**FISA Update – March 25, 2022**

**FISA Fascinating Facts**

From 1977-78 to the 2021-22 school year, total enrollment for the BC K-12 sector has grown by **22.2%**(551,462 to 668,708). During that same period, independent school enrollment has increased by **279.2%**(23,691 to 89,825).

**COVID Updates**

* Students and staff members throughout the province will be returning from spring break with some noticeable changes to the COVID requirements school leaders have managed for the past couple of years.
* Mask use will be a personal choice and school leaders will promote respect for the choices staff and students will make.
* Social distancing is still suggested as a valuable public health tool that schools may want to consider in circumstances where crowding may occur, but capacity restrictions and class configurations can be adjusted to meet the school’s needs.
* With the anticipated removal of proof of vaccination status for most events and venues in early April, this should provide schools with greater opportunity to access field trips and plan important school community events like Grad or school performances.
* Visitors to schools will now be welcomed and schools can resume their pre-pandemic practices for visitors entering your school.
* It is recommended that schools continue to take a trauma informed approach when managing these changes to the COVID-19 practices and procedures.

***Erase*Training Sessions**[Registration](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/erase/documents/erase-training-schedule.pdf) is now open for several*erase* training sessions taking place in May 2022. While all of these virtual training sessions are highly recommended the only training that meets the independent school compliance requirements is the “Overview of the Provincial Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Protocol and Digital Threat Assessment (DTA)”.

·         [Overview of the Provincial VTRA & DTA May 5, 2022](https://event-wizard.com/OverviewVTRADTAOnlineMay52022/0/register/)

·         [Overview of the Provincial VTRA & DTA May 31, 2022](https://event-wizard.com/OverviewDTAVTRAOnlineMay312022/0/register/)

*Erase* training is current for 3 school years. Training completed in 2019/20 will expire at the conclusion of this school year – June 30, 2022.

**National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**Yesterday’s [Special DM Bulletin](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220324/DM_Ind_School_Special_Bulletin_March_24_2022.pdf) asked independent schools to plan to not be in operation on September 30, 2022, in honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The BC government is presently in consultation with Indigenous leaders to determine how September 30th could best support Truth and Reconciliation (Statutory Holiday, Day of Study…) and FISA will continue to engage with the Ministry of Education on this topic and share any updates with our member schools.

**Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for Registered Homeschooled Students**

The next phase of the RAT distribution is to focus on distribution to BC homeschool students. In consultation with the MoE we have agreed on the following procedures.

·           If your school registers homeschool students, you should communicate with them to determine if they are interested in receiving a RAT package (please provide at least 3 days for these families to respond to this offer).

·           FISA then asks that **all independent schools complete a short survey** that will identify if you register homeschool students and, if so, the number of RAT kits required for the homeschooled students registered at your school that have requested a RAT package. For schools that register homeschoolers if you already have a sufficient number of kits on hand through previous deliveries to accommodate the homeschoolers' requests, please indicate a 0 on the survey. **If your school has not yet responded, please complete this**[**2-minute survey**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HSRATRequest)**no later than March 29th.**

·           FISA will forward this information to the MoE and they will arrange for the shipping to your site.

·           Independent schools will not be responsible for the mailing of these packages to their registered homeschool families (although you may choose to do so). Schools will determine the procedures the homeschool families must follow to receive their RAT packages (pick up at the school, pay for shipping…).

**Hours of Instruction**

Due to the PHO-imposed delayed post-Christmas school restart in January (4 days), FISA requested that the required hours of instruction be reduced to reflect this unforeseen closure. FISA received confirmation this week that the MoE will make the appropriate internal actions to make these adjustments (i.e. amend the [Educational Standards Order MO 41/91](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/independent-schools/educational-standards-for-independent-schools#:~:text=General%20Curriculum%20Requirements&text=450%20hours%20of%20instruction%20for,for%20Grades%201%20to%209.)). This is an important action, as independent schools’ per student funding (ES Audit) is dependent on minimum hours of instruction each year. **Resources**The Métis Nation BC is providing access for the K-12 sector to learning resources **(see attached flyer)** that will provide direct access to the Métis culture.

 **Invitation to Participate in a Youth Substance-Use Professional Learning Community**

You’re invited to attend a new, K-12 virtual Professional Learning Community (PLC) where you will learn about and share school-centred approaches to prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms for youth.

This PLC will provide a safe space to explore your practice, share strategies and receive web-based resources to support your work to prevent, delay and reduce substance-related harms for youth.

These one hour sessions every two months will be co-facilitated by [Art Steinmann and Cindy Andrew](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14efhs19ZtzueEUjVsg5uw9dAT8oE41kT/view?usp=sharing) who have decades of experience in comprehensive, school-based health and substance use related efforts.

**Who can Join?**

Anyone working in the BC K-12 education system who has a responsibility or interest in promoting and supporting the health and well-being of students including preventing, delaying and reducing substance use harms.

**What’s the Commitment?**

None. Attend if and when you can. We appreciate that people have multiple commitments and limited time, so it’s up to you how often you join. Members will help to shape our meetings to help ensure they meet the collective needs of participants.

**Details**

The first PLC will take place virtually on **Thursday April 7, 2022.**

Please share your availability when you register.

Once registered, you will receive a ZOOM link. **Register**[**HERE**](https://forms.gle/9Pm6KMDu7pYLx6Vu7)

**School Bus Purchases**Independent schools that are considering a new bus purchase should read the **attached message** from the Association of School Transportation Services of BC. The ASTSBC has secured standing offer prices for school buses from March 21, 2022 to June 10, 2022. The prices are “Free on Board” for each purchaser’s receiving location and includes delivery, packaging, crating, and unloading costs anywhere in BC.

**Coast Capital Youth Education Awards**

FISA manages the distribution of the Coast Capital Youth Education Award on behalf of Coast Capital Savings. This year FISA has been provided with 2 awards in the amount of $3,500 each. Please see the FISA [Scholarship and Awards](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/) page for more information and the application form. Youth Education Award submissions are due April 8, 2022. Please email the completed application form to info@fisabc.ca.

**BC School Sports**BC School Sports is pleased to provide over $30,000 in scholarships available to student-athletes this year.  Please pass this on to whoever at your school assists students with scholarships. The application **deadline is** **Monday, May 2nd, 2022 at 4PM**. The Scholarship package can be found [here](https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/member-services/scholarships).

**FISA Update – March 18, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

·         As a reminder for schools with non-traditional spring breaks,these independent schools can rescind mandatory mask use, based on the start date of spring break for the public school district in which their school resides.

·         Mask use for K-12 students, staff, and visitors now aligns with the individual’s personal health choices. Schools should support and respect individual choices. The VCHRRT team has developed mask signage which may assist in efforts to create a supportive environment **(attached message)**.

·         Schools are recommended to continue to take a trauma informed approach when managing shifts in COVID-19 practices and procedures. Many independent school personnel will recall that the 2019 FISA Provincial Outreach Pro-D series featured Dr. Linda O’Neill’s work on Trauma Informed Classrooms. The resources provided by Dr. O’Neill continue to be of relevance and can be downloaded from the [Pro-D section of the FISA website](https://fisabc.ca/professional-learning/provincial-outreach/). The Ministry also has developed a series of online [Trauma Informed Practice workshop packages](https://mytrainingbc.ca/traumainformedpractice/) which can be used to facilitate individual or staff Pro-D.

·         We also encourage independent school leaders and educators to reacquaint themselves with FISA's [WellBeingBC website](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/). This website has a plethora of classroom tested strategies and approaches to promote mental health and social emotional learning. The [Schoolwide Assessment & Growth Plan Toolkit](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/school-toolkit) may be of particular interest to schools that are seeking a way to assess their school’s climate and culture as part of their COVID-19 recovery plans.

·         The Ministry of Education has confirmed that the work of the 6 Rapid Response Teams will continue to the end of this school year. At this point the RRTs are still awaiting specific details on the RRT deliverables but we anticipate a greater focus on proactive, recovery related initiatives.
FISA is presently crafting a survey for independent schools to determine the areas where the ISRRT can best serve the needs of our sector.

**Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for Registered Homeschooled Students**

The BC government has committed to providing each student in the K-12 system with a package of 5 RATs. FISA greatly appreciates the efforts independent schools have provided to make this public health initiative possible. Brick and mortar schools managed the initial distribution phase and the Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS) have been managing the second phase of this distribution, with the unique challenges inherent with enrolling students from throughout the province.

The next phase of the RAT distribution is to focus on distribution to BC homeschool students. In consultation with the MoE we have agreed on the following procedures.

·           If your school registers homeschool students, you should communicate with them to determine if they are interested in receiving a RAT package (please provide at least 3 days for these families to respond to this offer).

