

Date: March 6, 2020

Title: Mar. 6 Coronavirus Update

Please note that DM Bulletin updates are intended for school district staff and, unless otherwise stated, are not intended for direct distribution to parents/guardians. Feel free to extract or adapt relevant excerpts for your own communications to your school community.

Provincial Pandemic Coordination Plan

The updated [B.C. Provincial Pandemic Coordination Plan](#) is available online, and outlines government's strategy for cross-ministry coordination, internal and external communications and business continuity. The Plan is supported by a new Deputy Ministers Committee that will support a cross-government approach to addressing COVID-19.

Within the updated Plan, priorities for K-12 education include minimizing disruption of services while ensuring student and staff safety with a focus on communications, staffing and continuity of instruction. The Plan references the [Pandemic Response Framework and Pandemic Planning Guidelines for School Districts](#) and the Provincial Health Officer's [School and Daycare Closure Guidelines](#).

At present the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Provincial Health Officer do not recommend school closure strategies for the prevention of COVID-19. Any decisions related to school closures would be made by public health officials in cooperation with school districts and the Ministry of Education.

Travel and Spring Break

The Provincial Health Officer has provided a [letter with advice on Spring Break travel](#) for students in B.C. Please feel free to share with your school community.

In terms of return travel to B.C., Canada Border Services Agency officers are taking contact information from all travellers arriving from Iran and Hubei Province, China, requiring them to self-isolate for 14 days and to contact public health officials. All other travellers who are returning or visiting B.C. from outside Canada are asked to self-monitor themselves and their family for signs of illness and, if any arise, limit their contact with others and call 8-1-1 or their regular health care provider if they experience symptoms which include fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

School districts are encouraged to have someone available to check emails and pick up messages during Spring Break.

School Events and Public Gatherings

The Provincial Health Officer is not recommending cancellation or postponement of events in B.C. at this time. However, event planners are encouraged to conduct risk assessments (local public health teams can assist with these assessments) and keep in mind that the global COVID-19 situation is changing quickly. For participants, anyone who is feeling ill should stay home until they are well.

Preventive Practices and Continuity of Instruction

The Provincial Health Officer advises schools to increase cleaning and hand hygiene, educate students on respiratory etiquette, and put mechanisms in place to support students who may be away for extended periods. More information for school administrators on these topics can be found in the Provincial Health Officer's [updated guidelines for schools and childcare programs](#) that was distributed last week.

Information for Students

In addition to the [Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 for Children and Students](#) released last week, CBC Kids News and the Provincial Health Officer have produced a [kid-centric Q and A video about COVID-19](#).

Supports for School Districts

The BC Public School Employers' Association has released a [bulletin on COVID-19 Issues and Resources](#) to help address employment-related questions.

Please notify the [Ministry of Education's Government Communications and Public Engagement team](#) for support related to media enquiries. Specific public health questions regarding COVID-19 should be directed to your local health authority for response.

Contact [Scott Beddall](#), Director of Wellness and Safety, if you have any questions.

Useful Links

- [Mar. 6, news release from the Premier, Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
 - [Mar. 5, joint statement from the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
 - [Mar. 4, joint statement from the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
 - [Mar. 3, PM joint statement from the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
 - [Mar. 3, AM joint statement from the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
 - [Novel Coronavirus Q&A from HealthLinkBC](#)
 - [BC Centre for Disease Control – Information on COVID-19](#)
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