



March 11, 2022

Dear Families,

February sure flew by! We celebrated and learned together about our history during Black History Month. We focused on promoting kindness and friendship through our actions and sharing with our schoolmates.

We also had some winter storm days and lots of mixed weather, which we have all taken in stride! We continue to get outside every day we can, so please make sure that the students come prepared for the weather (a few extra pairs of socks and pants in backpacks never hurt).

February was also registration month. We have been very busy registering a whole new group of Pre-Primary students along with many new Primaries as well as many students of all grades who are moving into the area. If for some reason you have not yet registered your child, please do so ASAP. Also, if you have a neighbour or friend that has not registered students new to our school for next year, please encourage them to do so. Student registration determines our staffing for September, so it is very important that we have everyone accounted for.

When we return from March Break, public health restrictions will be changing for schools. On March 21, Nova Scotia is moving into Phase 3 of its reopening plan. This means that all Public Health restrictions will be lifted when your child returns to school after March Break. Last night a message was sent to all families to provide clarification about the next phase. (See below). Families can choose to mask if they wish. I want to assure you that we will continue to ensure hands are sanitized etc as this is just a good health practice. If you require any extra test kits. Please let us know.

At this time we would like to thank the staff for their commitment to public health safety and the families for ensuring that Hillside is a great place to learn and work. It will still be very important to screen your child and keep them home

if they have any symptoms of illness. It's been a long two years living with uncertainty and adapting to constant change. Thank you for all you have done to support your children – and our schools through this journey. Remember, we are still in this together, even as we move into this next phase of living with COVID-19.

Have a great March Break and we will see you on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Kelly Joy and Courtney Smith

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Letter from Elwin...

***What does this mean for our schools?***

I am sharing this information to provide you with clarity.

Public Health continues to remind us to follow core measures. They include getting vaccinated, staying home if you are sick, self-isolating as per current Public Health advice, washing/sanitizing hands frequently and cleaning high-touch surfaces. It also continues to encourage masking. You can find the most up-to-date Public Health guidance for schools on the [Back to School website](#). Phase 3 details will be on the website as of March 21.

It is also important to remember to follow the self-isolation and testing requirements. You can find more information [here](#).

***PROOF OF VACCINATION***

When students and staff return to school on March 21, unvaccinated staff who are currently on unpaid administrative leave pursuant to the *COVID-19 Mandatory Vaccination Protocol in High Risk Settings* in the education sector will be able to return to their workplaces. Service providers can also allow their employees to begin providing service to schools/offices again.

Additionally, proof of vaccination will not be required for visitors and volunteers in schools.

***MASKING***

Effective March 21, masking will be optional in schools and on school buses. We know that the removal of restrictions, including mandatory masks, may feel unusual, especially in the beginning. **Wearing a mask is an individual choice. Staff may not request that students, other staff or any other individuals**

**wear a mask.** Please respect individual choices and remember to treat one another with kindness and understanding as we all adjust.

While masking is optional, Public Health recommends wearing a mask indoors and on school buses. Whether staff or students choose to wear a mask or not, they will be supported in their decision. There is a good supply of 3-ply masks that will continue to be available for staff and students.

### ***COHORTING***

There is no requirement for class cohorting. Schools should continue to minimize congestion in common areas, make the best use of available space and use outdoor areas for learning and well-being.

### ***RAPID TESTS***

Public Health is recommending the use of rapid tests to help protect people at increased risk of severe disease, such as those who are older or immunocompromised. These people and those who live with them or are around them are encouraged to do occasional or regular rapid testing, even if they don't have symptoms. Schools are at the heart of our communities, so rapid test kits will continue to be provided to students and staff on an ongoing basis, depending on supply from the federal government.

Public Health does not recommend testing for people who have recovered from COVID-19 within the past 90 days. Anyone who recovered in the past 90 days is asked:

- not to take rapid tests and leave supply for those who have not yet contracted COVID-19; or
- take the rapid tests and give them to family or friends who need access to rapid tests.

### ***VISITORS***

Principals, teachers and staff may invite non-essential visitors into schools as necessary, beginning March 21. Visitors will not be required to show proof of vaccination.

### ***GRADUATIONS***

Schools can begin planning graduation ceremonies, as restrictions have lifted for large gatherings. However, should Public Health need to reimplement, plans for large gatherings at the end of the school year may need to change accordingly.

### ***STUDENT TRANSPORTATION***

Masks will be optional for those entering and riding a school bus; however, Public Health recommends wearing one.

### ***What's next?***

These are big changes. Adjusting to these changes will take time. I encourage you to take time over the break to talk with your child about what school will look like when they return on March 21. **Please remind them that masking is an individual choice.**

It's been a long two years living with uncertainty and adapting to constant change. Thank you for all you have done to support your children – and our schools through this journey. Remember, we are still in this together, even as we move into this next phase of living with COVID-19. We're here for you and your family. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or principal.

Have a wonderful break,

Elwin LeRoux  
Regional Executive Director