·           FISA then asks that all independent schools complete a short survey that will identify if you register homeschool students and, if so, the number of RAT kits required for the homeschooled students registered at your school that have requested a RAT package. **If your school has not yet responded, please complete this**[**2-minute survey**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HSRATRequest)**no later than March 29th.**

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**Hours of Instruction**Due to the PHO-imposed delayed post-Christmas school restart in January (4 days), FISA requested that the required hours of instruction be reduced to reflect this unforeseen closure. FISA received confirmation this week that the MoE will make the appropriate internal actions to make these adjustments (i.e. amend the [Educational Standards Order MO 41/91](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/independent-schools/educational-standards-for-independent-schools#:~:text=General%20Curriculum%20Requirements&text=450%20hours%20of%20instruction%20for,for%20Grades%201%20to%209.)). This is an important action, as independent schools’ per student funding (ES Audit) is dependent on minimum hours of instruction each year.

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**FISA Update – March 11, 2022**

**In addition to the weekly update information, please see the attached March 2022 edition of the FISA Newsletter and Bulletin.**

Many independent schools were anxiously awaiting the news that [Dr. Bonnie Henry](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022HLTH0081-000324) and the [Ministry of Education](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220310/march-2022-summary-of-changes---communicable-disease-guidelines.pdf) delivered yesterday. I am sure you are all up to date with these announcements but there are a couple of questions that have come FISA’s way that may require some clarification.

* **Independent Schools with Non-traditional Spring Breaks:** Dr. Henry’s announcement yesterday rescinded the requirement for mask use in most public spaces as of today. The move towards optional mask use for staff and students in the K-12 sector will align with the start of their spring break, which varies for independent schools and school districts around the province. FISA recognized there are independent schools that do not schedule traditional March spring breaks and engaged with the Ministry of Education and the PHO to provide direction for these schools.

The directive for these independent schools that do not have a scheduled March break is that they can rescind mandatory mask use, based on the start date of spring break in the public school district where they reside.
Therefore, if your school is located in a SD where their spring break commences at the end of the school day on March 11th - school staff and students can make their personal mask wearing decisions when they return to school on Monday, March 14th. If your school is located in a SD where their spring break commences at the end of the school day on March 18th - school staff and students can make their personal mask wearing decisions when they return to school on Monday, March 21st.
* **School Transportation:** Once the mask mandate has been rescinded for your school (when spring break commences) mask use is no longer required on school busses.
* **Spring Break programming:** For schools holding camps, practices, tutorial sessions, etc. during spring break mask use for attendees and staff is optional.
* Schools are recommended to continue to take a trauma informed approach when managing shifts in COVID-19 practices and procedures. Many independent school personnel will recall that the 2019 FISA Provincial Outreach Pro-D series featured Dr. Linda O’Neill’s work on Trauma Informed Classrooms. The resources provided by Dr. O’Neill continue to be of relevance and can be downloaded from the Pro-D section of the [FISA website](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/).
* We also encourage independent school leaders and educators to reacquaint themselves with FISA's [WellBeingBC](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/) website. This website has a plethora of classroom tested strategies and approaches to promote mental health and social emotional learning. The [Schoolwide Assessment & Growth Plan Toolkit](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/school-toolkit) may be of particular interest to schools that are seeking a way to assess their school’s climate and culture as part of their COVID-19 recovery plans.

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* If your school registers homeschool students you should communicate with them to determine if they are interested in receiving a RAT package (please provide at least 3 days for these families to respond to this offer).
* FISA then asks that **all** independent schools complete a very [short survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HSRATRequest) that will identify the number of RAT kits required for the homeschooled students registered at your school – if any.
* FISA will forward this information to the MoE and they will arrange for the shipping to your site.
* Independent schools will not be responsible for the mailing of these packages to their registered homeschool families (although you may choose to do so). Schools will determine the procedures the homeschool families must follow to receive their RAT packages (pick up at the school, pay for shipping…).

**Independent Schools with Childcare Centres**

As anticipated, the accountability for childcare will transition to the MoE in April 2022. While there will be no immediate change for childcare operators as the result of this move of accountability from one ministerial agency to another, the government is seeking feedback regarding ways to improve and enhance BC’s childcare sector. Independent schools that have affiliated childcare programs are strongly encouraged to participate in the [virtual Focus Groups](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/childcarebc-engagement/focus-group-registration) and/or complete the [online Feedback Form](https://feedback.engage.gov.bc.ca/727126?lang=en) (accessible until March 17th). FISA will continue to meet with MoE officials to assist in creating policies and programs that take into account the wide variety of fulsome early learning and care opportunities provided within independent school communities. To assist FISA in the objective, an ad hoc Childcare Committee has been created with representatives selected by the Association Heads.

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**FISA Update – March 4, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

·         Once again this week we are hearing from public health officials that the COVID-related metrics that inform public health policy are improving. Senior PHO and BC political officials are also hinting at the inevitability of upcoming changes to community and school guidelines. I think it is also fair to say that BC has historically taken a more measured approach to the relaxing of public health restrictions.

·         I greatly appreciate the discussions at the Steering Committee (SC) that give a voice to medical experts, Ministry personnel and the K-12 stakeholders. As Dr. Henry prepares to make possible revisions, there is strong support for school and community guidelines to align as closely as possible. There is also consensus that there is great value in providing comprehensive rationales for any upcoming revisions to school-related guidelines.

·         Dr. Henry has established March 15th and April 12th as the dates when existing orders will be reviewed and possibly amended.

·         With spring break occurring soon, schools should share with their families the recent changes to the [entry requirements](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2022/02/government-of-canada-lightens-border-measures-as-part-of-transition-of-the-pandemic-response.html) for those that return to Canada after travelling abroad - effective February 28th. Of particular interest for independent schools is the change to the requirement restricting student school attendance for 14 days after their return to Canada:

o   Children under 12 years old, travelling with fully vaccinated adults, will continue to be exempt from quarantine, without any prescribed conditions limiting their activities. This means, for example, they no longer need to wait 14 days before attending school, camp or daycare.

·         The province continues to promote vaccinations as one of the most effective ways to mitigate negative public health outcomes. Health Canada authorized the use of the [Novavax](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/vaccines-for-covid-19) protein-based vaccine on February 17, 2022. This vaccine is available to people aged 18 and older. Having access to a variety of COVID-19 vaccine options may assist people in managing their personal health choices and contribute to increasing COVID-19 community immunity.

·         Schools are recommended to continue to take a trauma informed approach when managing shifts in COVID-19 practices and procedures. Many independent school personnel will recall that the 2019 FISA Provincial Outreach Pro-D series featured Dr. Linda O’Neill’s work on Trauma Informed Classrooms. The resources provided by Dr. O’Neill continue to be of relevance and can be downloaded from the [Pro-D section](https://fisabc.ca/professional-learning/provincial-outreach/) of the FISA website.

·         We also encourage independent school leaders and educators to reacquaint themselves with FISA's [WellBeingBC](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/) website. This website has a plethora of classroom tested strategies and approaches to promote mental health and social emotional learning. The [Schoolwide Assessment & Growth Plan Toolkit](https://www.wellbeingbc.ca/school-toolkit) may be of particular interest to schools that are seeking a way to assess their school’s climate and culture as part of their COVID-19 recovery plans.

**Independent Online Education**

As a result of the Funding Model Review (FMR 2019), which did not include consultations with independent schools, changes were proposed for online education in BC. Subsequently Bill 8 was passed (March 2020). This Bill provides the opportunity for public and independent brick and mortar schools to provide online course programming for students. In public schools this opportunity is restricted to students within the boundaries of their district. Since independent brick and mortar schools do not have a defined “district” or “geographical catchment”, an MoE policy will need to be created and FISA is actively advocating for a policy that meets the needs of our schools and their respective enrollment catchments.

For existing online schools, they operate under an agreement with the Minister of Education and have historically had the opportunity to enroll students throughout the province. Many public online schools did not exercise this option and focused their online programming to serve students within their district. This is not the case for the 16 Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS). Throughout their existence, PIOS have enrolled and provided educational services to students from all corners of the province – providing quality learning program accessibility, relevance, and choice to BC families.

One of the post-Bill 8 online policy initiatives the MoE is progressing with is the creation of approved provincial online learning schools. For online schools that would like to continue to offer accessibility to their programming for students from around the province, they will need to apply and receive Minister approval to operate as a provincial service provider. BC public online schools have recently gone through this application process and many BC education stakeholders are awaiting the announcement of which public online schools were successful in their bid to be designated a provincial public online learning school, starting in the 2022 – 2023 school year.

PIOS are awaiting a similar application process for independent online schools, even though PIOS have always been designated provincial online learning schools. FISA advocates for the continuation of this opportunity for all the PIOS interested in keeping this designation, due to the foundational principles of online learning (accessibility, relevance and choice) and the uniqueness of independent online school programming that is inclusive of BC’s pluralistic society and its diverse student population.

FISA is appreciative of the inclusive consultation the MoE has facilitated, post the FMR and Bill 8. An integral part of this consultation occurred earlier this school year when online parent focus group sessions were hosted by SFU’s Wosk Centre for Dialogue. [A summary report “What We Heard”](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/support/online-learning/what_we_heard_report-_ol_learning_parent_forums.pdf) is now public and I encourage you to review this document to get a sense of the value PIOS play in supporting BC families and the diverse student learning needs within the K-12 sector.

