

**SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 59 (PEACE RIVER SOUTH)**

2019/20 Pandemic Response Plan

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Updated: August 2020

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## Introduction

An influenza or viral pandemic is an outbreak occurring over a larger geographical area, often worldwide, affecting a large proportion of the population with elevated mortality rates. Three pandemics occurred in the last century, the Spanish (1918), the Asian (1957) and the Hong Kong (1968). The Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 resulted in approximately 40-50 million deaths worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic is currently occurring with large numbers of people affected across the globe.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will provide an opinion each flu season on the spread of the influenza and other viral outbreaks. WHO will further decide if, at some point, an influenza virus has reached pandemic proportions. In years where a pandemic has been declared, this protocol will come into effect to increase controls on the spread.

A contingency planning is essential for an effective response.

## Pandemic Planning Team

During a pandemic, the roles of the members will shift from planning to emergency response as identified in the Pandemic Period of this response plan and in conjunction with our Emergency Operations Plan. Members of the (Pandemic) Emergency Response Planning Team:

Mike Readman, Emergency Operations Plan Incident Commander (EOPIC)	
Christy Fennell, Superintendent of Schools	
• Melissa Panoulas, Secretary Treasurer	• Brittany Faulkner – Director of Human Resources
• Ken McCleary, Manager of Technology Services	
District Emergency Response Committee Members:	
• Wade Simlik, Director of Operations	• Don Belski, Health and Safety Coordinator
• Josh Kurjata, Principal DCSS – SP Campus	• Jeff Lekstrom, Transportation Manager
• Christi Munch, Principal – Elementary School	

## What is an Influenza Pandemic?

- A pandemic is a worldwide outbreak due to the spread of a new virus.
- Pandemics can happen when an animal virus mixes or changes to result in a new virus.
- This new virus is capable of person-to-person spread because most people have little or no immunity to it.
- Influenza causes outbreaks each winter. The very young and the very old usually have the most severe illness.
- Influenza and viral pandemics cause more illness and more serious outcomes like hospitalization and death affecting all age groups, including young adults. This is different from usual influenza.

### **What are the Signs and Symptoms of Influenza?**

• Fever	• Cough	• Sore Throat
• Runny Nose	• Headache	• Muscle aches and pains
• Extreme Fatigue	• May include diarrhea and vomiting (especially in children)	

### **What are the Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19?**

• Fever	• Cough	• Tiredness
• More serious symptoms can develop, including difficulty breathing and pneumonia.		

### **What type of prevention and continuity planning is School District No. 59 doing?**

As there may be one third to one half of the school population away during a pandemic or schools may be closed, the School District is working on the following plans. An important component of the plan is prevention.

#### **Planning and Coordination**

- Creating protocols and procedures for dealing with specific viruses.

#### **Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations**

- Education of students if schools are closed Facility's operations (heating, electrical, plumbing etc.).
- Technology Support: Educational Program Delivery and Communication.
- Transportation of students during key events.

#### **Infection Control Policies and Procedures**

- Creating exposure control protocols
- Education on hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette (Exposure Control Plan).
- Increased contact surface disinfection.
- Cleaning of schools following a closure or during a pandemic.

#### **Communication Planning**

- Identifying District and school communication protocols.

#### **Education of Staff/Students/Families.**

- Increase awareness of immunization opportunities for staff and students.
- Continuation of employee wages/benefits.
- Facilitate opportunities for staff and student immunizations with Northern Health.

## Plan Overview

### Organization and Structure of the Plan

The main body of this plan is organized in three sections, which outline the key roles and responsibilities of School District No. 59 in each of the three pandemic phases. In order to ensure clarity in public communication, these sections mirror the phases of the **Northern Health Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan**.

**Pre-pandemic Period:** This is the critical stage for pandemic preparedness. The pre-pandemic phase is NOW, and planning efforts need to focus on education, continuity of learning, core services and infection control.

**Pandemic Period:** The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) will declare when it is time to fully activate plans for the pandemic phase. We cannot anticipate exactly what will happen. Plans will need to be adapted to reflect circumstances and situations as they arise.

During this phase, the key goals will be to:

- Minimize rates of mortality, anxiety, illness, and suffering; and,
- Minimize educational and business disruptions.

