

Administrative Memorandum

Regular Board Meeting

Date: April 14, 2021
Topic: COVID-19 New Protocols
Submitted by: Dr. Jordan Tinney, Superintendent of Schools/CEO

Background:

Surrey Schools Context and Additional Measures

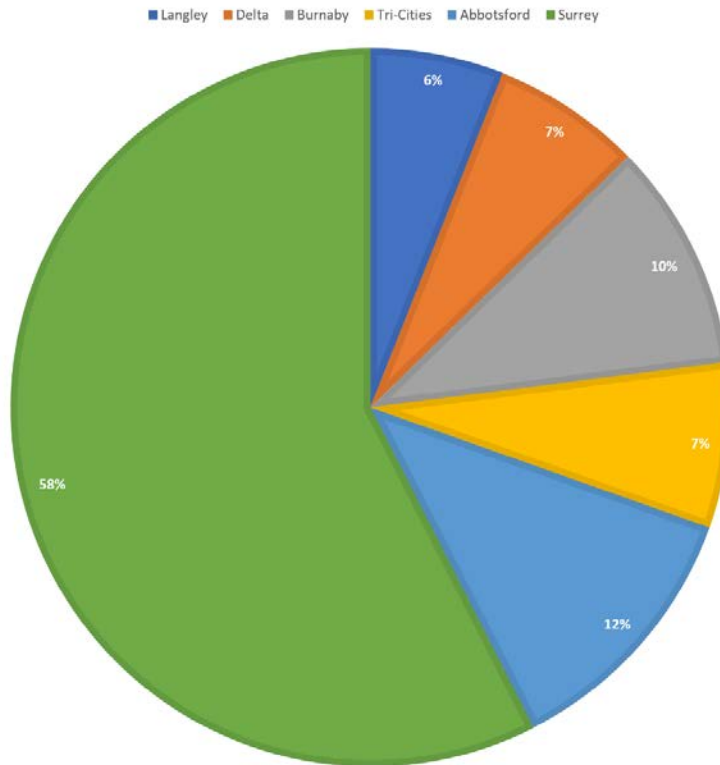
Surrey has likely had the majority of COVID-19 school exposures compared to any district in the province. The number of exposures in our schools are most certainly a reflection of our community. According to the BC Centre for Disease Control (CDC) website, from January 2020 to January 2021, the community of Surrey has seen 20,627 cases of COVID-19. The case numbers in Surrey are unparalleled compared to our neighbours. The CDC website has the following statistics for our surrounding neighbours:

- Langley 2,150
- Delta 2,406
- Burnaby 3,693
- Tri-Cities 2,670
- Abbotsford 4,333
- Vancouver 10,305

In all, even with Vancouver included, Surrey alone has 45% of all cases in these regions. With Vancouver taken out as a separate health region, Surrey would have more cases than all other areas combined.

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CASE COUNTS IN SURREY VS OTHER LARGE FH DISTRICTS



When these high cases descend upon Surrey schools, they come into our schools which have an additional contextual factor. That contextual factor is our overall school capacity. Since physical distancing is one of the top controls for preventing spread of COVID-19, our school capacity is a significant factor in being able to maintain physical distancing. All of our schools are operating at 100% class size.

Most of our repeat cases have been in our secondary schools. Most of our secondary schools are large by any district measure. We have 12 secondary schools over 1400 students. Of those 12 schools, they operate as a combine average capacity of 129%. In these 12 schools, we are overcapacity by 3000 students or 250 students per school. We have five secondary schools, Tamanawis, Sullivan Heights, Fleetwood Park, Semiahmoo and Earl Marriott, each of which is greater than 300 students over capacity.

As a district, we track all letters to stay on top of schools or regions where cases are emerging or growing. We have a central dashboard which is updated twice daily due to our volume of exposures and notices. Currently, the information we have to date is that we have issued:

- 835 Notices of Exposure;
- 909 Self-Monitoring Letters;
- 75 Self-Isolation letters to a full class; and
- 2 Letters declaring an Outbreak.

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This is the cumulative list of the larger scale letters for whole schools or whole classes. We are now in a world of the variant where we are seeing an escalation in self-isolations, rapid testing, and more targeted approaches of notices. As a result, we've seen an escalation of letters and notices. In one single day on March 2nd, we issued:

- 15 Notices of Exposure to schools;
- 38 Self-Monitoring letters;
- 67 Self-Isolation letters;
- 6 Letters for testing;
- 2 Letters to the Community for Variants in schools; and
- 2 Letters to StrongStart (Early Learning) Centres.