**Independent Schools with Childcare Centres**

As anticipated, the accountability for childcare will transition to the MoE in April 2022. While there will be no immediate change for childcare operators as the result of this move of accountability from one ministerial agency to another, the government is seeking feedback regarding ways to improve and enhance BC’s childcare sector. Independent schools that have affiliated childcare programs are strongly encouraged to participate in the [virtual Focus Groups](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/childcarebc-engagement/focus-group-registration) and/or complete the [online Feedback Form](https://feedback.engage.gov.bc.ca/727126?lang=en) (accessible until March 17th). FISA will continue to meet with MoE officials to assist in creating policies and programs that take into account the wide variety of fulsome early learning and care opportunities provided within independent school communities. To assist FISA in the objective, an ad hoc Childcare Committee has been created. Please connect with your association head for more information regarding serving on this committee.

**FISA Mental Health & Wellness Coordinators Update**

Earlier this morning, FISA’s Mental Health Coordinators, Jamie Morris & Michelle Hussey, facilitated a webinar with [Foundry BC](https://foundrybc.ca/). A recording of this webinar is available for viewing in the [Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/) on the FISA website. The attendees expressed astonishment of the wealth of free mental health services provided by Foundry BC for young people ages 12-24 and their parents/guardians. Please promote Foundry BC within your school community.

**Provincial Assessments**

As part of the February 11th DM Bulletin the Ministry provided further information as to steps to take for students who are on track to graduate prior to the next Provincial Assessment administration period in April 2022. Please read the [FAQ sheet](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/exams/graduation-assessments.pdf) for details. Additional questions can be directed to exams@gov.bc.ca

**District Authority Scholarships (DAS) and Coast Capital Youth Education Awards**

The application due date for submitting the online application form for the DAS award is fast approaching for most regions of the province (the Vancouver Island region deadline has already past. Please see the [Scholarship and Awards](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/) page on the FISA website for more information and application forms.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Application** | **Portfolio/Evidence** |
| Vancouver Island/Gulf Islands | February 25 | April 15 |
| Fraser Valley | March 8 | April 11 |
| Interior & Northern | March 8 | April 11 |
| Metro Vancouver | March 11 | Late April |

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BC School Sports offers Awards to its member schools, staff, and coaches. Do you know someone in your school community who goes above and beyond with your sports programs? Or a school that you think should be recognized? Nominate them today! Click on this [link](https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/member-services/awards) for the full Awards package. **Deadline to submit nominations is Wednesday, March 9th, 2022**. One submission per award. If you have any letters of support you would like to include with your submission please email them to info@bcschoolsports.ca

**FISA Update – February 25, 2022**

This week marked the first time the FISA Board was able to meet face to face since January 2020. There was a palpable sense of joy and relief that our dedicated Board members could engage in face to face conversations and not have to respond to “sorry, we can’t hear you, you’re muted” – even though we have all become much better at navigating the virtual meeting conventions since 2020.

This meeting also provided the Board with an opportunity to meet the new Deputy Minister of Education & Childcare, Christina Zacharuk (she joined the meeting virtually). The introductory meeting was friendly, and I was impressed with the DM’s thoughtful responses to the issues the Board identified as requiring further/future engagement with the Ministry. FISA looks forward to future independent school advocacy opportunities with DM Zacharuk.

**COVID Updates**

* We are happy to state that the BCCDC is reporting a positive trajectory in the key pandemic indicators they monitor (cases and hospitalizations). The Ministry of Education (MoE) is also reporting a return to near normal attendance rates for students and staff in most of the province. It is very positive news that no independent schools reported a school or class functional closure this week.
* The Steering Committee (SC) is presently reviewing potential communication to the K-12 sector that will reflect the inevitable changes to the existing PHO orders and the BCCDC and MoE guidelines. There is acknowledgement that there are both sustainable (hand washing, stay home when you are sick) and unsustainable (Proof of Vaccination, mandatory mask use) public health practices that are included in these orders and guidelines. The unsustainable practices have a lifespan contingent upon being effective in meeting public health objectives. The sustainable practices can live on as positive public health legacies from COVID. Therefore, we can be confident that gathering restrictions, mask use requirements and POVs will cease – but when?
	+ Dr. Henry has established March 15th and April 12th as the dates when her orders may be revised, informed by a review of the prevailing public health data. There is also a strong commitment on the SC to move towards greater alignment between community and K-12 orders and guidelines. To promote this alignment, an announcement of potential changes to the K-12 guidelines must align with the aforementioned dates.
* FISA requested a review of the requirement for schools to track and report daily staff and student attendance. The MoE reported on who receives this data (shared with the MoE and the regional School Medical Health Officers) and what it is used for (to provide a profile of illness prevalence to inform regional public health supports). There was an expressed desire to cease the collection of this data once it is determined it no longer provides the information health officials need to effectively deal with COVID issues.
* With spring break occurring soon, schools may want to share with their families the recent changes to the [entry requirements](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2022/02/government-of-canada-lightens-border-measures-as-part-of-transition-of-the-pandemic-response.html) for those that return to Canada after travelling abroad - effective February 28th. Of particular interest for independent schools is the change to the requirement restricting student school attendance for 14 days after their return to Canada:
	+ Children under 12 years old, travelling with fully vaccinated adults, will continue to be exempt from quarantine, without any prescribed conditions limiting their activities. This means, for example, they no longer need to wait 14 days before attending school, camp or daycare.
* The distribution of the **Rapid Antigen Test**(RAT) kits for students is proceeding at a swifter pace than originally forecasted. Many rural and remote schools have reported receiving their allotment along with a handful of schools in metro areas. As explained in a February 15th Special DM Update, each student is to be provided a 5-pack box of tests to have at home to use if needed. Schools are requested to distribute the [MoE’s Letter to Families](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220215/rapid-test---letter-to-famlies20220215.pdf) when sending the kits home with the students.
* **Personal Protective Equipment** (PPE). The MoE has received a large donation of PPE (disposable masks, gloves, face shields, gowns, sanitizers) which will be made available to schools and districts upon request. Look for an announcement soon with details as how to order PPE through this offering. Note: the PPE will be distributed free of charge on a first come, first served basis. Participating schools are responsible for paying the shipping costs.

**BC Budget Highlights**

The BC budget was released on Tuesday, February 22nd and the most notable change for the K-12 sector was the inclusion of Childcare into the MoE budget. Of particular interest to independent schools:

* The total budget for the Ministry of Education and Childcare for 2022/23 is **$8.2 Billion**
* Independent schools are projected to receive **$490,795,000** in 2022/23
* This represents a **$17,483,000** increase for independent schools in 2022/23
* Independent schools are projected to receive **6.76%** of the K-12 total operating grant (in 2021/22 independent schools accounted for **13.3%** of BC student enrollment)

**FISA Mental Health & Wellness Coordinators Update**

The FISA Mental Health coordinators, Jamie Morris & Michelle Hussey, are pleased to facilitate the following webinar event for independent schools:

**Introduction to Foundry Health & Wellness Supports**

**When: Mar 4, 2022 at 9:30-10:30 AM Pacific Time**

FISA is pleased to partner with [Foundry BC](https://foundrybc.ca/)to host an upcoming Q & A session for all independent schools. This virtual conversation will be an excellent opportunity for you to directly engage with Foundry to learn more about what services, support, and resources they offer students across the province. Foundry offers regional and virtual services aimed at supporting young people ages 12 - 24 with health and wellness resources, services and supports. To learn more about Foundry in advance of this conversation, please check out their website: <https://foundrybc.ca/>

Register in advance for this meeting:

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**Independent Schools with Childcare Centres**

As anticipated, the accountability for childcare will transition to the MoE in April 2022. There will be no immediate change for childcare operators as the result of this move of accountability from one government jurisdiction to another. FISA met with personnel from the MoE and MCFD to discuss possible implications for independent schools that provide a wide variety of fulsome early learning and care opportunities (pre-school, daycare, before & after school care) for BC families.

The FISA Board approved the creation of an **Ad Hoc Childcare Committee**,  comprised of representatives from each of the five associations, in order to ensure that our interactions with government in this area match the needs and expectations from the field. The Association Heads will provide further information as to committee membership.

On February 7th the government announced that licensed childcare providers will receive a special [Health and Safety Grant of $160 per space](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022CFD0003-000171). These funds can be used by childcare operators to buy cleaning supplies, sanitizers or masks, to hire an external company to clean, or additional staff to cover absences due to illness.

**District Authority Scholarships (DAS)**

The independent school sector has been allotted 427 DAS awards for 2021/22. These awards are managed through the four regional DAS committees. Each region has a multi-step process, of which the first step is to complete an online application form prior to Spring Break and thereafter submit evidence of achievement in April.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Application** | **Portfolio/Evidence** |
| Vancouver Island/Gulf Islands | February 25 | April 15 |
| Fraser Valley | March 8 | April 11 |
| Interior & Northern | March 8 | April 11 |
| Metro Vancouver | March 11 | Late April |

Application forms are available on the FISA website under the “[Services](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/)” tab.

