

## **FISA Update - September 3, 2021**

### **2021 – 2022 School Start Up**

- FISA was grateful to receive a notice last week from the Ministry of Education informing us that independent schools will receive equitable and proportional funding targeting mental health supports for school communities. FISA continues to advocate for equal funding for independent schools when supplemental grants target public health initiatives that should be equitably accessed by all BC students.

These grants, mentioned in the August 27<sup>th</sup> DM Bulletin, include the final instalment of a 3-year Early Initiative Mental Health grant (\$472,290) and a one-time COVID-19 Recovery Mental Health grant (\$650,000). The FISA Board and the FISA Mental Health Committee (with representatives from the 5 FISA member associations) will collaborate to determine the best way these funds can support mental health and wellness in independent schools.

FISA is also aware that the DM announcement has caused some understandable confusion for independent schools. During last year's school start up schools received funding from both the federal and provincial governments to support COVID-19 health and safety compliance and the purchase of required items (masks, hand sanitizer, washing stations, cleaning supplies....). These above-mentioned grants are not targeted for these initiatives but instead the focus is on recovery and mental health supports.

- A separate, one-time grant to independent schools of \$1.2M to support health and safety compliance measures (similar to last year's provincial grant) will be distributed early in the school year to independent school authorities that operate Group 1, 2, and 3 schools, based on a school's Feb. 2021 FTE enrollment.

### **Provincial Outreach**

Plans were well underway for FISA to resume the Provincial Outreach and the FISA team was looking forward to visiting the different regions of the province where independent schools make a difference in the lives of their students. Unfortunately, the present public health orders and the uncertainty of future orders means it is prudent for FISA to delay face to face Pro D gatherings at this time.

My sincere appreciation to the independent schools that agreed to host these events, to Janet Dhanani for her efforts to coordinate these events and to the Pro D facilitators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, for their planning for an engaging and valuable day for independent school educators.

FISA is hopeful that the future public health status in BC will allow us to resume the Provincial Outreach sometime this school year. In the interim, the FISA Mental Health team is exploring virtual options to provide mental health and wellbeing supports for independent schools this year. More information to follow.

### **ArtStarts – Artists in Education (AIE) Grant**

AIE Grant applications are due to the FISA office by Friday, September 17, 2021. Group 1, 2, 3, and 4 schools are encouraged to apply to receive reimbursement of a portion of the professional artist fees for performances and workshops held in schools (in-person or virtually). Details can be found in the application form which is available [HERE](#). FISA thanks the BC Arts Council and the Province of BC for their generosity in making these grants possible.

## **FISA Update - August 27, 2021**

### **2021 – 2022 School Start Up**

- On August 23<sup>rd</sup> Dr. Henry announced the implementation of a vaccination passport for non-essential public gatherings. The BC vaccination passport requirement commences on September 13<sup>th</sup> but does not apply to regular school settings. FISA has requested further clarification on school events that may draw parents and guests to school sites and for school field trips to indoor public spaces.
- The PHO order on masks in public indoor settings does apply to K-12 schools and aligns with the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings and commenced on August 25<sup>th</sup>.
- The PHO and the Ministry of Education will be focusing on encouraging vaccinations for all that are eligible to receive one. Both the Fraser Health Authority and Vancouver Coastal Health Authority produced studies of COVID-19 cases in K-12 schools in their respective regions and the common theme was that vaccines are the most effective means to lowering case numbers and reducing the severity of illness for those who become infected with COVID-19. An increased provincial vaccination rate is also the most effective way to keep those unable to be vaccinated safe.
- The Ministry of Education has indicated that independent schools will not be required to supply weekly attendance reports to the Ministry at the start of this school year – as was the practice last year.
- In last week's DM Bulletin independent schools were asked to complete their First Nations September Restart Engagement Plans. Thank you for the schools that have submitted this form. All independent schools are expected to submit this form. If your school does not enroll on-reserve Indigenous students you can respond with "does not apply" on the template provided.

### **International Education Resources**

I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry of Education has added supporting materials to the Health and Wellness Guidelines on the International Education Website - which is now live.

The new materials include:

- Documents that support student-adult discussions on 3 topic areas;
  - Experiencing low mood/depression
  - Feeling stressed
  - Building Resilience
- A one-page student worksheet for each of the above topics, translated into Simplified Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese and;
- A Health and Wellness Resource directory.

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## **FISA Update - August 24, 2021**

### **2021 – 2022 School Start Up**

This morning Minister Whiteside provided an update to the K-12 Health and Safety guidelines. At the end of the last school year, we anticipated a move towards guidelines that would align more closely to pre-pandemic school operations. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 fourth wave is a reality and government and public health officials are responding with guidelines that promote safe and supportive school communities.