**Post-Pandemic Period:** The post-pandemic period begins when the Provincial Health Officer declares that the influenza pandemic is over. The primary focus of work at this time is to restore normal services, deactivate pandemic response activities, review their impact, and use the lessons learned to guide future planning activities.

Each period in the Pandemic Response Plan addresses the following five key components:

- Planning and Coordination
- Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations
- Infection Control Policies and Procedures
- Communication Planning
- Education of Staff/Students/Families.

## Pre-Pandemic Period

<i>Pre-Pandemic Activities</i>	<i>Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility</i>
<b>1. Planning and Coordination</b>	
a. Responsibility for School District No. 59 plan activation.	Superintendent, in consultation with EOP Incident Commander (EOPIC)
b. Make available a Pandemic Response Procedure.	EOPIC
c. Incorporate responsibilities and authorities of Northern Health and Ministry of Education in development and implementation of Pandemic Response Plan.	Superintendent, EOPIC
d. Advise staff of pandemic plan sent in conjunction with updated <b>Emergency Operations Plan</b> .	Principals, Managers, EOPIC, Site Based Safety Committees
e. Plan for an isolated space for staff and students that become ill with flu-like symptoms while at work/school (See Exposure Control Plan – Appendix A).	Principals, Managers, SD59 EOPIC, Site Based Safety Committees
f. Educate and equip person(s) to care for ill students until parent arrives. (See Exposure Control Plan). Staff may be designated this responsibility.	Principals, Managers, Teachers

<i>Pre-Pandemic Activities</i>	<i>Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility</i>
<b>2. Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations</b>	
a. Consider impact of varying levels of student and staff absences and school closures.	Superintendent,
b. Consider and develop alternative procedures to ensure continuity of education.	Principals,
c. Develop cross training plans for essential services.	See below:
d. Develop a continuity of operations for essential services:	
i. Education/Learning	Senior Management Team, Principals, Teachers
ii. Payroll-Dispatch	Secretary Treasurer, Managers, Director of HR
iii. Custodial	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator
iv. Transportation	Director of Operations, Transportation Manager

*Pre-Pandemic Activities*

*Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility*

<b>3. Infection Control Policies and Procedures</b>	
a. Implement infection control practices and procedures that help limit the spread of infection.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals, Teachers, EOPIC
b. Ensure that schools and facilities have an adequate supply of hand soap and paper towels	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals
c. Order additional cleaning supplies and ensure custodial staff are trained in pandemic cleaning procedures.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals
d. Ensure that inventory of cleaning supplies and PPE is adequate and is updated and restocked as needed.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator
e. Advise staff and students that are sick with flu like symptoms to remain at home.	Principals, Managers, Teachers, Manager of Human Resources
f. Educate children and staff on proper hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.	Principals, Teachers
g. Maintain a healthy work environment by posting tips on how to stop the spread of germs.	Principals, Teachers, Managers, EOP Incident Commander
h. Track absenteeism, and reasons for absences, in order to detect situations where increased attention to infection control may be necessary. Staff with influenza diagnosis are advised to remain in quarantine as recommended by Public Health.	Principals

*Pre-Pandemic Activities*

*Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility*

<b>4. Communication Planning</b>	
a. Develop and maintain contacts with MHO, Northern Health, Ministry of Education, and City Officials.	Superintendent, EOPIC, Board of Education, Secretary Treasurer
b. Post relevant information on School District No. 59 website on Pandemic Planning.	Communications Officer, Manager of Technology Services,
c. Provide newsletters and establish methods of communication with students and families to receive immediate information if child needs to be sent home or if school or facility is closing.	Communications Officer, Superintendent
d. Advise Board of Education, Managers and School Administration on influenza surveillance and preventative measures.	Superintendent, EOPIC, Secretary Treasurer

e. Ongoing review of planning at District Health and Safety Committee meeting.	OH&S (School-based and District based committees)
f. Advise staff, students and families of School District No. 59 website.	Principals, teachers
g. Ensure that parents/guardians have provided up to date contact information to the school.	Principals
h. Communicate Pandemic Response Plan with staff including prevention, signs symptoms, universal precautions, and travel related quarantine directives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at your health and safety committee meetings</li> <li>• and at staff meetings</li> <li>• immediately through email and web pages, etc.</li> </ul>	Principals, Communications Officer

***Pre-Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>5. Educate Staff/ Students/Families</b>	
a. Personal Planning articles, home hygiene, etc, in school newsletter.	Principals, Health and Safety Coordinator
b. Inform school user groups that their facility may not be available if closure of the school occurs.	