**BC School Sports**

BC School Sports is pleased to provide over $30,000 in scholarships available to student-athletes this year.  Please pass this on to whoever at your school assists students with scholarships. The application **deadline is** **Monday, May 2nd, 2022 at 4PM**. The Scholarship package can be found on the website or on this [link](https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/member-services/scholarships).

BC School Sports offers Awards to its member schools, staff, and coaches. Do you know someone in your school community who goes above and beyond with your sports programs? Or a school that you think should be recognized? Nominate them today! Click on this [link](https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/member-services/awards) for the full Awards package. **Deadline to submit nominations is Wednesday, March 9th, 2022**. One submission per award. If you have any letters of support you would like to include with your submission please email them to info@bcschoolsports.ca

**FISA Update – February 18, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

·       Dr. Henry’s February 15th announcement, lifting most of the restrictions contained in the [Gathering and Events Order](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-gatherings-events.pdf) was met with good cheer by many, and the subsequent cancellation of the MoE and BCCDC Addendums provide even more heartening news. Schools should now revert to the practices and procedures which were in place prior to Winter Break as detailed in the [MoE’s 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-guidlines.pdf) and the [BCCDC’s Guidance for K-12 Schools](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf). These documents are under review by the Steering Committee with an eye towards removing references to contract tracing and aligning with community protocols as much as possible.

·       The federal government has announced changes to the [entry requirements](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2022/02/government-of-canada-lightens-border-measures-as-part-of-transition-of-the-pandemic-response.html) for those that return to Canada after travelling abroad effective February 28th. Of particular interest for schools is the change to the requirement restricting student school attendance for 14 days after their return to Canada:

o   Children under 12 years old, travelling with fully vaccinated adults, will continue to be exempt from quarantine, without any prescribed conditions limiting their activities. This means, for example, they no longer need to wait 14 days before attending school, camp or daycare.

·       This past week no independent school reported staffing challenges severe enough to warrant a functional closure and only a couple of schools experienced low student attendance rates. This is certainly a trend we hope will continue.

·       The January 21st DM Bulletin mentioned a BCPSEA guidance document on suggested protocols for the collection of vaccination status information. FISA thanks the BCPSEA for sharing this document with the IS sector – attached. Note: the BCPSEA guidance is written for public employers which are under FIPPA regulations. Independent school employers are under PIPA regulations. Schools choosing to use the guidance will need to revise it per PIPA standards. To be clear, independent school authorities have not been tasked with collecting vaccination status information, although they may do so if the school authority determines that a policy of such nature is beneficial to their school context.

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On February 7th the government announced that licensed childcare providers will receive a special [Health and Safety Grant of $160 per space](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022CFD0003-000171). These funds can be used by childcare operators to buy cleaning supplies, sanitizers or masks, to hire an external company to clean, or additional staff to cover absences due to illness.

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|  |  |  |
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| **Region** | **Application** | **Portfolio/Evidence** |
| Vancouver Island/Gulf Islands | February 25 | April 15 |
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Register in advance for this meeting:
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**FISA Update – February 11, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

This past week the independent school sector reported a miniscule number of functional closures and student absenteeism concerns due to illness. This encouraging trend is welcomed as we approach the end of what is historically considered the respiratory illness season (cold & flu).

Next Tuesday, February 15th, Dr. Henry will provide an update on the status of the existing public health orders that were in response to the Omicron variant. This information will inform the work of the Provincial Steering Committee (SC) and the application and duration of the public health and MoE addendums. This information will also be used by the SC to determine future revisions to the K-12 guidelines.

While recognizing we are in a very different place now regarding COVID-19 case management, it may be of interest to look back at the confirmed exposures and cases experienced by independent schools from Sept. to Dec. 2021. The attached report provides a quick overview as to how we fared as a system.

·         The Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits intended for distribution to school staff (2 tests/employee) have been received by the school districts, who have connected with independent schools in their region with pick up details. If your school has not received instructions as to how to retrieve your allotment, please contact ISCOVIDLead@fisabc.ca for assistance.

·         The deployment of RAT kits for K-12 students attending rural and remote schools is scheduled to commence next week. Each student will be allocated 1 box (containing 5 tests) and Independent schools located in the [17 prioritized districts](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220201/rapid-antigen-test-deployment-is.pdf) will receive their shipments directly and are not required to collect their allotments from their local school district.

·         The Ministry is coordinating the distribution of the RAT kits for First Nations schools through FNESC. The kits will be shipped directly to the First Nations schools and contain sufficient kits for the distribution of 2 tests per staff member and a 5-pack box of tests to each family enrolled.

·         The Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD) has begun distributing [250,000 RAT kits to the childcare operators](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022CFD0002-000119). This has caused some confusion among independent schools that operate childcare facilities in addition to K-12 programs. For RAT kits delivered directly to the school or to an authority office this past week, or arriving in the upcoming week, please check to see who is listed on the address label. It is likely that these kits are intended for the childcare program.

**Independent Schools with Childcare Centres**

As anticipated, the accountability for childcare will transition to the MoE in April 2022. There will be no immediate change for childcare operators as the result of this move of accountability from one government jurisdiction to another. FISA has been invited to meet with personnel from the MoE and MCFD to discuss how independent schools contribute to ensuring a wide variety of fulsome early learning and care opportunities (pre-school, daycare, before & after school care) for BC families.

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**Make a Future**

Many independent schools have contracted with [Make a Future](https://www.makeafuture.ca/) (MaF) to support them with their human resources recruiting. We are approaching the end of a 3-year agreement (March 31, 2022) between independent schools and MaF that provided consistent fees for the duration of the agreement. FISA is working with MaF to establish a new 3-year agreement for independent school employers that would like to continue their relationship with MaF. We anticipate a marginal fee increase to the 2019 – 2022 costs and we are pursuing fee consistency for the next 3-years.

You can expect more information soon.

**FISA Mental Health & Wellness Coordinators Update**

The FISA Mental Health coordinators, Jamie Morris & Michelle Hussey, are pleased to facilitate the following two webinar events for independent schools:

**1)**   **Compassionate Systems Leadership #2 with Dr. Shirley Giroux**
**When: Feb 18, 2022 1:30 - 3:00 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtcuytrzsqGdGaZSVcMWf6VU5sxy6XC4op**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtcuytrzsqGdGaZSVcMWf6VU5sxy6XC4op)

FISA will host our 2nd CLS webinar with Dr. Shirley Giroux. CLS encourages a deliberate focus on creating and nourishing a school culture where everyone feels safe, connected, and respected. A recording of the Dec. 7th session is available for viewing in the [FISA Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/). Learn more about Dr. Giroux’s [work with CSL here](https://systemsawareness.digication.com/shirley-giroux-project/about).

**2)**   **Introduction to Foundry Health & Wellness Supports**

**When: Mar 4, 2022 at 9:30-10:30 AM Pacific Time**

FISA is pleased to partner with [Foundry BC](https://foundrybc.ca/)to host an upcoming Q & A session for all independent schools. This virtual conversation will be an excellent opportunity for you to directly engage with Foundry to learn more about what services, support, and resources they offer students across the province. Foundry offers regional and virtual services aimed at supporting young people ages 12 - 24 with health and wellness resources, services and supports. To learn more about Foundry in advance of this conversation, please check out their website: <https://foundrybc.ca/>
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**FISA Update – February 4, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

FISA is happy to report that BC independent schools have not experienced a functional closure for nearly two weeks. We report this knowing that the Omicron variant is still quite active in BC communities and independent schools have experienced staff absences due to illness. Therefore, I would like to make a special acknowledgement for the efforts by independent school leaders, teachers, EAs and support staff members who have gone above and beyond, often taking on non-traditional roles, to ensure their schools could continue to provide uninterrupted learning for their students.

·       FISA was pleased to see the Ministry of Education (MoE) revised their regulations to allow schools to host and participate in sports tournaments. FISA continues to advocate for alignment between PHO orders and the K–12 guidelines, when it makes sense to do so.

·       The Rapid Antigen Tests (R.A.T.) targeted for distribution to independent school staff members have been shipped but, as of today, we are aware some school districts have yet to receive their orders (that include the independent school orders within their district). The latest update from the MoE is that most school districts have received their allotment of tests, but some are still in transit.

·       These R.A.T. kits will come with [deployment instructions](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220114/rapid-test-deployment-information.pdf) (2 per staff member) and this [letter](https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20220114/rapid-test-letter-to-school-staff.pdf) should be distributed to staff before the distribution of the tests. School employees should be encouraged to follow the BCCDC “[When to get a COVID-19 test](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/when-to-get-a-covid-19-test)” guidance, which includes the recommendation that people with mild symptoms do not need to take a test. Mild symptoms are those that can be managed at home. The BCCDC advises that people with mild symptoms should stay home and away from others until they feel well enough to return to regular activities and they no longer have a fever.

