



School District No.59 (Peace River South)

Media Release
January 25, 2022

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 59 (PEACE RIVER SOUTH) IMPLEMENTS PROOF OF VACCINATION PROCEDURE FOR STAFF

In a closed meeting on January 19, 2022, the Board of Education of School District No. 59 (Peace River South) passed a motion to implement a proof of vaccination procedure specific to COVID-19 for staff and individual contractors of the District. The health and safety of staff and students was at the forefront of this decision and public health authorities recommend that vaccines continue to be the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities.

On October 5, 2021, The Ministry of Education convened an Advisory Committee to review and design guidelines (The K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination Policies) for boards of education to use to facilitate this process. The Board used the guidelines and considered additional information leading to this decision including local COVID infection and vaccination data, and employee absences. The Board consulted with the Northern Health Authority, Ministry of Education, BCPSEA and employee groups, and weighed the potential implications of implementing a proof of vaccination procedure.

The procedure will include a process for verification of proof of full vaccination, as well as a procedure for those that are not fully vaccinated to consent to routine rapid testing as a condition to continue to work. Individuals that do not provide proof of vaccination and do not participate in rapid testing will be placed on a leave of absence without pay.

The procedure will be developed in accordance with the following:

- K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination Policies and the BCPSEA Template Operations Procedure.
- Consultation with employee representatives, District Parent Advisory Council, Indigenous Advisory Councils, and community partners.
- The procedure will ensure the School District complies with its obligation to accommodate individuals who are legally entitled to accommodation for medical reasons or under the Human Rights Code of BC or Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- The procedure will ensure the School District's privacy obligations are met.

The procedure is expected to be implemented as soon as possible after the required notice to staff has elapsed. The timeline will allow for staff that are unvaccinated to get fully immunized. The Board feels strongly that the best learning environment for students is to keep them in their classroom where they are surrounded by fellow students and have the support of their classroom teacher and school staff. The Board concurs with the advice of the public health authority that vaccination continues to be the strongest method to reduce the risk of severe illness, thus reducing time away from work and disruption to school environments. The most effective means to protect students and staff from COVID-19 is for everyone that is eligible to be vaccinated.

Further communication and consultation will be conducted in the next steps as district staff work to create a Proof of Vaccination Regarding COVID-19 Operations Procedure. The District will work closely with the Ministry of Education and BCPSEA to develop procedures that follow the process and guidelines as set out in the K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination Policies and the BCPSEA Framework Template. The procedure will be in place until June 30, 2022 and will be reviewed thereafter.

The Board of Education thanks all those involved in this process for your understanding and commitment as we work together to ensure employees have a safe place to work and students have a safe place to learn.

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