Total letters on March 2nd: 130

A question that has been posed to us is what additional measures might we take to reduce the numbers of cases coming to schools, to mitigate the effects of exposures, and ultimately to prevent transmission in our schools. Below is a framework to consider interventions. The interventions are taken from the approach of universal, targeted, and intensive measures depending on the unique needs of a school, region or district.

Universal interventions apply to all schools in the district, targeted interventions are for schools seeing increased exposures where risk is higher and intense interventions occur where exposures have escalated, or where clusters may be emerging.

This document does not contemplate the declaration of an outbreak since that declaration comes with its own health measures. This document also includes the impact of the Order of the Chief Medical Health Officer for Fraser Health, issued on March 29, 2021.

Universal

Universal measures will apply to all schools. While many of these measures have already been implemented in schools across the district, some including those related to the mask Order will be new.

Secondary schools

- All staff, students, and visitors are required to wear a mask at all times when inside a school.

Elementary Schools

- All staff, visitors and Grade 4 to 7 students are required to wear a mask at all times when inside a school.
- All Kindergarten to Grade 3 students are strongly recommended and encouraged to wear a mask when in the school.

Exceptions to the mask order of the Medical Health Officer (MHO) include:

- When an individual is unable to wear a mask because of a psychological, behavioural or health condition; or a physical, cognitive or intellectual impairment;
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- When an individual is unable to put on or remove a face covering without the assistance of another person;
- While communicating with a person who has a hearing impairment;
- When an individual is actively eating or drinking;
- To engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a face covering (such as actively playing a wind instrument); or
- To a teacher if the face covering is removed while providing direct instruction at a distance of more than two metres from others.

District-wide

- Prohibit any adult face to face meetings in a closed office.
- All meetings should be scheduled using virtual platforms.
- Informal face to face interactions between staff may proceed but need to be less than 10 minutes in length and physical distancing needs to be maintained at all times.
- Avoid informal gatherings in small groups in any setting inside the school.
- Minimize platooning (combining classes in cohorts) in Elementary – cohort is reduced to a single class wherever possible. Where required (e.g. band) appropriate physical distancing must be in place.
- Require all teachers to organize their classroom spaces using existing furniture in a manner that maximizes physical distancing and reduces face to face contact.
- All teachers continue to teach and review specific Health and Safety protocols with their classes.
- Schools to develop schedules or revise room limits for photocopying. No more than one person should have access at any one time and proper flow is to be maintained.
- No visitation by District-Based staff to school sites unless critical response or organized by school principal.
- No external visitors from public or district to school sites unless essential for operation (e.g. deliveries, medical assistance).
- All students and parents asked to leave school grounds after school, wherever possible.
- StrongStart programs moved online – limiting adults on school grounds.
- District-wide early dismissal once per month (dates set by the district) to review health and safety plans and to revisit any health and safety adjustments needed to be made. Meeting will be led by school-based Health and Safety Team and meetings will include any recommendations or observations based on new exposures or mitigation strategies.

Targeted

Targeted measures will be added in those schools that are seeing increased levels of exposures, and where the risk is higher.

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- Outdoors and at lunch time in Elementary – zones of play and/or multiple lunches so no interaction between individual cohorts/classes, where possible.
- All maintenance activities occur only outside of instructional time unless essential for continuity of service (e.g. flood, power outage).

Intensive

Intensive measures will be added in those schools where exposures have escalated, or where clusters may be emerging.

- All staff rooms are closely monitored for informal gatherings/coffee and principals engage in conversations with staff about the importance of not gathering informally in small groups in any setting inside the school. Access to washroom facilities remains in place.
- All elementary prep at one time – eliminates adults moving across cohorts.
- As multiple individuals are identified in classes for self-isolation, work with MHO to define the level of concern and target whole class for self-isolation as opposed to several individuals.

Next Steps

- These interventions, at all levels, will require collaboration with our partners.
 - We will meet with our union executives to lay the foundation for these changes.
 - We will initiate an Intervention Team to identify structural and procedural challenges and how we both communicate and implement the changes needed and the sites that require intensive support.
 - The Superintendent will work directly with the MHO to establish sites requiring intensive interventions.
 - This Intervention Team, who will work to implement the desired changes, will include:
 - Superintendent
 - Manager – Health and Safety
 - Rapid Response Team – Environmental Officer
 - Rapid Response Team – Communications Officer
 - Assistant Superintendents (6)
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