



March 31, 2021

RE: Updated Provincial Health Orders for Schools

Dear NLPS families and staff,

Welcome back from Spring Break. We hope you are doing well.

You may have seen in the news recently that British Columbia has been experiencing higher numbers of COVID-19 cases. In an effort to help break the chain of increased COVID-19 infection in the province, on Monday, Dr. Bonnie Henry announced new provincial public health restrictions in place between March 29 and April 19, 2021. Included in the announcement were new guidelines for mask wearing for students in grades 4 to 12. Yesterday evening the Ministry of Education issued clear direction for the use of masks for ALL students in the updated [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#).

Effective tomorrow, April 1, all K-12 staff and all students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical masks in all indoor areas, including when they are at their work stations (desks), and on school buses - both within and outside of their learning group.

Exceptions include:

- A person who is unable to wear a mask because they do not tolerate it (for health or behavioural reasons);
- A person unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- If the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- If the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. actively playing a wind instrument, high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- If a person is eating or drinking;
- If a person is behind a barrier;
- While providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment), where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements are important.

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear a mask indoors in schools and on school buses – both within and outside of their learning group – though mask wearing ultimately remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for these students, their choices must be respected.

For some schools, where students are not used to wearing masks indoors, teachers will spend the next few school days helping students to adjust to this change. We suggest you send your child to school in a clean mask, and with a spare mask, that they are used to wearing. Schools will have masks available if students forget their mask. Please click the following links for a [video](#) and [poster](#) containing a reminder of how to wear a face mask.

The Ministry of Education has put this order in place indefinitely and will be working with Public Health up to and after April 19 to determine if further changes are required for health and safety reasons.

Masks should not be used in place of the other safety measures detailed in the Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools Stage 2 Operational Guidelines (will be added to the district's COVID-19 [webpage](#) later today). Those wearing masks must still maintain physical distancing whenever possible and there must be no crowding or congregating of people, even if masks are worn.

We are confident that this additional layer of protection will further enhance the measures we currently have in place to keep staff and students safe at school.

As always, perform [daily health checks](#) and stay home if you are sick, keep your distance, practice good hand hygiene and wear a mask.

Hych'qua (Thank you) for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Charlene McKay
Board Chair



Scott Saywell
Superintendent/CEO