

# Office of the Superintendent

*Shelley Green - Superintendent*

August 20, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

## **Re: Return to School Planning Update**

Thank you for sending us your emails with questions, thoughts and concerns in regards to our restart framework for September. We greatly appreciate the high level of parent and guardian engagement in our learning community and we are working very hard to provide you with more details.

As many of you share the same sentiments, we will continue to provide as much clarity as possible through the sharing of frequently asked questions, Provincial guidelines and regular updates to families.

Last week we shared that we would await the Ministry of Education's approval of our Stage 2 Restart Plan before providing additional details. However, due to the high volume of correspondence we have received since then, we felt a more detailed response about our **proposed plan** is required.

It is important to note that the proposed plans below for elementary, middle and secondary school are still in draft as we await approval from the Ministry. Our approved plan will be published by August 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **ELEMENTARY**

Elementary schools have been organized into cohorts/learning groups with maximums of 60 individuals inclusive of staff. Learning groups will be assigned entry and exit doors, as well as specific recess times and outdoor play area locations.

This organization will help reduce the number of students in hallways and on outside play areas. Students will continue to receive support from staff who are not within their cohort by staff physically distancing and the use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) where appropriate. Library, music and physical education, or other prep will be arranged when possible within learning groups/cohorts.

Students will be oriented on all of the health and safety protocols including washroom use, hand hygiene, sneeze/cough protocols and staying home when sick.

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## **MIDDLE**

Middle schools have been organized into cohorts/learning groups with maximums of 60 individuals, inclusive of staff. These learning groups will function like a school within a school to reduce contact between individuals outside of the learning group. Learning groups will/may have staggered start times, different break times, separate entry and exit points and assigned play areas (locations) outside when physical distancing considerations are needed.

Exploratory options for students will be limited to one per term for a total of three for the year. Music programs will continue where physical distancing can be maintained when students combine from multiple learning groups.

Students will continue to receive supports from staff who are not within their learning group through physical distancing and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate.

Students will be oriented on all safety protocols including washroom use, hand hygiene, cough/sneeze protocols, and staying home when sick.

## **SECONDARY**

Secondary schools will operate under a “modified” quarter system. Students will take two courses at a time for a ten-week period. As students will be in only two courses at any given time, unless they are taking an additional outside the timetable course, classes will be longer in duration (in excess of two hours) than in a traditional timetable.

The “modification” will be that for the first half of the quarter (five weeks), students will receive daily face-to-face instruction within their class learning group, with the second course being a blend of in-person classroom instruction (two days per week) and self-directed study at home (the remaining three days of the week). This modification will enable the blended class to be divided into two groups attending on alternating days, thereby permitting physical distancing to be achieved within the classroom. After the five-week period, the full-time in-class learning group will switch to blended instruction and the class that the student had been attending on alternating days will receive daily face-to-face instruction for the remainder of the ten-week quarter. This mid-point transition will result in students receiving an equal amount of in-class instruction in both courses.

Once the ten-weeks is over and the two courses are completed, students commence studies in two new courses for another "quarter". This system requires relatively little change to student schedules and maximizes student time in class, while adhering to the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines.

## **STUDENTS WITH IMMUNE SUPPRESSION**

According to the Provincial Health Officer and the Centre for Disease Control, most children who are immunocompromised can return to in-class instruction where safety measures are in place. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised, as determined on a case by case basis.

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Parents/caregivers seeking an alternative to in-class instruction, and who do not wish to register their child in a distributed learning program or homeschooling, will be required to obtain a doctor's note indicating the need for accommodations due to health-related risks. School districts are expected to work with these families to ensure continuity of learning and supports. Accommodations could include some elements of remote learning, specific course offerings, and/or modified days. Specifics for each child need to be developed in collaboration with families and school staff.

**For students with immune suppression, if attending in-class instruction is right for their child:** school and school districts work with parents or caregivers to develop options for learning to ensure appropriate preventative measures are in place.

**For students with immune suppression, if attending in-class instruction is not right for their child:** schools and school districts work with families to develop options to continue their child's education at school or school district.

#### Criteria for Students with Immune Suppression:

Criteria for Children with Immune Suppression based on information from the BC Children's Hospital available from: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/priority-populations/children-with-immune-suppression>

1. They have a medical condition that affects their immune system.
2. They have side effects from medications that cause a very low white blood cell count.
3. They are taking medication that suppresses their immune system. Children may be taking these medicines as treatment for:
  - autoimmune or rheumatologic disease
  - inflammatory bowel disease
  - immune-mediated kidney or liver disease
  - organ transplant
  - bone marrow or stem cell transplant
4. They are having chemotherapy, or they had chemotherapy recently.

#### Process for Parents to Request Accommodations:

- Parent/guardian visit their medical health practitioner to obtain a doctor's note using attached form (to be provided by the school district).
- Contact the school principal/vice principal to discuss accommodation options and develop a collaborative plan.

#### Educational Programming:

- The student is assigned to a learning group/classroom. A case manager will be assigned by the school principal/vice principal, and in consultation with the learning group/classroom teacher, will develop and implement the accommodations.
- For some students programming will be focused on the goals in their IEP. If appropriate, programming could include virtual Educational Assistant and/or Teacher support, virtual specialized therapy support (e.g. Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Pathology).
- District support will be available to the school including programming design support and learning resources.
- Options for returning to in-class instruction will be revisited at specific times of the year— e.g. Thanksgiving, Christmas break and Spring break

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It is important to know that within the Stage 2 guidelines, students will be expected to attend one of the learning options below. This grid will help clarify some of the questions you have asked about each option.

### K-12 Return to School – Stage 2 Educational Options

	<b>In Class Instruction</b>	<b>Students with Immune Suppression</b>	<b>Distributed Learning</b>	<b>Homeschooling</b>
<b>Status of Student with School</b>	<i>Enrolled in GVSD School</i>	<i>Enrolled in GVSD School</i>	<i>Enrolled in a Distributed Learning School</i>	<i>Registered as a Homeschooling student in catchment school</i>
<b>Students Organized in Learning Groups/Cohorts</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Depends on Accommodation</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Parent/Caregiver must provide a doctor's note indicating the need for accommodations due to health related risks</b>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Method of Instruction</b>	<i>Full time instruction for all students for the maximum instructional time possible within cohort limits</i>	<i>Parents/Care Givers work with school to develop options to continue education which may include remote learning</i>	<i>Online</i>	<i>Parent provides and supervises the entire educational program</i>
<b>Must meet the Learning Outcomes of the BC Curriculum</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Student Progress Evaluated by a Teacher</b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

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We hope this helps clarify some of your questions in regards to our Restart Plan. We understand information sharing is key and we will continue to be transparent as we prepare for our first week back to school. We will continue to share with you directly via email, on our District website and on social media. Further details of our Restart Plan will be available next week.

In the meantime, please be safe and take good care of yourself and each other.

Sincerely,



Shelley Green  
Superintendent of Schools

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One *Learning* Community

