

July 29, 2020

*(To read this letter in a language other than English, follow this link and use the Google Translation option:
<https://newwestschools.ca/september-return-to-full-time-instruction-for-most/>)*

Dear parents, students and staff,

As you may have heard, today the Provincial Government – led by both the Provincial Health Officer and the Minister for Education – announced most students will be returning to schools for full-time instruction in September.

We welcome this news as we know how important schools are to the development and growth of all kids ... for their learning needs as well as their social and emotional health. We also know how tough the last months have been and the many ways this will enable families to work with more certainty, access supports they count on through our schools and more.

As we act on the direction we've been given – and develop the best plan for New Westminister – we do so remaining committed to keeping the health and safety of kids, staff and families as our top priority, under the continued lead of the appropriate health and workplace-safety authorities.

We will also use the in-depth feedback you provided us in June to help steer and refine the plans that will allow us to meet this direction given today:

- **Students in both elementary and middle schools will see a full return to classroom time in September.**
- **All students attending our high school will also return to in-class instruction at that time, with more details coming later this summer on what that will look like. As one of the largest high schools in the province, New Westminister Secondary School falls into the category of schools that will need to look at a variety of options to safely maximize in-class learning ... and may need to offer a hybrid model that would include some remote or self-directed learning.**

In order to facilitate the return in a safe and measured way, the Province's updated five stage plan will shift to a cohort-based model – establishing set learning groups of staff and students and introducing new protocols that will maintain small circles of contact within our schools.

Elementary and middle schools will be organized in learning groups of 60, with older students better able to safely learn and distance in cohorts of up to 120 people ... reducing unnecessary exposure and keeping people safer through limiting contact.

This new model was developed under the guidance of many experts and stakeholder groups, and will continue to be relevant should we need to adjust phases at some later point.

As per today's announcement, we'll now be able to access additional funds to support new safety measures: increased cleaning and disinfection, additional hand-washing stations if necessary, optional reusable masks and more. Daily health assessments that were introduced in June will continue to be required. And we'll be looking at adjusting bell schedules and break times, new distancing measures and many other factors as we plan for new requirements and protocols.

We know there are still many questions to be answered. Work is still happening at a Provincial level to guide and direct the process, and much will need to be done locally as well. But this news today will allow us to start making concrete plans that will set both our District and each of our schools on the right path.

Please know we'll continue to communicate with you as we know more. You can anticipate that we'll be in touch again in the middle of August with an update, with final plans for each school ready by August 26th.

With warm wishes as we build for a new year,



Karim Hachlaf
Superintendent of Schools / CEO