·       The Ministry is coordinating the distribution of the R.A.T. kits for First Nations schools through FNESC. The kits will be shipped directly to the First Nations schools and contain sufficient kits for the distribution of 2 tests per staff member and a 5-pack box of tests to each family enroled.

·       Independent schools are dutifully monitoring their daily student attendance/absenteeism and monitoring for “activity signals”. What we have learned over the last couple of weeks is that your local Health Authority (HA) has their own recommended protocols for determining baseline attendance rates and that few schools reach a threshold of concern. Please continue to reach out to your respective Association Leads when you believe you may have reached an activity signal threshold so they can review your data and determine if further action is needed.

Reaching an activity signal does not result in a class or school closure. Your local HA reviews absenteeism data, when brought forward after schools have consulted with their Association Lead and FISA, and may provide a letter to be distributed which notifies your school community as to elevated absenteeism due to illness.

**Middle Years Development Index (MDI)**

The FISA Mental Health Coordinators want to remind schools that are not yet signed up to complete the [Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)](https://discovermdi.ca/) survey with their grade 4 and 8 students that **it is not too late to participate!**

We recognize and appreciate that there is a lot to juggle these days, however the data that schools, associations, and FISA get from engaging with the MDI surveys is immensely valuable (and thanks to funding from the Ministry of Education, this is a free opportunity). Engaging in the MDI involves only 4 steps schools:

1.    Sign and return 2 forms (the Information Sharing Agreement-ISA, and the Memorandum of Understanding- MOU)

2.    Send out a Passive Informed Consent letter to families (at least 4 weeks before engaging in the MDI survey)

3.    Upload your class lists to a secure link sent by UBC

4.    Engage in the MDI survey with your students! (Usually takes about 45minutes for students to complete the survey)

The MDI closes on March 11, 2022. So as long as schools send out their Passive Informed Consent letters (step 2) before February 10, 2022, they can still participate.

Your FISA Mental Health Coordinators, Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca), are available to answer any questions schools and get you onboarded in time to participate in this year's cycle.

**FISA Mental Health & Wellness Update**

**Compassionate Systems Leadership (CLS) Pro-D**

From 1:30-3:00 pm (PST) on Feb. 18th FISA will hold our 2nd CLS webinar with Dr. Shirley Giroux. CLS encourages a deliberate focus on creating and nourishing a school culture where everyone feels safe, connected, and respected. A recording of the Dec. 7th session is available for viewing in the [FISA Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/). Learn more about Dr. Giroux’s [work with CSL here](https://systemsawareness.digication.com/shirley-giroux-project/about).

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**Make a Future**

Many independent schools have contracted with [Make a Future (MaF)](https://www.makeafuture.ca/) to support them with their human resources recruiting. We are approaching the end of a 3-year agreement (March 31, 2022) between independent schools and MaF. FISA is working with MaF to establish a new agreement for independent school employers that would like to continue their relationship with MaF. You can expect more information in the near future.

**Renewal of COVID Mitigation Agreement for 2021/22 School Year**

On August 17, 2020 the Ministry sent out a communication advising that it had reached an agreement with School District No. 73 Business Company (SD73BC) that will temporarily allow international students, who are residing outside the province but registered with authorities and school boards and who have confirmed their intention to come to BC when it is safe and practicable to do so, to take a limited number of BC Curriculum courses by means of online learning through SD73BC.

This allowed schools to provide a bridge for some international students until they were able to come to the province.  Course credits were to be assigned by the board/authority who enrols the student upon their arrival in BC, following completion of an equivalency review by the board/authority.

Given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the international education sector, this Agreement has been renewed for the 2021/22 school year with an expiry date of June 30, 2022.

As with the 2020/21 Agreement, independent school authorities and school districts who wish to have students enrolled in BC Curriculum courses while they are temporarily prevented from coming to BC will still need to enter into separate agreements with SD73BC.

Contact Information for SD73BC:

Kristin Engleson

Director of Distributed Learning

Global Education - SD73 Business Company

kengleson@sd73.bc.ca

**The following requirement was added for the 2021/22 school year:** Students must have an in-progress study permit application to be eligible to take courses under the COVID Mitigation Agreement, in addition to confirming their intention to come to BC as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

**FISA Updates – January 28, 2022**

**FISA Mental Health & Wellness Update**

The FISA Mental Health Coordinators want to remind schools that are not yet signed up to complete the [Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)](https://discovermdi.ca/) with their grade 4 and 8 students that **it is not too late to participate!**

We recognize and appreciate that there is a lot to juggle these days, however the data that schools, associations, and FISA get from engaging with the MDI surveys is immensely valuable (and thanks to funding from the Ministry of Education, this is a free opportunity). Engaging in the MDI may, at first, seem like a lot of work, but in reality, the only steps schools need to take are:

1.    Sign and return 2 forms (the Information Sharing Agreement-ISA, and the Memorandum Of Understanding- MOU)

2.    Send out a Passive Informed Consent letter to families (at least 4 weeks before engaging in the MDI survey)

3.    Upload your class lists to a secure link sent by UBC

4.    Engage in the MDI survey with your students! (Usually takes about 45minutes for students to complete the survey)

These four simple steps pave the way for your schools to receive invaluable data and hear the voice of your students on their own perceived well-being.

The MDI survey closes on March 11, 2022. So as long as schools send out their Passive Informed Consent letters (step 2) before February 7, 2022 (at the latest), they can still participate.

Your FISA Mental Health Coordinators, Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca), are available to answer any questions schools have and are excited to continue working with all of you on this important project. Remember, **it is not too late to participate!**

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**COVID Updates**

FISA acknowledges the efforts school leaders are making to ensure their schools can remain open to provide face to face instruction for their students. As anticipated, due to the Omicron variant and being in the midst of cold and flu season, both staff and student absenteeism may be higher than the norm. FISA is pleased to report that this week independent school functional closures were rare, and we are hopeful this trend will continue going forward.

Individual Health Authorities are finalizing protocols they would like schools in their region  to use to identify potential attendance activity signals. We expect the protocols for each HA to be similar but also expect some variation based on the public health context in their respective regions (vaccination rates, access to testing, HA capacity for data analysis, historic illness rate baselines…). Further information should be coming from HAs next week.

School leaders know their school communities – and probably have a very good idea which absences are due to illness and which are due to other factors and should not be included in the data used to identify potential attendance activity signals. As mentioned in last week’s FISA Update, please connect with your FISA association head if you believe your school or a class has passed an absenteeism threshold of concern. They can review your data with you and determine if communication with your local HA is required. Some encouraging news is that provincial aggregate data indicates the K-12 sector has experienced a steady decrease in student absences this week.

Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) targeted for distribution to independent school staff members have been shipped and some districts have received their orders and the orders for the independent schools within their district. FISA greatly appreciates the commitment from our public school district colleagues to receive the independent school shipments and we have let all the districts know we are able to provide them with any support they may require ensuring efficient pick up from our schools.

These tests will come with distribution instructions (2 per staff member) and are intended to be used by staff members that may develop symptoms. The updated BCCDC guidelines provide clear direction for staff members who are experiencing COVID-like symptoms. School employers should not require staff members to use these tests to confirm they are fit to return to work.

**Renewal of COVID Mitigation Agreement for 2021/22 School Year**

On August 17, 2020 the Ministry sent out a communication advising that it had reached an agreement with School District No. 73 Business Company (SD73BC) that will temporarily allow international students, who are residing outside the province but registered with authorities and school boards and who have confirmed their intention to come to BC when it is safe and practicable to do so, to take a limited number of BC Curriculum courses by means of online learning through SD73BC.

This allowed schools to provide a bridge for some international students until they were able to come to the province.  Course credits were to be assigned by the board/authority who enrols the student upon their arrival in BC, following completion of an equivalency review by the board/authority.

This temporary agreement with SD73BC was initially set to expire on June 30, 2021. However, given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the international education sector, this Agreement has been renewed for the 2021/22 school year with an expiry date of June 30, 2022.

As with the 2020/21 Agreement, independent school authorities and school districts who wish to have students enrolled in BC Curriculum courses while they are temporarily prevented from coming to BC will still need to enter into separate agreements with SD73BC.

Contact Information for SD73BC:

Kristin Engleson

Director of Distributed Learning

Global Education - SD73 Business Company

kengleson@sd73.bc.ca

**The following requirement was added for the 2021/22 school year:** Students must have an in-progress study permit application to be eligible to take courses under the COVID Mitigation Agreement, in addition to confirming their intention to come to BC as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so.

**Access to PPE**

Elections BC has hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes that they are making available to independent school authorities. The product is free but each school has to pay for shipping (courier from Victoria). This offer is only available until Monday January 31, 2022.

