



SCHOOLS READY TO WELCOME STUDENTS BACK

May 26, 2020

KELOWNA, BC – Central Okanagan Public Schools is prepared to welcome students back to safe classrooms. With safety protocols approved by the Provincial Health Officer and the B.C. Center for Disease Control (BCCDC), and small groups of students returning to onsite instruction the District is confident in a successful transition. The District anticipates that staff and students will also be able to begin safely preparing for the next school year.

"From operations staff to educators to administrators, our staff's response to the third stage of opening schools is commendable," said Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of Schools/CEO. "The critical role of public schools in BC's Restart Plan brings its share of challenges and our people meet those challenges with the resilience and work ethic we teach to students."

The Province of British Columbia requires the implementation of strict safety measures at schools to reduce to the risk of COVID-19 transmission, as well as ministry-approved return-to-class plans and safety plans. With many safety protocols already in place since April, as Central Okanagan Public Schools continues to offer in-class learning services for hundreds of children, the district is well prepared to add to plans and support the roughly 11,000 students who will return to class on a part-time basis.

"While we share community concerns about returning to any kind of in-class instruction, we are confident in both the Province of BC's guidelines and our district's response," said Moyra Baxter, Chairperson for the Board of Education. "As we educate and prepare everyone for the next phase in September, we will continue to serve our communities with a focus on the safety and well-being of students and staff."

Central Okanagan Public Schools continues to base all plans on direction and information from the Provincial Health Officer and the BCCDC. On May 15, 2020, the BCCDC stated:

- Children are not the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in schools or in community settings.

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- Evidence indicates transmission involving children is primarily limited to household settings, and from COVID-19 positive adults to children. Most cases in children have been linked to a symptomatic household member.
- Clusters and outbreaks involving children and youth are unusual and tend only to occur in areas where there are high levels of community spread.
- Prevention measures and mitigation strategies involving children and youth must be commensurate with risk.
- Adolescent children should physically distance themselves where possible when outside the family unit or household.
- For younger children maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.

With regards to the sharing of paper and paper products, the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) stated:

- There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper, or other paper-based products. As such, there is no need to limit the distribution or sharing of books or paper based educational resources to students because of COVID-19.

Schools will continue to have specific entry points, daily entry procedures, signage, and instructions to help maximize hygiene and physical distancing. School administrators will also educate staff, students, and families on routine daily screening to self-assess for symptoms of any respiratory illness. Safety plans also include extensive guidelines for school sites such as hallway etiquette, shared spaces and technology, isolation of potential cases, and supporting mental health and well-being.

For more information, please visit sd23.bc.ca

Please view the [Interior Health letter to school communities](#) of May 26, 2020.

[Ministry of Education's FAQ's on Continuity of Learning in the K to 12 Education System.](#)

For comments, please contact:

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