

Hello parents, students, staff and community

Ey Swayel, it's good to speak with you again.

I said that we would be communicating with you again soon and I wanted to take this chance to give you an update. We've had a chance to dive into the details of the framework for opening schools in September. In my last message, we were just wanting you to know that we had received the main announcement of what the opening of schools should look like and we have been working hard on our plans for running schools in cohorts. I want to talk more about cohorts and what it means for the planning in our schools and for our staff and students.

First, a reminder that Dr. Bonnie Henry is our guide in Public Health. Her advice and her Orders set the stage for government action and provide us all with direction including when and how we will safely return to school.

The cohort model Dr. Henry has proposed is all about managing the pandemic and is rooted in what she calls Public Health's "Bread and Butter" which is contact tracing. When students return to school, having them move and learn in cohorts is about restricting contact with other students and allowing our Public Health teams to do quick and effective intervention in the case of any outbreak. The direction to form cohorts of 60 in elementary and 120 in secondary means that these groups of students will learn together and this is the way to minimize contact with other students and staff.

Our planning to this stage has been to revisit our secondary timetables where the concept of cohorts will have the greatest impact. Our secondary timetables are built and designed around student choice. This is particularly true in grades 10, 11 and 12 where our curriculum splits into a variety of offerings. For example, in the BC Curriculum there are 9 English Language Arts courses listed in grade 10 and 2 Mathematics courses. In grade 11 there are 5 Math courses. In grade 12 Social Studies, there are 15 possible courses. That doesn't mean we offer all of these courses, but what this does mean is that once you hit grade 10, one size does not fit all at the curriculum level. Student choice and what a school can and will offer dictates how timetables unfold. The concept of 120 students all coincidentally taking the exact same courses at the same time is a new structure for us. So how are we proceeding?

Our guiding principles are this:

- We want to have as many students in school as physically practical and within the health guidelines;
- We want to keep our cohorts and contacts as small as possible to minimize contact
- We want our students to get the courses that they chose in the spring;
- We want our students to remain on the graduation pathway that they expect;
- We want our teachers teaching the courses that they normally would teach;
- We want our support staff to be providing assistance and support in the courses that they know; and
- We want parents to know what to expect and to be confident that our learning programs are strong and consistent across all schools.

What can you anticipate in September? If you are in an elementary school, please expect that our normal start up routines will be different. We cannot form cohorts with students as they arrive on day 1 and 2 and then switch cohorts in a couple of days. This would be against the principle of keeping

contacts to a minimum. You can expect us to reach out and it's critical that we know to the greatest extent possible, who exactly will be in attendance in which school come opening day. Then we can begin forming cohorts from there and we will be in touch with parents.

If you are in secondary school, as in elementary, expect our opening routines to look different as we work to form cohorts. Course changes are common in September in our secondary schools, but now that means changing cohorts as well and once again, we need students in cohorts quickly and once in a cohort, the pathway is set for several weeks. Just as Doctor Bonnie Henry suggested in the spring, expect that hybrid learning, a blend of online and face to face is a consideration particularly for our students in grades 10, 11 and 12. With much more time to plan now than in the spring, consistency and structure is key to the hybrid models we are exploring. While we are working as hard as we can to explore models with 100% of students in attendance 100% of the time, in our large secondary schools several who have more than 1400 students and some as large as close to 2000 students, it may be necessary to stagger start times, lunch times and to limit attendance to be able to manage the cohort interaction that is possible during lunches or breaks. Minimizing contact consistent with the Health Guidelines is our top priority and that will impact our structures.

For our staff, know that we are working with our CUPE and STA leads. We are including support staff and teachers in our conversations about what we are exploring so we know the impact on the enormous variety of roles that our staff perform from clerks, EA's and caretakers to our non-enrolling teachers and Teachers Teaching on Call. We are also working on our Strongstart programs and implications for them. For parents, we are also reaching out to our District Parent Advisory Council and others to ensure that parent questions and concerns are answered including in particular, implications for students with special needs and those who need additional supports. I have also reached out to our First Nations communities to offer to work directly with them on our models.

There is still lots of planning to do. Our details are becoming clear and very soon we feel we will be in a place to share actual timetable structures with parents and our communities. We are exploring a few key options but these options are narrowing fast. As opening day routines become clearer, we'll be in contact once again and we'll keep doing these video messages to keep you informed.

In the meantime, please continue to enjoy your summer. Take time, rest up, and stay well.

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