federation of Independent Schools and the Ministry of Education, and is due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high absenteeism of all staff or certain employees required for a school to function and the inability to replace those absences.

## Closure steps

- Closures can be very unsettling and disruptive to families, and as much prior warning as possible will be issued. Notification will be issued via email from the office.
- While the school has every intention of avoiding a mid-day closure, if this situation arises, the office will call parents for pick-up of younger students, or dismissal permission for high school students. Until parents are available for pick-up, students will be supervised; however, regular instruction may not be possible.
- Students affected by closures will transition to remote learning. The school will aim to pivot to remote learning the day after closing.
- Discovery School is prepared to support our learners and families remotely during school hours through a combination of homework packages and Google Classroom apps.
- Parents can expect the teachers and SEAs to follow the student's schedules (start/finish times, breaks, and daily subject block schedules) contacting students at the morning start time via a Google Meet.
- All students will have practiced and should know how to access their Google accounts and join Google Meets.
- Teachers will send out emails to parents of any detailed information regarding remote learning processes particular to their students. (ie. Schedules, notice to pick up certain books/supplies/homework packages at the school, attendance queries.)
- While there are still unknowns, it is presumed that most functional closures will continue for five to seven days, in alignment with self-isolation protocols.
- During periods of remote learning, our therapists, counsellor, and learning assistance teachers will provide support to students remotely.
- If there is a functional closure of the whole school, people on site will likely be limited to those supervising students of the essential workers, a front office person, and an administrator. All other staff will work remotely.

## Contact Tracing/Notification Process

The emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 has necessitated changes in public health management. With higher levels of community transmission, a shorter virus incubation period, and the increased use of rapid antigen testing, contact tracing and close contact notification by public health is no longer effective to minimize spread of COVID-19.

Public health has transitioned to individual self-management (i.e., individuals care for themselves, engaging with health care providers when needed), with public health focused on identifying and responding to larger clusters and outbreaks. [Individuals who test positive](#) are to notify those they live with or have had intimate contact with.



Going forward, schools will be monitoring their attendance levels to determine if a public health-determined threshold for a grade or school has been met. If met, schools will send a notification to the school community indicating the threshold has been met and that they are following up with public health for further investigation.

With additional supply of rapid tests for schools expected in the coming weeks, the Ministry of Education continues to work with the PHO and Ministry of Health to determine how these rapid tests will be used in K-12. It is expected that symptomatic teachers and staff will initially be prioritized.

Thank you for your continued patience and participation while we all work together through the complications of this pandemic. At the core of everything we do is providing a nurturing environment so all learners can excel.

As more guidance is distributed, the school will evolve our plans to ensure Discovery has effective measures in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. The safety of students and staff is paramount, so as we have done from the beginning, we will continue to make decisions based on the Ministry of Education guidelines and latest health data and the expert advice of Dr. Henry and her public health team.

Sincerely,

Sherri Ko,  
Principal