·  Hand sanitizer 1L bottles – 144 cases (16 bottles per case) [Canpalm 1000mL Gel hand sanitizer — CANPALM](https://www.canpalm.com/canpalm-1000-ml-hand-sanitizer-1-1-1-1)

·  Hand sanitizer 250 ml – 268 cases (25 bottles per case) [Canpalm 250mL Gel hand sanitizer — CANPALM](https://www.canpalm.com/canpalm-250-ml-hand-sanitizer)

·  Maxill disinfectant wipes tubs, 160 wipes per tub (item 61164) & refills (item 61164R) - 410 cases (6 per case) [hx2 Hard Surface Disinfectant (maxill.com)](https://www.maxill.com/ca/hx2-hard-surface-disinfectant.html)

To order free hand sanitizer and wipes for your school please email educ.srsd@gov.bc.ca with your order and contact info by 9 am on Monday, January 31. The email should contain:

o    Quantity of hand sanitizer/wipes you wish to order (number of cases)

o    Shipping address

o    Contact phone number and email

o    Any other specialized delivery instructions

**Placing the order via email means that your school accepts responsibility for the delivery costs.**Should orders exceed the available supply, all orders will be proportionately scaled.

Elections BC will deliver the hand sanitizer to you and will invoice the Ministry for the delivery costs. The Ministry of Education will recover the delivery costs through CDS.

Should you have any questions about this offer please contact educ.srsd@gov.bc.ca.

**FISA Update – January 21, 2022**

This continues to be a dynamic time for schools and public health. As you will have noticed, changes are happening frequently as medical professionals review the most up to date Omicron data and create regulations that meet public health goals and are the least intrusive actions to meet these goals.

Some medical health professionals now believe that BC has hit the peak of cases for the Omicron variant but recognize that more severe outcomes (hospitalizations and ICU admissions) often lag cases of infection, and these are monitored closely. BC is also a large province and therefore the public health context (vaccination rates, access to testing, medical service capacity…) for each health region must be considered when creating province-wide regulations.

In recent days the BCCDC, the PHO, local health authority MHOs and the Ministry of education have made incremental improvements in providing consistency in messaging on COVID-19 symptoms, testing protocols, when it is safe to return to school or work, functional closures, and potential attendance activity signals.

·      The Ministry is preparing materials for distribution that outline the latest BCCDC regulations for COVID symptoms, testing, and return to school regulations.

·      Functional closures are implemented when schools do not have the staff required to provide their complete, normal programming. There is recognition that most independent schools (IS) may not have access to a large pool of TOCs that may be available to public school districts. IS leaders know their communities, but when considering a functional closure should **consult with their FISA association lead** **or superintendent** (for Catholic schools or others with a superintendent structure – IS leaders do not consult with the public school superintendent). Our experience over these last 2 weeks is that IS prioritize continuity of learning but in some exceptional circumstances a partial or full functional closure due to a lack of staff availability is required.

·   The Independent School Branch has notified FISA that the Jan. 21st DM Bulletin may provide inaccurate information regarding the functional closure process for the independent school sector. The ISB is working on a correction, but if they are not able to “stop the presses” they request that school leaders do **not** notify their MHO and the Ministry of Education when considering a functional closure. Independent schools should follow the process outlined above and work with their FISA association lead or superintendent, who will in turn connect with the MHO and Ministry on behalf of the school.

·      The [Jan. 7th DM Bulletin](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/covid-19-protocols-for-administrators.pdf) provided initial guidance on potential attendance “activity signals”. This process is being refined to assist school leaders in determining when attendance patterns indicate that a consultation with Public Health may be needed. After factoring in baseline data, school leaders that feel an activity signal has been met should connect with their FISA association lead or superintendent for further analysis. Please provide at least 3-5 days of data to assist in identifying trends. When warranted, the association lead/superintendent will connect the school with the local Health Authority who may engage in further analysis. The Health Authority may choose to issue a notification letter to the class(es) involved. Activity signals are**not** an indication that a class or school should be closed to in-person instruction. “Circuit breaker” closures and self-isolation of school contacts are **not**seen as effective measures against the Omicron variant.

·      The COVID-19 Exposure Report Form is no longer due as this form was to be submitted when a Health Authority confirmed that a school was an exposure site. With the move to self-management, the Health Authorities are no longer contacting schools to confirm an exposure.

·      On January 17, the PHO released an [Order](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-school-staff.pdf) relating to collecting of vaccination status for K-12 staff members. This did cause quite a bit of confusion until a subsequent DM Bulletin provided clarification on the intent and possible impact of the PHO Order. What we know is:

o   The PHO made this Order to empower regional MHOs to provide direction that they feel is most important for their region.

o   Dr. Henry states “Recognizing that the risk differs in different regions of the Province, and that medical health officers are in the best position to assess local circumstances with respect to the risk of the transmission of communicable diseases in school settings” – she then goes on to empower local MHOs by stating “A medical health officer may implement this Order by way of a direction with respect to a board of education, independent school authority and francophone education authority in the geographic area of the Province for which the medical health officer is designated;”

o   This is not one Provincial Order for all K-12 schools in the province.

o   This order lays the foundation for the local MHOs to implement a collection of staff vaccination status where they deem it necessary.

o   FISA will continue to work with the health authority MHO's and the MOE to understand what this means for independent schools.

o   At this point, there are no local health authority orders directing independent school authorities to request proof of vaccine status from your employees.

o   If your local MHO deems it is necessary, they will direct independent school authority employers to do so, as empowered by the PHO Order.

o   Local MHO orders directed at a school district do not include independent schools located within the boundaries of a district unless the order explicitly states that the independent schools are included.

·         The MoE appreciates the timely submission of daily staff and student attendance data from independent schools. This information is monitored by local health authorities to inform them of schools that may need additional supports.

·         Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS) are **not** required to complete and submit their daily staff and student attendance data due to their unique learning structures.

·         The Rapid Antigen Tests targeted for IS should have arrived or will be arriving soon to all independent schools that replied to FISA’s survey last week. Independent schools located within 50km of their public district board office will need to pick up their kits from the district. Please contact the person identified as the Rapid Antigen Test Distribution Lead for your district found on this[list](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/iplj4ue1w00dbxkrm1mau/school-district-contact-info-for-rapidtestdelivery-Jan2022.xls?dl=0&rlkey=u2x2b2egv9q66mar47t27x2wp). First Nations Schools should connect with FNESC for information as to the process for FN Schools. FISA expresses our appreciation to the 60 public districts for their cooperation with assisting to get kits into the hands of school employees within both the public and independent sector as quickly as possible.

**MDI Updates**

Students in Grade 4 and 8 across the province are now participating in the [Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)](https://discovermdi.ca/). The MDI survey opened on January 11th and the close date has just been extended to end on March 11th, 2022.  While a number of our FISA schools have already begun the survey with their students, it is not too late to sign up to participate! Like last year, the results of the survey will give our independent schools valuable data and insight into the overall well-being of our Grade 4 and Grade 8 students. As well, each school will have the added benefit of comparing their school-level reports with their respective association-level reports.

Thanks to funding from the BC Ministry of Education, engagement with the MDI is free for all independent schools. We encourage you to take part in this very valuable opportunity as the results from the MDI will help inform and affirm individual schools on what is working well, and identify areas where further growth is required to support the continued positive development of our schools and our students.  Click [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T6V0ue9wVAUTUjIYLMC3YqwlKUOIHyaA/view) to watch a testimonial from one of our FISA school educators on the value of the MDI. As well, please check out the attached document all about what schools can do with their MDI data.

Your FISA Mental Health Coordinators, Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca), are available to answer any questions schools have and are excited to continue working with all of you on this important project. Remember, **it is not too late to participate!**

**Compassionate Systems Leadership Pro-D**

On Dec. 7th, 2021, FISA held the first of a two-part series introducing independent school staff to the key components of Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL). The 2nd session will be held on Feb. 18th from 1:30-3:00 pm. This session is open to all school personnel. CLS encourages a deliberate focus on creating and nourishing a school culture where everyone feels safe, connected, and respected. During this session participants will go deeper into ways to apply CLS in their own lives and in their school communities. Participants who were not able to attend the Dec. session are encouraged to view the recording in the [FISA Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/).

Dr. Giroux is a Registered Clinical Counsellor with many years of experience working in independent schools. She is a certified CSL Master Practitioner (one of eight in Canada). Learn more about Dr. Giroux’s [work with CSL here](https://systemsawareness.digication.com/shirley-giroux-project/about).

**Compassionate Systems Leadership #2 with Dr. Shirely Giroux**
**Feb 18, 2022 01:30 - 3:00 PM Pacific Time**
Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtcuytrzsqGdGaZSVcMWf6VU5sxy6XC4op**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEtcuytrzsqGdGaZSVcMWf6VU5sxy6XC4op)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Provincial Graduation Assessments**

The angst felt by secondary school administrators, teachers, students, and parents over the cancellation of the January administration session of the grade 10 and 12 provincial graduation assessments has not gone unnoticed. A great deal of time is spent in preparing for these assessments – time which could have been spent in other valuable endeavours. FISA is confident that the Ministry weighed all the options before taking this action to forego the January session. As indicated in the Jan. 20th announcement more information will be provided, including the process schools should follow for students scheduled to graduate following the completion of term one courses.

