

March 5, 2020

Dear students, parents and staff,

In light of the evolving situation with COVID-19, we are receiving many questions regarding the status of upcoming school trips over Spring Break and therefore, we are sending an update to parents and staff.

As I'm sure you are aware, the list of countries affected by COVID-19 continues to grow, many cities, states, regions and countries that have previously been minimally affected by the outbreak are finding themselves in a state of emergency within a matter of days. We have been monitoring the situation very closely and rely on the latest information from Global Affairs Canada, the World Health Organization, the B.C. Ministries of Health and Education, and Fraser Health to help inform our decisions.

In the last few days, Adrian Dix, Minister of Health and Dr. Bonnie Henry, BC's Provincial Health Officer advised travellers to conduct risk assessments in advance and to consider postponing trips to impacted areas, noting that these areas are changing as COVID-19 continues to evolve. As global efforts to contain the disease continue, the availability of health care services in some areas may be limited and travel restrictions may be put in place suddenly.

While individual families may assume higher levels of risk, as a school district our top priority must be the safety and well-being of our students, staff and volunteers. After careful consideration, the Delta School District has decided to cancel all international-bound Spring Break school trips as a precautionary measure. We believe the risk of contracting the virus or of being placed into quarantine while outside of Canada or upon return is significant and increasing. In addition, we are concerned about the difficulties that may arise in supervising large groups of students outside of Canada should circumstances start to change rapidly.

We will continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and may extend cancellations to include other school trips scheduled to take place over the coming months. If that happens, we will communicate directly with those who are affected.

We share the deep disappointment of our students, staff and families. A great deal of planning goes into these trips and we know how much our students and staff look forward to them. I can assure you that we took all of this into consideration when making this very difficult decision.

We are currently working with the travel providers and individual schools to review the insurance policy. Schools will communicate directly with affected students and families about next steps related to refunds.

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Information for families and staff travelling during Spring Break

We are also asking families and staff who are travelling internationally to please consider issues such as needing to be quarantined upon returning to Canada. Currently, the government is asking all travellers who are returning to, or visiting, B.C. from outside Canada to monitor themselves and their children closely for symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing for a total of 14 days from your return, and if any symptoms arise, to limit their contact with others and call 811. This is an important way to reduce the possibility of transmission of illness to others.

As always, the best precautions people can take are to their wash hands, use hand-sanitizer, and cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or cough into your elbow) to reduce the spread of germs. It will take a collective effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and while we regret to have to cancel any planned activities, we see this as a wise and necessary measure.

We will continue to work closely and take direction from our provincial health experts at the Ministry of Health and Fraser Health to ensure the continued safety and well-being of students and staff. Please visit our website for the latest updates: <https://www.deltasd.bc.ca/news-events/news/information-for-parents-guardians-novel-coronavirus/>

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Doug Sheppard', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Doug Sheppard
Superintendent of Schools
Delta School District No. 37