

December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Families:

As the Medical Officer of Health and Directors of Education, we remain united in our commitment and determination to create COVID-safe schools for all. With the number of cases on the rise in the northeast, we invite you to join us as we reaffirm our resolve to limit the spread and be vigilant with our actions at home, at school and in the community.

Our teams are working tirelessly—Public Health and Education together—to implement the provincial direction on COVID-19 prevention and management in schools. We all have a role to play in this critical effort, including parents/guardians, students, staff and community members. As a result of increased cases, we understand that families may be feeling scared, anxious, or unsettled. Our everyday actions either allow the virus to spread or stop the virus in its tracks.

Doing our part to prevent transmission in the community and in our schools will go a long way towards ensuring that outbreaks do not occur. Now is the time to choose our actions wisely to keep our schools and our school communities healthy and safe.

Here's how parents/guardians can help:

- Continue to screen for COVID-19 symptoms as part of your daily routine. Families can use the [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#) tool. Do not send your child(ren) to school if they have symptoms.
- Remind your child that if they leave school property during the school day (for example, during the lunch hour), it is important for them to continue to practice physical distancing, respect hygiene measures and to wear a mask.
- Avoid having close contacts and in-person interactions with those outside of your household. Although private gatherings of up to 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors are allowed under provincial legislation, non-essential gatherings of any size should be avoided.
- Remember that although students are placed in cohorts, being in the same cohort does not mean you ignore public health measures. Students should always practice measures such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette and wearing masks.
- Ensure that children who take the bus are wearing a face mask at the bus stop and during the entire ride. Students should also remain in their assigned seat.

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- Keep in mind that, as with all cases of COVID-19, Public Health will directly connect with any individuals in the school community who are affected to provide direction and support. This includes students, their parents and guardians, and school staff. Public Health works closely with school boards to gather information to perform case and contact follow up to determine next steps.
- Keep following the [Top 10 COVID-19 Basic Rules for Safe Schools](#) to get through the school year safely together. Practicing these simple but effective public health measures puts the brakes on virus spread.

The choices we make today, and in the future, will help keep our communities and schools safe. We want to thank parents, guardians, families, bus drivers, educators, custodial staff, and the entire school community for taking COVID-safe actions. As always, we ask everyone to be COVID-kind. Practice kindness, patience, and gratitude. Together, our actions can make a difference.

For more information about COVID-19 and schools, visit [COVID-19: Schools](#) or contact the Porcupine Health Unit at 705-267-1181 (Toll-free: 1-800-461-1818).

Signed,

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