



School District No.59 (Peace River South)

December 30th, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you heard in the announcement on December 29th, students will return to in-class instruction on Monday, January 10th. This will give our district additional time to assess the impact of the Omicron variant on our community, schools, and staff, and to implement enhanced safety plans to support the safe continuation of in-class learning.

Schools will use this administrative time to understand and assess the impact of the Omicron variant on students, teachers and staff over the holiday break, determine their workforce needs; implement continuity of learning planning; develop communications plans for families in the event of school closures; reach out to students and families; and to consider transportation and meal planning in the event of workforce issues or closures.

During this time, schools will be open for limited numbers of students in particular need in Kindergarten through grade 7, and specifically children of essential health care workers, if you cannot find alternate arrangements. If you are in need of this service, please send an e-mail to your school principal or call and leave a message at the school. This will be childcare/supervision, it will not be in-class learning.

Next week we will send out our enhanced guidelines for returning to school. They will build on existing protocols already in place to minimize the spread of virus in schools. Our safety protocols will help keep our schools open as staffing schools in this next wave could prove to be a problem. I am asking parents to rethink mask exemptions. We need your help to keep our schools safe and open. Mask wearing should be most of the people most of the time. We need your help increasing mask wearing or we are going to see disruptions to our operations for the next few months. Please help us in our effort to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Our new guidelines coming out next week build on existing protocols that have succeeded in minimizing the spread of the virus in schools such as:

- Encouraging everyone who is eligible, to get fully vaccinated
- Doing daily health checks, and staying home when sick
- Using available space to spread out, and to respect others personal space.
- Wearing masks in accordance with the Provincial Health Officer Order on Face Coverings
- Cleaning hands regularly
- Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces at least once a day

The delay will also allow more students to be vaccinated – which remains the best protection against severe outcomes from COVID-19.

The safety of students and staff is paramount, so as we have done from the beginning, we will continue to make decisions based on the latest health data and the expert advice of our public health officials.

We will need all of us working together to navigate through the coming weeks, and I know that when we work together and help each other out, we can get through this.

Sincerely,

Christy Fennell

Superintendent of Schools