



January 14, 2022

Dear Abbotsford School District families,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a challenge we must constantly navigate, however, this past week we were able to safely return to in-person instruction. As we look forward to the opportunities in the weeks and months ahead, I must again extend a sincere thanks to our staff for getting us through the first part of this school year. What we continue to accomplish in British Columbia, and particularly here in Abbotsford, is truly amazing. Our society owes a debt of gratitude to the teachers, support staff, principals and managers who pull together to care for our students when they need us most.

Throughout this pandemic, I've also stayed committed to regularly updating you. More COVID-19 operational information has become available, and I would like to share a brief update with you.

Rapid Antigen Tests

The emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 has required changes in public health management. With higher levels of community transmission and a shorter virus incubation period, contact tracing and close contact notification by public health are no longer effective in minimizing the spread of COVID-19.

However, we have been advised by the Ministry of Education that our district will receive a shipment of rapid antigen tests within the coming days. Our first batch of tests will go to employees to support with symptomatic testing and minimize the risks to school operations. It is our intention to expand a future shipment to support students with symptomatic testing.

I know this information may surface many questions. We ask for your ongoing patience and understanding as we receive more details and refine this distribution process.

COVID-19 Vaccines

The evidence has shown us that vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19. People who are 5 and over are eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves and those around them – including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated.

More information on the COVID-19 vaccine and how to book an appointment is available at getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca.

Ongoing Communications

The safety and well-being of our students, families, and staff remains our highest priority. Please continue to complete a daily health assessment for your child each morning, wear a mask, continue to wash your hands frequently, and maximize physical distance where possible.

Fraser Health has provided an update for families, and we have included their letter at the end of this message. BC's Provincial Health Officer and the Minister of Education will continue to monitor developments around the COVID-19 pandemic. Ongoing updates will continue to be posted on our website at www.abbyschools.ca/covid-19.

Please take good care of yourself and each other.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Godden
Superintendent of Schools

**This email contains important information.
Please have it translated.**

ਇਸ ਈਮੇਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਣ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੈ।
ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸਦਾ ਅਨਵਾਦ ਕਰੋ।

يحتوي هذا المستند على معلومات مهمة حول مدرسة طفلك. يرجى ترجمته.

매우 중요한 공지문이니, 반드시 번역하여 내용을 숙지하십시오.

Hãy dịch nó sang tiếng Việt. Đây là một thông báo quan trọng.

Este documento contiene información importante sobre la escuela de su hijo/hija. Háganlo traducir por favor.

January 14, 2022

Dear parents and guardians,

Last Monday, schools in the Fraser Health region returned for another term of in-person schooling. While some schools had higher than historical levels of attendance this past week, others have not.

Based on experience from previous waves of COVID-19, and through regular discussions with school leadership, we believe that the two main reasons behind low attendance in some schools this first week back have likely been due to the following:

1. Staff and students had COVID-19 prior to school starting and are isolating or are close household contacts to cases and needing to isolate.
2. Parents and guardians have kept their children home due to concerns about an increased risk of COVID-19 in schools.

With respect to the first reason above, COVID-19 case rates continue to be higher than they have ever been during this pandemic. It is no surprise that there are a number of individuals needing to stay home right now because they have COVID-19 or are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. This does not represent an increased risk of COVID-19 in schools as these individuals would not be attending while infectious. For information on what cases and close contacts are instructed to do, please refer to the BCCDC [website](#).

With respect to the second reason above, I want to reassure you that school is safe and there are layers of protection in place to protect staff, students and families. In our region, we began implementing a set of enhanced health and safety measures in October 2021, aimed at increasing distancing between staff and students and limiting mixing between different grades. These measures are now part of the updated K-12 guidelines being used by schools.

In addition to these school safety measures, schools continue to remind staff and students of the importance of daily health checks, hand hygiene, and consistent use of well-fitting masks. Public Health continues to work with schools to monitor the level of COVID-19 in schools. We receive regular reports of school attendance levels that we analyze against reported cases of COVID-19 among staff and students to see if additional steps need to be taken to address increases in COVID-19 activity. It is important that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 report their result online so that we can better monitor what is happening at schools. To report your results online, visit: <https://reportcovidresults.bccdc.ca/>

Nearly 60 per cent of children ages 5 to 11 in the Fraser Health region have yet to receive their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. If you are a parent or guardian of a child between the ages of 5 to 11 who has not received their first dose of vaccine, please get your child registered and booked for their first dose. This is the most important step that you can take to protect your child from severe health outcomes of COVID-19. Vaccination has been proven safe and effective for children ages 5 to 11. It is true that children have continued to have the lowest rates of hospitalizations due to COVID-19, but they can and do occur

For more information about the vaccine for 5 to 11 year olds, I encourage you to read the [Summary of National Advisory Committee on Immunization \(NACI\) statement: Recommendation on the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine \(10 mcg\) in children 5 to 11 years of age](#).

An extensive FAQ is also available on Immunize BC at <https://immunizebc.ca/COVID-19-vaccines-FAQ-5-to-11>

If you would like to speak to someone about the COVID-19 vaccine for children, please reach out to our COVID-19 Call Centre at 778-368-0123 or your family doctor/nurse practitioner.

You can register and book your child's vaccine here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/register>.

K-12 schools continue to be safe places for children to learn in-person during the pandemic. For parents and guardians, we look forward to your children returning to school to learn, be with their friends and peers and be part of a safe school environment.

Sincerely,

Ariella Zbar MD, CCFP, MPH, MBA, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health Authority