



School District No. 54 (BULKLEY VALLEY)

“To empower all learners to live the challenges of a diverse and changing world.”

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August 26th, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and SD54 Employees,

Thank you for your patience and understanding as the School District works to provide service in an educational circumstance that is new for everyone. Over the last few weeks most of our Administrative staff were forced to interrupt their summer vacation and time with their families in order to work on plans for our September restart of schools. My thanks to them for their professionalism and commitment in these challenging times. Through their hard work, the School District submitted a Stage 2 return to school plan along with an updated Exposure plan (a health and safety plan) to the Ministry of Education for approval. I am happy to let you know those plans were approved as submitted.

As a parent, I do understand there is a wide variety of opinions about how schools should operate in this COVID environment. I believe that following the advice of our health care professionals is the right course of action. As such, our plans follow the guidelines and recommendations of the Provincial Health Office, the Ministry of Education and Worksafe BC. Our detailed plans can be found in full on our District Website:

<http://www.sd54.bc.ca/>

In a general way, I can say that our plans call for students to be divided into cohorts (learning groups) at all of our schools. Students will interact with other students in their cohorts for the school day. Situations where students are out of their cohorts will mean that they must follow the physical distance guidelines and should remain 2 meters apart from other people. Breaks and movement around schools will be staggered to reduce congestion and numbers in common areas.

There will be a number of health and safety protocols in place at our schools (as detailed in our plans) and the staff will be working hard to ensure that we are providing a controlled and safe environment for students. One of the changes in Ministry guidelines this fall is the expectation that students at the Secondary schools should wear non-medical masks in the hallways and students in grades 5-12 should also wear masks when they are on the school bus. In these situations, students might be out of their cohort and might not be able to physically distance. Wearing masks in classrooms is not a requirement, but a matter of personal choice.

The school year will also start out in a slightly different manner this year. School District No. 54 staff will report to their schools on Tuesday, Sept. 8 for safety orientations and planning sessions. Groups of students will begin attending school on Thursday, Sept. 10 for their welcoming and safety orientation sessions. Over the Thursday and Friday all students will be invited by their school to attend an orientation on one of these days. The school will communicate with parents about the orientation time their children have been assigned. Graduated entry for Kindergarten will still occur in its usual manner.

Over the next few days schools will be communicating directly with parents with more detailed information about schedules and plans for their students in September. I encourage you to have a look at the plans on our website and if you need clarification or have questions about any of the information, please contact your local school or reach out to us at the School Board office.

Thank you again for your patience and understanding,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. McDiarmid". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent flourish at the end.

Mike McDiarmid
Superintendent of Schools
School District #54 (Bulkley Valley)