**2021-2022 Recalculated Grants**

As communicated earlier this week, here is the link to the recently published 2021-2022 [Recalculated Grants](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/independent-schools/funding).

**FISA Update – January 14, 2022**

**COVID Updates**

The K-12 sector is in the midst of what many have called a “messy” time, as the Omicron virus requires changing and evolving management strategies to support public health while new information on this variant is emerging. As school leaders - staff, students and families look to you for direction and leadership. During this “messy” time, and without clear cut or sometimes conflicting messaging in the guidelines that you are responsible for implementing, it requires effort not to become frustrated or overwhelmed by not being able to provide the “right” answer. I can ensure you that a great deal of effort is going into aligning messaging that will bring consistency to the school and public health guidelines as more information becomes available – but it requires time and I ask for your patience (which is a valuable virtue at this time!) as this prioritized work continues.

·      This first week after the delayed K-12 restart has reinforced that BC schools play an important role in the health and wellness of the communities we serve. The Omicron virus is prevalent in communities and is far more infectious than previous COVID-19 variants. However, transmission of the virus in controlled settings, with established communicable disease plans in place, continues to be low when compared with the broader community.

·      You can anticipate updated information coming from the Ministry of Education (MoE), the BCCDC and your local health authorities within the next week.

·      As public health shifts to managing COVID-19 as an endemic, there is acknowledgment that “COVID-ZERO” is not, and has never been, a realistic public health outcome. Ongoing adherence to your communicable disease plans, amending and adjusting as directed by public health and the MoE, will ensure independent schools continue to contribute to the overall wellness of our students, staff and communities.

·      I want to relay the MoE’s appreciation for completing the daily [staffing survey](https://www.bcedextranet.gov.bc.ca/educ_forms_service/daily-independent-staffing-survey.html). This information is aggregated and used to provide the Ministry with a sense of how staff illness is impacting K-12 schools.

·      Starting on January 17th daily student attendance will be collected, and this information will be monitored by local health authorities to inform them of schools that may need additional supports. For student attendance reporting, schools that use MyED will have their attendance data pulled automatically from the system. Schools that do not use MyED should report attendance daily by 11:00 a.m. via [Ministry’s online survey](https://www.bcedextranet.gov.bc.ca/educ_forms_service/daily-independent-student-survey.html).

·      Due to their unique recording of student program engagement, Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS) should not complete the daily student attendance report. PIOS schools should complete the staffing survey and report any staff members who are unable to fulfill their regular duties.

·      These data collections are temporary and will cease once public health no longer requires this information to support their work.

·      Rapid antigen tests will be made available to public and independent schools. FISA thanks the 300+ schools who responded to our request to provide employee headcount data with less than a 24-hr. turnaround time! For schools that did not respond we provided the Ministry with an estimated headcount. The anticipated arrival of these tests to their destination (local public school district offices or directly to your school if you are further than 50 km from that location) is next week. More information will be forthcoming regarding pickup details. Today’s DM Bulletin identifies how the tests are to be distributed to staff members and when and how they should be used as another tool to support continuity of learning at your school.

·      For FISA member schools if a student attendance “activity signal” is met or a functional closure is being considered (class, grade, or school) contact the Rapid Response Team (RRT) before taking further action. ACSIBC, SCSBC, and ISABC schools should connect via your Association Head. CISBC schools should connect via your Superintendent’s Office. AMS schools should connect via Janet at ISCOVIDLead@fisabc.ca.

**2021-2022 Recalculated Grants**

As communicated earlier this week, here is the link to the recently published 2021-2022 [Recalculated Grants](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/independent-schools/funding).

**District/Authority Scholarships (DAS)**

The 2021-22 DAS application forms are available under the “[Services](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/)” tab on the FISA website. For independent schools the province is divided into 4 DAS regions:

1)    Metro Vancouver - Chairs: Máebh Carragher & Katie Larson, metrovandas@gmail.com

2)    Fraser Valley – Chair: Chris Blesch, cblesch@holycross.bc.ca

3)    Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands – Chair: Simon Tuffin, vidascomm@gmail.com

4)    Interior & North – Chair: Mike Campbell, mike.campbell@kcschool.ca

Please ensure that your students follow the instructions for your region as the process and the due dates vary. Independent Online Schools should instruct their students to apply in the region where the school is located.

**FISA Update – January 11, 2022**

I hope this update finds you well as most independent schools have welcomed back students after the delayed restart. The K-12 sector, along with other sectors in BC, are dealing with the dynamic nature of the Omicron variant. There is a paradigm shift in the public health response to this variant that presents as more infectious but with likely less severe symptoms. The prevalence of Omicron means that a more effective and sustainable public health policy is to focus on self-management of illness and a move away from mass testing of all people that experience symptoms of a COVID-type respiratory illness.

FISA continues to participate in the many meetings that include representation from all the stakeholder groups in the K-12 sector and representatives from BC’s health sector. The one thing that has become very apparent is that during this time - change is inevitable. As more information is revealed through studies of Omicron, public health and BC school initiatives and guidelines will require adjustments.

FISA is aware that school leadership in these changing times is challenging, but imperative. So too is the health and wellness of independent school leaders and the students and staff they work alongside. I know many independent schools took time last week to explore and institute supports and routines that ensure individual and community wellness is prioritized as schools reopened to an unpredictable but hopeful future.

**COVID Updates**

The release of the [COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff: Management of School-Associated Activity](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/covid-19-protocols-for-administrators.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) document on January 7th provides directions for schools as the public health management of COVID has changed in BC. FISA has received many inquiries looking for clarification on some items from this document. FISA will attempt to answer some of these questions and others we are awaiting clarification from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and/or Public Health (PH).

·      BC schools are open because they are an essential service and support health and wellness for a large segment of our society. The Omicron variant is highly transmissible and will exist within schools and within the wider community. Most, if not all, people will be exposed at some point to Omicron, and public health has identified strategies that are aimed at reducing the speed of its spread and the severity of its health outcomes (vaccinations, daily health checks, stay home when sick, wash your hands, wear a mask…).

·      Public health is moving towards managing the Omicron virus as they would other similar viral illnesses (the flu). Therefore, testing to confirm an Omicron infection provides little public health benefit, as does contact tracing of each confirmed case. This means schools will no longer be receiving exposure notifications from your local health authority or requests for additional information to support contact tracing.

·      Potential “activity signals” related to student attendance have historically been used by both schools and health authorities to identify potential public health concerns. The recent guidelines have asked schools to monitor illness-related absences, comparing them to a previous absenteeism data baseline. In discussions with some School Medical Health Officers, they have advised that schools use this week to strictly monitor absenteeism. It is unlikely there will be value in reporting to Health absenteeism that surpass the thresholds suggested in the Ministry document this week.

·      When schools do experience illness-related absenteeism that they may judge to be a potential activity signal, their initial consultation and reporting should be to the Head/Executive Director/Superintendent of their respective FISA association who will help them assess the situation and provide guidance as to next steps.

·      It is reasonable to anticipate that independent schools will experience an increase staff illness and the resultant staff shortages that do not support the safe operation of the school. Independent school leaders that are considering a Functional Closure due to staffing challenges should consult with your FISA association leadership and the FISA COVID Lead before finalizing your decision. FISA is presently trying to establish with the Ministry of Education any reporting requirements for Functional Closures.

·      The Independent Schools Rapid Response Team (ISRRT) will continue to serve independent schools until at least March 31, 2022. Janet Dhanani will continue to serve as the ISRRT Lead and each FISA association will have a COVID Lead and each health region will have representation as well. Recognizing the importance mental health and wellbeing play in a thriving education system, and especially during these pandemic times, the ISRRT will include personnel focused on providing this support for schools. The ISRRT can be reached at ISCOVIDLead@fisabc.ca.

·      FISA is presently working with the MoE on developing an efficient method to collect daily student attendance reporting for both MyEd and non-MyEd independent schools. Information will be shared soon.

·      The MoE and PH are meeting this week to establish the role Rapid Antigen Tests may play within BC schools. I expect the K-12 sector will receive more information on these tests soon.

·      The MoE and PH are aware that differing guidance is being provided on official channels (Thrive App, BCCDC, news conferences) regarding self-isolation instructions for people who are close/intimate contacts. Synchronization is underway.

·      The Ministry’s [COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff: Management of School-Associated Activity](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/covid-19-protocols-for-administrators.pdf) document has a letter (Appendix B) that schools could use to inform parents of a potential activity signal at their school. In discussions with some of the RHA School Health Officers they are not encouraging schools to use this letter for the next week or two, as it may cause unproductive speculation within your school community.