**Pandemic Period**

***Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>1. Planning and Coordination</b>	
a. If school trips are in session, determine how children will be isolated and sent home should they become ill with flu like symptoms.	Principals, EOPIC
b. Closing of Schools may be required.	Superintendent, EOPIC, Principals
c. School Trips and school evening user groups may be cancelled.	Superintendent, Principals
d. Schools may be used by officials for clinics, hospitals, daycare centers etc.	Northern Health, City of Dawson Creek, Superintendent, EOPIC
e. Make plans for dealing with staffing or student shortages.	Superintendent, Principals, Managers, Director of Human Resources
f. Bus routes may need to be cancelled due to driver and / student shortages.	Superintendent, Director of Operations, Transportation

	Manager, Secretary Treasurer
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*Pandemic Activities*

*Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility*

<b>2. Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations</b>	
a. Evaluate the capability of schools to maintain continuity of student learning and to adjust as needed.	Superintendent, Principals
b. Reinforce cross training to ensure continuity of core ops.	
i. Education	Principals, Teachers, Superintendent
ii. Payroll-Dispatch Management	Secretary Treasurer
iii. Custodial	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator
iv. Communications	Communications Officer, Technology Systems Manager
v. Transportation	Transportation Manager
vi. School Safety	EOPIC
c. Schools may be closed.	Principals, (under advisement of Superintendent or designate)
d. School trips may be cancelled.	Northern Health, Principals, Superintendent

*Pandemic Activities*

*Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility*

<b>3. Infection Control Policies and Procedures</b>	
a. Continued use of infection control practices and procedures that help limit the spread of infection.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals, Teachers
b. Ensure that schools and facilities have an adequate supply of hand soap and paper towels.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals
c. Advise staff and students that are sick with flu like symptoms to remain at home. i. Take direction from Director of Human Resources in regard to self-isolation protocols	EOPIC, Director of Human Resources, Principals, Managers, Teachers
d. Restriction of community, volunteer and visitors to schools and facilities.	Principals, Managers
e. Additional deep cleaning of schools and contact surfaces.	Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator
f. Audit infection control practices.	OH&S (School Based), Director of Operations, Health and Safety Coordinator, Principals

g. Ongoing Education for children and staff on proper hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.	Principals, Teachers, Managers
h. Separation of ill students or staff who will be sent home.	Principals, Managers, Teachers

***Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>4. Communication Planning</b>	
a. Media communications.	Communications Officer
b. Continue to work closely with MHO, Northern Health, Ministry of Education, and City Officials.	Superintendent, EOPIC
c. Maintain and evaluate School District No.59 website for information on Pandemic Planning.	Communications Officer, Manager of Technology Services
d. Maintain method of communication with students and families to receive immediate information if child needs to be sent home or if school or facility is closing.	EOPIC, Principals
e. Continue to provide the Board of Education, Managers and School Administrators with information on influenza surveillance and preventative measures.	Superintendent, EOPIC
f. Remind staff, students, volunteers and families of School District No. 59 website information.	Principals, Managers, Teachers
g. Provide information in school newsletters and online.	Principals, Communications Officer

***Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>5. Educate Staff/Students/Families</b>	
a. While in-class instruction is suspended, increase awareness by informing through bulletins etc., advise of School District website, communicate with DPAC.	Principals, Communications Officer

**Post-Pandemic Period**

***Post -Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>1. Planning and Coordination</b>	
a. Return to in-class instruction.	Superintendent, Principals
b. Resumption of regular school activities.	Principals, Teachers
c. Schools may need to be reconfigured and structures may look	Superintendent or designate,

different.	Principals, Teachers
d. Plan for Bus driver shortages and cancelling routes.	Transportation Manager, Director of Operations, Director of Human Resources

***Post -Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>2. Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations</b>	
a. Evaluate capability of student learning continuity: adjust as needed. May take some time for full services to return.	Principals, EOP Committee
b. Resumption of in-class instruction and activities. Reporting periods and assessments may be effected.	Superintendent, Principals, EOP Incident Commander

