



March 4, 2020

Dear PVNC Families,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with some updated information about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

We understand and appreciate that this issue is on the minds of our students, parents and staff. The safety and well-being of our students and staff is always our main priority and the Board is working closely with the three public health units in our jurisdiction to ensure we receive and can communicate the most up-to-date information about this coronavirus.

As of this week, Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, has stated that there remains a low risk for Ontarians to contract COVID-19.

Since our last communication to you on this topic in late January, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), in collaboration with Canadian public health experts, has developed [guidance on the prevention and management of COVID-19 in schools and childcare settings](#). Our school operations continue to be in line with this guideline.

There is currently no widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Canada; therefore, PHAC recommends that schools take standard respiratory illness precautions, the same precautions that are recommended every year for cold and influenza season.

These precautions include:

- **Hand hygiene** - thoroughly washing hands with plain soap and water is recommended in school settings as the mechanical action of it is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes. In instances where hand washing sinks are not available, supervised use of alcohol based hand sanitizers (ABHS) containing at least 60% alcohol may be considered.
- **Respiratory etiquette** - respiratory etiquette in school settings includes covering the mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow, and disposing of used tissues in a plastic-lined waste container, followed by hand hygiene.
- **If you are ill with any flu-like or cold symptoms, stay home** - as always, we are asking students and staff who are ill to remain at home until they are feeling better. As is our normal practice, we continue to monitor student and staff absences daily and our schools keep Public Health informed of any significant spikes in absenteeism due to illness.

We continue to undertake our Proactive Outbreak Cleaning Protocol in all of our schools, which involves enhanced disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces.

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The use of masks in general are not recommended for those without symptoms to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Surgical masks in school settings are not recommended, as these are not settings where people are typically trained on their use, and there is a potential risk of infection with improper mask use and disposal.

Public Health is asking residents who return from recent international travel to affected areas such as China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore and South Korea to monitor themselves for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days after leaving the area of travel, and to contact their health-care provider and local health unit if they experience symptoms or think they may have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19.

We have created a new section on our website that includes connections with local and provincial health units: <https://www.pvnccdsb.on.ca/coronavirus-update/>

Most importantly, students who are sick should be kept home, and not attend either regular school or before/after school programs until they are free of symptoms. Together, we will continue to work to keep our students and staff safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mnasello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'M' being particularly large and stylized.

Michael Nasello
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

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