

# School District 81

## Communicable Disease Plan

### September 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted, and continues to impact students, staff and families in many ways, with some longer-term impacts of the pandemic yet to be realized. While COVID-19 will continue to circulate in our communities, the BCCDC advises that in school settings COVID-19 can be managed as are other serious respiratory infections in the community. As such, the guidance in this document supports reducing the risk of transmission of all communicable diseases.

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, Norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

The following principles will continue to guide the K-12 sector throughout the 2022-23 school year:

#### KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

- Use of trauma-informed practice, with a focus on mental health and wellness.
- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette is practiced and modelled by staff.
- Stay home when sick.
- HVAC and air circulation follows Provincial Guidelines.
- Masks are available and used by those who feel comfortable using them.

#### TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Staff is aware of Trauma-informed Practice.

Trauma-informed practice is a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events including the emotional and traumatic impact of a pandemic. Trauma-informed practice includes:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments
- Understanding coping strategies
- Supporting independence
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual needs of students and staff

Some students may have experienced elements of trauma during the pandemic. Educators and support staff should be aware of changes in student behavior, including trauma-related behaviors which may include fear; hyperactivity; aggression; body aches and pain; depression; self-harming behaviors; excessive shyness; or withdrawal. To support educators and staff in identifying and responding to the needs of students who have experienced trauma, the Ministry has created trauma-informed practice resources that are available on the erase (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) website.

## HVAC

Global Plasma Solutions (GPS) are in all school district buildings. The GPS NBMI (Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization) technology reduces airborne particles through agglomeration. The ions attach to the airborne particles. The particles are subsequently attracted to one another, effectively increasing mass and size that is easily captured by the air filtration system. During the GPS cleaning process, the NPBI technology attacks and kills viruses, mold spores, and bacteria, leaving clean indoor air.

## SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Schools will support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Promoting required safety measures in the school through visual aids.
- Adopt a trauma-informed approach
- Provide information on how to access counselling services during school start-up.
- Regularly communicate that students, staff, parents, and visitors should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.
- Communicate the importance of doing a daily health check and provide parents with health check resources

## PERSONAL PRACTICES

### STAY HOME WHEN SICK

Staff, students, or other persons who are exhibiting new symptoms of illness (including symptoms of COVID-19 or gastrointestinal illness) should stay home and follow BCCDC guidance on when to get tested, self-isolate, and return to school.

Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved enough to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen). Information specific to COVID-19 is available from BCCDC.

### MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

The decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice for staff, students, and visitors. Some people may choose to continue to wear a mask because they are more comfortable wearing a mask or because they, or someone in their family, may be at higher risk and want to take extra precautions. Some may choose to continue to wear them throughout the school day, or only during specific activities. Personal choice should be respected.

### HEALTH AWARENESS

Everyone at school should practice health awareness, including staying home when sick and performing a daily health check.

## HAND HYGIENE

Staff, students and visitors should be encouraged to practice frequent hand hygiene.

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an effective hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene and schools should facilitate regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands.

## RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

## PERSONAL SPACE

Staff and students should be encouraged to respect others personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

## SHARING FOOD, BEVERAGES & OTHER ITEMS THAT TOUCH THE MOUTH

Staff and students should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g., food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices).

Shared-use items that touch the mouth should be cleaned and disinfected between use by different individuals (e.g., water bottles, instrument mouth pieces).

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Enhanced cleaning of frequently touched surfaces will continue to occur.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES

### SPACE ARRANGEMENT

Schools can use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches

### BUSES

Normal seating and onloading/offloading practices can be followed.

### SHARED EQUIPMENT

Students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after shared equipment use. Equipment that touches the mouth or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared, or cleaned and disinfected in between uses. Toys or manipulatives that may not be easily cleaned (e.g. fabric) or at all (e.g. sand, playdough) may be used.

## EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION DRILLS

Schools will continue to practice emergency (e.g. fire, earthquake, lockdown) and evacuation drills including the six required annual fire drills as per BC Fire Code 2.8.32, and modify drill procedures to prevent crowding/congregating. In the event of an actual emergency, communicable disease prevention measures can be suspended in order to prioritize student safety.

## MANAGING STAFF AND STUDENTS WHEN ILL AT SCHOOL

- All staff be advised to let the Principal know if they are ill or if a student is ill.
- Schools should promptly, but showing awareness for confidentiality concerns, separate the student or staff who are ill (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, headache, muscle aches). The student should be put in a comfortable area separate from others, with adequate supervision, until they can go home. The staff should leave the building and follow health procedures.
- To help prevent transmission, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene practices are recommended. The student can be placed in a separate room from other students with a closed or partially closed door but with regular supervision. The person monitoring the student can wear gloves and a mask.
- The student should be instructed to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Schools should notify parents/guardians if their child begins to show symptoms of illness while at school, including the need for immediate pick up. They should not go home on the bus.
- should be notified when in the school to The cleaners have any surfaces the person's bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill cleaned and disinfected.
- Students and staff are welcome to return when they feel well enough to participate in routine activities.

## GUIDING DOCUMENTS

- Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings – BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (last updated August 25, 2022)
- Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools – BC Centre for Disease Control (last updated August 25, 2022)