***Post -Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>3. Infection Control Policies and Procedures</b>	
a. Continue with infection Control practices and procedures that help limit the spread of infection.	Principals, OH&S, Director of Operations, Teachers
b. Ensure that schools and facilities have an adequate supply of hand soap and paper towels.	Director of Operations
c. Advise staff and students that are sick with flu like symptoms to remain at home.	Principals, Managers
d. Continue to audit infection control.	Principals, OH&S (School Based), Director of Operations
e. Ongoing education for children and staff on proper hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.	Principals, Teachers, Managers
f. Separate ill students or staff until they can go home.	Principals, Managers, Teachers

***Post -Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>4. Communication Planning</b>	
a. Media Communications.	Communications Officer/EOPIC
b. Continue to work closely with MHO, Northern Health Consultants, Ministry of Education and City Officials.	EOP Committee
c. Maintain and evaluate School District No. 59 website for information on Post-pandemic Recovery Phase.	Communications Officer, Manager of Technology Services
d. Maintain method of communication with students and families to receive immediate information if child needs to be sent home or if school or facility is closing.	Principals, Communications Officer, Manager of Technology Services
e. Prepare for Critical Incident Response if there have been deaths among students and staff.	Superintendent, Principal, EOPIC, EOP Committee, Site based Critical Incident Response Team.

***Post -Pandemic Activities***

***Lead Person(s) in Order of Responsibility***

<b>5. Educate Staff / Students / Families</b>	
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a. Direct staff, students and families to information on School District No. 59 website.	Principals, Managers, Teachers
b. Use school newsletter to provide information to students and families.	Principals
c. Keep staff informed.	Principals, Managers (through site based safety committee and staff meetings)

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Superintendent of Schools**

1. Work with the EOP Incident Commander to oversee the planning and implementation of a Pandemic Response Plan and to ensure effective communication with all SD59 employee groups (PRSTA, CUPE, BCGEU, Teamsters, excluded staff).
2. Monitor the effect of a pandemic on school populations.
3. Activate School District No. 59 Emergency Operations Plan when required.
4. Direct school closures.
5. Oversee communication for school related pandemic issues.
6. Maintain direct communication with Ministry of Education and Northern Health Authority on pandemic development.
7. Provide ongoing reports to the Board of Education regarding the school district's state of readiness in dealing with a pandemic.

### **EOP Incident Commander (Communications Officer)**

1. The Superintendent of Schools (or Communications Officer) is the spokesperson for all school district related pandemic issues.
2. The Regional Medical Health Officer is the spokesperson for all pandemic health issues.
3. Annually, facilitate and maintain a Pandemic Response Plan with input from the Emergency Operations Committee.
4. Maintain liaisons with other School Districts, Health Authorities and City Officials.
5. Provide schools with educational materials and information for school newsletters, staff and student education and safety committee meetings.
6. Provide district wide educational support, advice and expertise to schools to maintain continuity of student learning.
7. Provide ongoing Pandemic Response communication and information sharing to Superintendent.
8. Monitor the development of school-based plans that will ensure the safety of students and continuity student learning.

8. Communicate staff absenteeism to the Superintendent.
9. Assist departments with the development and implementation of cross training strategies.
10. Advise and report to the District Occupational Health and Safety committee on plans and preparedness.

### **Emergency Operations Committee**

1. Currency of the School District No. 59 influenza planning.
2. Annually, facilitate and maintain a Pandemic Response.
3. Develop, implement and promote an exposure control plan.
4. Monitor the development of school-based plans that will ensure the safety of students and continuity student learning.
5. The EOP Incident Commander will advise and report to the Superintendent and the District Health and Safety committee on plans and preparedness.

### **Principals and Managers**

Develop and maintain operational and educational plans for implementation if schools are closed and /or teaching or support staff, critical to program delivery, are away due to pandemic influenza.

1. Educate all staff and students about influenza and virus exposure control practices and universal precautions, and ensure that staff and students do not attend work or school when exhibiting flu like symptoms.
2. Separate students that become ill at school until they can be sent home.
3. Work with other principals and managers to establish a cross-school plan for assuming the administrative role of a colleague, should they become ill.
4. Advise PAC parents about School District plans for pandemic influenza, including website communication and personal preparedness.
5. Ensure that rigorous cleaning and infection control practices are happening in the schools and facilities.
6. Provide communication in school newsletter on pandemic planning and preparedness, including information on School District No. 59 website. Information will be provided by the EOP Incident Commander.
7. Ensure that parents/guardians have provided up to date contact information to the school.
8. Site-Based Safety Committees are to review the SD59 Pandemic Response Plan and Influenza/Virus Control at the beginning of each school year.