School leaders will need to spend some time with the health and safety documents released by the Ministry to answer the more nuanced questions you may have and to inform the updates to your Communicable Disease Plans (COVID-19 plans). Here are a few of the high-level themes:

- Vaccines will not be mandated for staff or students over the age of 12 that could be vaccinated. The government will focus on sharing credible scientific information to encourage greater vaccination levels across the province.
- To start this school year, all school staff and visitors are required to wear masks indoors.
- Grades 4 – 12 are required to wear masks indoors and on school busses.
- K – 3 students will be encouraged to wear masks indoors.
- Strict physical distancing guidelines (cohorts and 2 meters personal space) will be replaced by practices that respect personal space through effective utilization of school space and student movement. There will be no Ministry prescribed cohorts.
- There will be baseline PHO orders that will apply across the province but local health authorities may also activate medical health orders that reflect their region's context and public health experience.
- Cleaning protocols will more closely resemble pre-pandemic practices. Regulations on building ventilation remain similar with updates on the best practice for safe air movement.
- Extra-curricular school activities will resume and will be governed by the wider provincial or local health authority orders.

Important links:

This morning's press release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021EDUC0058-001663>

The August 24<sup>th</sup> version of the Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12

Schools: [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID\\_public\\_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf)

The August 24<sup>th</sup> version of the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12

Settings: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines.pdf>

## **FISA Update - August 20, 2021**

### **2021 – 2022 School Start Up – FISA Updates**

Many independent school leaders have either returned to their leadership posts or will be doing so soon. I truly hope you all were able to take time this summer to completely disconnect, after a year that required a herculean effort from K-12 leaders throughout the province. A special welcome to any new personnel that have accepted the call to leadership for their respective independent school authorities.

### **K-12 Health and Safety Guidelines**

The work of the Provincial Steering Committee and the Health and Safety Working Group recommenced on August 9<sup>th</sup>, with FISA providing an independent schools' voice at those tables. I would like to acknowledge and commend the Provincial Health Office and the Ministry of Education for their work on the K-12 health and safety documents over the summer. When these committees concluded their work in July our goal was to provide the K-12 system with revised guidelines by the end of this week. However,

with the recent increase in provincial COVID case counts and the prevalence of the Delta variant, we presently anticipate the release of these documents early next week.

It would be reasonable to expect a concerted push by the government and the education sector to encourage vaccinations for all people within the K-12 sector that are able to do so. You should also anticipate some form of mask requirements due to the present COVID-19 case numbers.

### **BC Center for Disease Control (BCCDC) Updates**

The BCCDC continually analyses COVID related data to support public health initiatives and policies. You can access this information at <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data>. What this data reveals:

- BC has experienced an impressive rate of vaccination when compared with other jurisdictions.
- A majority of recent COVID cases are the Delta variant and predominantly impact people that are not fully vaccinated.
- While recent provincial COVID cases have increased, the corresponding rate of hospitalizations and deaths are much lower.
- Regional variance exists for vaccination rates, case counts, hospitalizations and deaths, with predominantly higher rates experienced in areas with lower vaccination uptake.
- People that are fully vaccinated are far less likely to be infected with COVID and, if they are infected, the severity of their health outcomes is dramatically reduced.

### **Provincial Truth and Reconciliation Day**

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> the BC government announced that provincial employees will be granted a statutory holiday on September 30<sup>th</sup> this year. This will include public K-12 school employees that are governed by collective agreements with the provincial government, many of which include language that de facto applies to federally proclaimed statutory holidays. Independent schools will need to make decisions on how their communities will honour this day of Truth and Reconciliation. Possible options to consider:

- Align your schedule with the public K-12 sector and treat the day as a provincial statutory holiday.
- Consult with local Indigenous leaders to provide insight on how to make Truth and Reconciliation meaningful in your community.
- Designate September 30<sup>th</sup> as a non-instructional day and provide your staff with Truth and Reconciliation focused in-servicing.

The Ministry of Education has reduced the minimum hours of instruction by 5 hours for the 2021/22 school year (i.e. 845 hours instead of 850 hours).

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### **International Education Scholarship**

Due to budget constraints some of the BC international student scholarship programs that previously existed will not be available for the 2021 – 2022 school year. However, I am pleased to inform you that the **International Student Ambassador Pathways Scholarships** will continue to be available for independent school international students in 2021 - 2022. These scholarships are for international students graduating from Grade 12 at a BC school and transitioning to an approved BC post-secondary institution. Deadlines for this scholarship are fast approaching and further details and the application form can be found through the following [link](#).

The application forms have been modified from previous years and are now quite streamlined. If you have any questions on the application process, they can be directed to [bccie@bccie.bc.ca](mailto:bccie@bccie.bc.ca).

*The FISA office acknowledges that the land on which we gather and work is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlíl̓wətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.*

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