

May 7, 2020

Dear Families,

I'd like to begin by thanking you for your ongoing patience and support. It's heartening to see how well our students, school administrators, teachers and school staff have adapted to a completely different learning environment in such a short period of time. Your child(ren) should be hearing from their teachers on a weekly basis now with assignments, updates and support. Please reach out if you or your child(ren) needs additional support, technical or otherwise. We are here to help.

Planning for a gradual expansion of in-class instruction

Yesterday, the Premier of B.C. and Provincial Health Officer announced plans to start lifting provincial pandemic restrictions in phases, gradually allowing for more social and economic activity, while closely monitoring health information to minimize the risk to the public. The next phase, which is expected to start later this month, will see a gradual expansion of access to childcare and K-12 in-class instruction in schools (Government news release: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BG_Parks_and_Sites_and_In-Class_Learning.pdf). This is one of several measures included in B.C.'s Restart Plan intended to support the re-opening of society and help re-build the economy, as it will enable parents to return to work.

This is something we have been thinking about and discussing at the district level for the last few weeks. Our top priority is how to make this happen while ensuring the continued health and safety of our students, staff and wider local community. Like many in the education sector, we are considering various measures such as staggered classes, rotating start times, smaller groups, regular handwashing breaks and sanitization stations. We anticipate receiving further guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, Minister of Education and WorkSafeBC over the coming days and weeks. As such, we expect to expand access to our schools in late May or early June. As mentioned by the Premier, we expect any return to school for students this year will be voluntary for families.

I want to assure you that strategies to maintain a healthy, clean and safe workplace, including maintaining physical distancing and increased cleaning protocols, have been in place at our schools and other sites since mid-March. In this new environment, we have been successfully providing support to just under 50 children of Essential Services Workers (ESWs) at two schools, with additional sites ready to provide support in response to an increasing need from ESWs as required. In addition, our Inclusive Learning team has been working with families of more than 50 students with Ministry of Education designations, diverse abilities and/or vulnerability to provide additional supports where needed, including the provision of in-person, in-school learning.

Support for Essential Services Workers

We anticipate that an increasing number of Essential Services Workers may need childcare and learning support over the coming weeks. If you are an Essential Services Worker as defined by the [provincial government](#) and require support for your children, please email ESW@deltasd.bc.ca with your contact information and needs. Please include a phone number to make it easier for us to get in touch with you. Someone from the school district will be in touch as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

Upcoming events

Please note that the events and activities we would normally be participating in at this time of year are not going ahead as planned. As directed by the Provincial Health Officer, the ban of gatherings of more than 50 people is still in effect. Sadly, that means that District and school events such as theatre productions, school trips and spring/summer fairs are cancelled. Currently, we are finalizing plans on how we can make graduation meaningful for our Grade 12 students. Stay tuned for more information.

Although it is still too early to provide specific information on what a return to in-class instruction will look like for your child(ren), we can assure you that we will take a measured and mindful approach, and we will provide you with more information as soon as we can. One thing we can all be sure of...learning in schools will look very different than before.

I hope your child(ren) is feeling supported and cared for at this challenging time. Please know that our administrators, teachers and support staff miss them greatly. We are all very much looking forward to the day that we can welcome them back safely into our schools and classrooms.

Until then, to quote our Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry, "Be Kind, Be Calm. Be Safe."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug Sheppard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "S".

Doug Sheppard
Superintendent of Schools