### **Teachers**

1. Intentionally teach and remind students of the practices to prevent the spread of influenza.
2. Collaborate with colleagues and the principal to develop a school plan for the continuity of student learning should they become ill, or if their work will be continued by another teacher.

3. Advise the principal and parents (as needed) when a child appears to have influenza like symptoms, and the child should remain home to recover.

### **Transportation Manager**

1. Continuation of core safety and mechanical functions as possible based on staffing and safety requirements.
2. Redeploy staff in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, as directed by the Superintendent and Secretary Treasurer.

### **Director of Operations**

1. Ensure the continuity of all physical plant operations.
2. Ensure that all grounds maintenance continues.
3. Direct the Health and Safety Coordinator in providing increased attention to cleaning at all facilities.

### **Technology Systems Manager**

1. Develop and maintain electronic communication through the website.
2. Support the posting of information on the School District No. 59 website, and school websites as it becomes available.
3. Make recommendations to staff for improved methods of communication.
4. Provide support to schools and individual teachers in regard to the use of a variety of applications and platforms for remote learning (i.e. Freshgrade, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.)

### **Secretary Treasurer**

1. Develop and implement key financial functions and communicate to financial department.
2. Review and support Transportation planning.
3. Review and support Facilities planning.
4. Review planning for redeployment of Transportation and Facilities staff.
5. Communicate financial impacts of pandemic to the Board of Education
6. Maintain communication with the Ministry of Education in relation to financial matters.

### **Director of Human Resources**

1. Provide clarity and direction on workplace accommodations
2. Liaise with BCPSEA
3. In consultation with Pandemic Team consult on redeployment and reassignment.
4. Provide direction on leaves of absence or temporary lay-off, if required.

5. Ensure effective communication with all SD59 employee groups (PRSTA, CUPE, BCGEU, Teamsters, excluded staff).

### **Health and Safety Coordinator**

1. Develop, communicate and implement specific employee work policies for use during a pandemic.
2. Ensure custodial staff is trained in the safety requirements and the contact disinfection techniques for all three pandemic phases.
3. Ensure custodial staff has personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies to prevent self-infection and cross-contamination during all three phases of pandemic planning,
4. Ensure adequate supply and soap hand sanitizer, and paper towels for increased hand washing vigilance during all three pandemic phases.
5. Audit infection control program.
6. Maintain communication with Northern Health and WorkSafe BC to ensure up to date information is provided to all staff.

## **School District No. 59 Reporting Requirements**

1. Communicate monthly to parents on the influenza effect in schools.

## **School Closure Decision Making Process**

1. The Provincial Medical Health Officer will direct the province when it is time to activate pandemic plans. If, to minimize the spread of infection, activation of these plans is to include school closures, the Regional Medical Health Officer will advise the Superintendent of Schools.

## **Separating Ill Students and Staff (see Exposure Control Plan)**

1. Sick students and staff should always be required to stay home. Students and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness during the day must be quickly separated from healthy students and staff and sent home.
2. It is recommended that ill students be provided with a particle-mask (**if available**) to reduce exposure to caregivers and others until parents can remove them to home.
3. Schools should regularly update contact information for parents so that they can be contacted more easily if they need to pick up their ill child.

Recognizing that space is often in short supply, early planning on the location for a sick room is essential. This room should not be one commonly used for other purposes (for example, the lunchroom during non-meal times). It should not be a space through which others regularly pass. It is not necessary for this room to have a separate air supply (HVAC) system. Ill persons should be placed in well ventilated areas and placed in areas where at least 2 meters of distance can be maintained between the ill person and others.

4. A limited number of staff should be designated to care for ill persons until they can be sent home. These care givers should not be at increased risk of influenza complications (for example, pregnant women or persons that have a chronic illness) and they should be familiar with infection control recommendations to prevent spread of influenza.

## **Personal and Family Preparedness**

### **What can you and your family do to minimize the chance of coming into contact with the agent that causes the pandemic influenza?**

1. Wash hands often. When soap and water are not available, use disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.
2. Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing or coughing or cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Wash hands after you cough or sneeze.

3. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. A person can become ill by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
4. If you or a family member becomes sick with flu like symptoms, stay at home, get plenty of rest and contact a health care provider as needed.
5. Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods and avoid smoking which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

### **What can you do to ensure your family is prepared?**

1. Food: 2-week supply minimum.
  - a. No Refrigeration, preparation or cooking.
  - b. Formula for infants or special nutritional needs.
2. Pets:
  - a. Food, medication, water.
3. Water: 2-4 litres/person/day
  - a. Use clean plastic containers.
  - b. No milk cartons or glass bottles.
4. Medical:
  - a. Have extra prescription and non-prescriptive drugs and supplies.
  - b. Store health/cleaning supplies.
5. Talk to your family about how they would be cared for if they get sick.
6. Find out now about your child's school/day-care.

**NOTE:** You can call **HealthLinkBC** at **8-1-1**, 24 hours/day, seven days/week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or if you are feeling ill.

### **Hand Washing Education**

#### **Washing your hands properly consists of the following steps:**

1. Remove jewelry and watches from fingers and wrists.
2. Wet hands under warm running water.
3. Apply soap and rub hands together for 10 seconds to produce lather.
4. Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands, between fingers and thumbs, and under finger nails, for 20 seconds.
5. Rinse hands with fingers pointing downward.
6. Dry hands with a clean or disposable towel.
7. Turn off the water with the same towel used to dry your hands. Do not turn off the taps with solely your hands as this will only re-contaminate them.
8. If single use, dispose of the towel in the nearest waste basket.

**Sanitizing with hand sanitizer consists of the following steps:**

1. Remove jewelry and watches from your fingers and wrists.
2. Apply a sanitizer to your hands.
3. Rub all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, backs of hands and between fingers.

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Information provided by the School District #59 Emergency Response Committee and posted on School District No. 59 website.

## Appendix A

# **Exposure Control Plan for Schools**

### **Purpose**

The district is committed to providing safe schools and a healthy workplace for all of our staff and students. A combination of measures will be used to minimize staff and student exposure to influenza. The procedures described below will work to protect not only our staff, but also parents and students who enter our facilities. All staff must follow the procedures outlined in this plan to prevent or reduce exposure to influenza and other disease.

### **Facts about Influenza**

Seasonal flu affects people to varying degrees. The onset of seasonal influenza usually begins with the sudden onset of a cough and fever (usually greater than 38° C). Other symptoms may include sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, and runny nose. In some cases vomiting and diarrhea may be present. Secondary infections such as pneumonia may develop.

The BC Centre for Disease Control advises that influenza is communicable for 24 hours before the onset of symptoms and 3-5 days following (this may be longer in some cases). If staff or students begin to show symptoms of infection, they should plan to stay away from the school as advised by Northern Health. Exposure to the virus may occur in a variety of ways including:

- Shaking hands with an infected person or touching a surface contaminated with the virus, followed by touching one's eyes, nose or mouth;
- Infectious droplets from a coughing or sneezing person landing in the eye or onto the moist inner surface of the mouth;
- Breathing infectious airborne droplets or particles from coughing or sneezing of infected persons;
- Sharing food (e.g. bags of chips) or utensils with an infected person. This includes sharing from trays of food where hands come into direct contact with the food;
- Passing a telephone or other electronic device between friends.

### **Responsibilities**

Ongoing communication with the Northern Health Authority has been established, to consult on what to communicate to parents and staff regarding the current influenza situation. We will maintain regular contact with the Northern Health Authority and will follow any directives or advisories provided by the Regional Health Officer and the Provincial Health Officer.

The Superintendent will work closely and directly with the Regional Health Officer, and the Provincial Health Officer where schools are particularly impacted by absenteeism of staff and students, and for safety reasons, school closure may be contemplated.

All staff and students have a burden of responsibility in minimizing their exposure to seasonal influenza, and in minimizing the exposure of others if they are ill. This Exposure Control Plan (ECP) describes the precautions that are fundamental toward preventing the spread of influenza.

### **(Staff and Student) Prevention Strategies**

Influenza will spread where precautions are not consistently practiced: Here are six simple actions to take:

1. Stay home when you are sick or have influenza symptoms. Get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed. Phone ahead to notify your health care provider of your situation before showing up at their place of practice.
2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick (minimum 2 metres).
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue away immediately. At the minimum where a tissue is not available, cough into the crook (elbow) of your arm.
4. Wash your hands often, because it will help protect you from getting sick. Use wipes or gel hand sanitizers where soap and water are not available.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. That is how you can introduce the virus to your body or if you are infected it can transfer the virus to your hands.
6. Practice good health habits that will strengthen your immune system. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods. Smoking increases the risk of serious consequences if you contract the flu.
7. Minimize the occasions where you share in the handling of items.

### **Education and Training**

Staff and all parents will review the Exposure Control Plan and will receive information on the following:

1. The risk of exposure to influenza and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
2. Safe work procedures to be followed, including hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette, carrying disposable tissues with you at all times.
3. Location of washing facilities, including the location of wipes or hand rubs.
4. How to report exposure to or symptoms of influenza to the principal.

Washing your hands often is your best protection from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with a disinfecting gel or wipe. Wash with warm soapy water for 15-20 seconds. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work. Always wash your hands:

- Before leaving your work area;
- After handling materials that may be contaminated;
- Before eating, drinking, smoking, handling contact lenses, or applying make up.

### **Cough/Sneeze Etiquette**

All staff and students are expected to follow the cough/sneeze etiquette, which is a combination of measures that minimizes the transmission of diseases via droplets or airborne routes. This includes the following:

- Staff educating themselves about the information in the Exposure Control Plan, in particular with regard to hand washing;
- Post signs at the entryway to classrooms and the school to educate/remind staff and students about the control measures in your school;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
- Use tissues only to contain secretions (not a hanky) and dispose of them promptly in a waste container;
- Turn your head away from others when coughing or sneezing;
- Caution younger children about using their sleeves to wipe runny noses, and encourage the use of tissues.
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### **If Staff or Students are Showing Symptoms of Influenza**

If staff or students are ill with influenza, they should stay home. If they develop symptoms of illness while at school/work, they should leave the school/workplace. Schools should promptly isolate students in the sick room and notify parents. The student should remain in the sick room until parents can transport them to home. Notify the custodial staff that the sick room was used for an ill student.

Bus students that are ill with influenza should not be permitted to ride the bus to return home because of the confined nature of the bus-environment. If there is no option for transporting the student other than by bus, staff should ensure the student is in a seat by themselves, and have tissues available to cover their mouths when coughing and sneezing.

Staff and students should return to the school/workplace once they have completely recovered from the influenza, and show no symptoms. Staff should inform their principal if they are ill with influenza. Parents should inform the principal or school secretary if their son or daughter is ill with influenza.

### **Use of Surgical Masks**

A surgical mask is a protective fabric barrier that is worn on the face, covers at least the nose and mouth, and is used to contain large droplets generated during coughing and sneezing by the person using the mask.

Surgical masks help minimize the spread of infected material from the wearer to other people, and from others to the wearer. If a student is ill with influenza, and is isolated prior to pick up by parents, staff that are working with the student should either wear surgical masks and/or have the student wear a surgical mask to avoid infection of others. Other cough/sneeze etiquette should be reinforced to the student.

### **Health Monitoring**

Staff will promptly report symptoms of influenza to their principal/supervisor.

Students that are observed to be ill will be reported to the principal, and the parents will be contacted.

### **Latest Updates and Additional Information**

Updates on the impact of the seasonal influenza in SD 59 are being regularly provided on district's website ([www.sd59.bc.ca](http://www.sd59.bc.ca)). There are also a significant number of links for parents and educators on the Ministry of Education site to assist in preparing for influenza in schools. Updates are also available on the Ministry of Health Services and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport websites.

One of the best resources for information or advice regarding all illnesses is <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca>

You can also call HealthLink BC at 811 anytime for an update.

### **Annual Review**

This Exposure Control Plan will be reviewed at least annually, and updated, as new and useful information is made available.

Exposure Control Plan Review for 2019/2020

Prepared and reviewed by:

Candace Clouthier – Superintendent

District Emergency Response Team:

Mike Readman – EOP Incident Command/Director of Instruction

Wade Simlik – Director of Operations

Jeff Lekstrom – Transportation Manager

Don Belski – Health and Safety Coordinator

Josh Kurjata – Principal DCSS – South Peace Campus

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