**District/Authority Scholarships (DAS)**

The 2021-22 DAS application forms are available under the “[Services](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/)” tab on the FISA website. For independent schools the province is divided into 4 DAS regions:

1)    Metro Vancouver - Chairs: Máebh Carragher & Katie Larson, metrovandas@gmail.com

2)    Fraser Valley – Chair: Chris Blesch, cblesch@holycross.bc.ca

3)    Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands – Chair: Simon Tuffin, vidascomm@gmail.com

4)    Interior & North – Chair: Mike Campbell, mike.campbell@kcschool.ca

Please ensure that your students follow the instructions for your region as the process and the due dates vary. Independent Online Schools should instruct their students to apply in the region where the school is located.

**2021-2022 Recalculated Grants**

Historically the Ministry of Education releases the recalculated per student grant allocations during the last week before the Christmas break, however, this year the release of this information has been delayed till the end of January 2022.

Happy New Year, Shawn

**FISA Update – January 6, 2022**

Dear Independent School Leaders,

I know you are all working diligently to ensure that your schools are prepared for the return of students next week - during a time of great uncertainty. I also know you are awaiting needed information and updated guidelines from the Ministry of Education concerning the effective management of the anticipated increase in staff and student absenteeism due to COVID-19, and the Omicron variant in particular.

I can report that the Steering Committee (with representatives from the MoE, BCCDC, WorkSafe, FISA and the other education partner groups) has been meeting regularly to finalize a COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff document that should be made available to schools tomorrow. Thank you for your patience and I ask that you please recognize that this will be a living document that will require change in response to changes to the prevailing public health environment in BC.

**School Mask Supplies**

The emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant of COVID 19 necessitates that we continue to reinforce the safety measures/tools in place to reduce its impact; this includes masks. The Ministry is informing the K-12 sector that there is an expectation that any student or employee that wants a 3-ply disposable mask should have access to them on request, and so they should be readily available. As such school authorities should ensure that they have an adequate supply of these masks. Please refer to the Focused Educational Resources [bulletin on Tuesday, January 4th](https://us3.campaign-archive.com/?e=__test_email__&u=0984bae2b3c2e600765133706&id=eba7298ef1) . Should you need procurement support related to masks or other safety supplies, please contact them at supplies@focusedresources.ca .

**FISA Update – December 31, 2021**

Happy New Year!

While a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes during the holiday break, I truly hope all independent school leaders have had an opportunity to enjoy their time off and feel rejuvenated as we approach a return to school.

FISA’s intent was to keep to a minimum our communication out to schools during this break but the K-12 sector is facing dynamic times. Next week FISA will shift to providing updates and information we believe you need to support your role as school leaders, as it becomes available. You should also anticipate more information coming from the Ministry of Education next week, including a revised FAQ document.

**COVID Updates**

As you are aware Dr. Henry announced at a [news conference](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0079-002460) on December 29th, a **Public Health Order**for the K-12 sector that will delay the return to school for most students until January 10th. School staff are expected to return to school in accordance with their school calendar and the intent of the delay in face to face learning is to allow time for schools incorporate [the addendums to the K-12 COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf) and to prepare plans in the event that schools are required to exercise a functional school closure due to staff or student absence due to illness. The delayed start will also allow time for health authorities to amend their operations and create protocols to support schools within this changing pandemic environment.

The message we are receiving from BC health experts is that:

·      The Omicron virus seems to be more infectious with a corresponding short incubation period.

·      Case counts are anticipated to grow but the experience in BC and in other jurisdictions around the world is that the severity of illness is diminished and hospitalization and ICU admission rates are holding flat.

·      With the large number of cases, PCR tests are being reserved for people associated with high-risk settings (health care) and the use of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) will expand over the next month.

·      Health authorities no longer have the capacity to complete vigorous contact tracing, as was done for the Delta variant, and a more effective public health response is to shift to the self-management of cases (more information on the protocols for reporting and communicating cases for schools will be coming from your local health authorities next week).

·      Schools should anticipate greater student and staff absenteeism due to illness for the next little while. Your planning next week should focus on how you will manage functional class, division or school closures due to illness and opportunities for continuity of learning.

Operationally, school staffs will resume work next week and schools must provide services for the children of essential service workers, with a priority for health care workers and first responders. Schools will need to determine how they define essential service workers beyond this priority group, based on capacity and anticipated subscription for this service at your schools. Schools must also prioritize in-school services for Unique Needs learners during the first week of January. For schools with an extended Winter Break (i.e. schools not scheduled to be in session during the week of Jan. 3rd) there is no expectation that these schools will provide services to ESWs' children or Unique Needs Learners during their break.

**Staff Wellness and Professional Growth Opportunity**

Recognizing independent schools may have capacity next week to support staff professional growth and wellbeing, FISA will be offering a session with Dr. Laurie Anderson from the SFU Faculty of Education. School leaders, teachers and support staff are welcome to join this timely session to explore ways to remain hopeful, grounded and resolute within the prevailing uncertain and unpredictable educational environment.

FISA has expanded its Zoom license to accommodate 1,000 participants for this session. We anticipate that Dr. Anderson will give permission for the session to be recorded and available for viewing for a limited time.

**Educator Well-Being in Uncertain Times - FISA Mental Health Mini Session**

Thursday, January 6, 20221:00 – 3:00PM

Please connect via the following Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87971516855?pwd=cVk0WDg1TlNndFUzQm9zeUVZcTE3UT09>

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

I would like to encourage independent schools from around the province to invest some time and review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education). Historically independent school nominations have only represented ~ 5% of the total nominations received (independent schools represent 13.3% of the K-12 sector enrollment) and this is certainly not reflective of the exceptional work being done in independent schools by staff members who are deserving of this recognition.

Please make an effort to identify people within your community that should be acknowledged and affirmed by submitting a nomination for these awards.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**Childcare BC Information Session Recording**

A recording of the Dec. 1st Childcare Information Session is available for viewing [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQSmm4mW1xY). This session provided preliminary information regarding the move of the Childcare portfolio to the Ministry of Education. Many questions remain as to how the change in ministerial jurisdiction may impact childcare providers. FISA will continue to engage with MoE officials to ensure that the quality childcare and early learning programs offered through independent school authorities are taken into consideration.

**FISA Update – December 29, 2021**

I hope your holiday break is going well and providing you with some much needed down time! I was reluctant in sending this message your way now  – but we are in unusual times.

Dr. Henry and Minister Whiteside will provide a COVID update at 3:00 PM today (Dec. 29th) that will include important information for the K-12 sector. FISA and the other BC education partner groups have been meeting with the Ministry of Education, the PHO and the BCCDC over this holiday break to plan for a post-break return to school amidst growing Omicron exposures. These meetings will continue, and as plans and protocols are finalized you can anticipate information updates later in the week and early next week shared via DM Bulletins, FISA Updates and through your local associations.

**FISA Update – December 21, 2021**

Today Dr. Henry announced some additional [public health restrictions](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0234-002431) that are intended to slow down the spread of the Omicron variant.

The Steering Committee also met this afternoon to discuss public health implications for the K-12 sector. The key takeaways were:

·        Case counts are anticipated to rise, however the most significant metric for public health officials is the hospitalization and ICU rates.

·        January 2022 is far different than January 2021. A vast majority of British Columbians have been double vaccinated and the 5 -11 age group are now eligible for vaccines.

·        Schools have managed the pandemic well and they play a key role in the province’s public health plan. Keeping schools open remains a priority.

·        The Ministry of Education, the PHO and the BCCDC will be meeting over the Winter Break to consider possible addendums to school K-12 guidelines.

·        Draft amendments will be reviewed by the Steering Committee over the holidays. The SC’s aim is to have communication out to schools on or around December 30th.

·        Consideration is given to actions that provide a high level of public health benefit, with the least amount of impact to school operations and student learning. Possible operational changes for the K-12 sector may include gathering restrictions, (i.e., no assemblies for a prescribed period of time).

·        A return to a cohort model is **not**anticipated.

·        [BC School Sport issued a memorandum](https://www.bcschoolsports.ca/news/update-pho-orders-december-17th) on Dec. 17th. Tournaments are canceled for the time being, but competitions with only 2-teams present may proceed under the current guidelines.

FISA will continue to provide an independent school voice to these ongoing discussions. Our hope is that independent school leaders and their communities will continue to enjoy a restful and joyous holiday break, with the knowledge that any January restart information will not be coming your way until late in December.

**FISA Update – December 17, 2021**

With the 2021 Christmas break upon us I have been reflecting on how different things were two short years ago. There was no question that I would be gathering with my family to enjoy holiday celebrations. Zero thought was put into the number of people who would attend – the more, the merrier! The only restrictions for my travels to visit my children and friends was the need for a good set of snow tires (my car sports studded snow tires – which are not essential in Vancouver) that would allow me to safely travel the Coquihalla Highway.

A lot has changed since then, and this year especially, with the recent emergence of a new COVID variant and the extensive damage experienced on our major intra-provincial travel corridors. But, as has been the case over these last 20 or so months, the resiliency of the people of BC has been tested and the response has been heroic! This is especially true within the independent school sector. Your efforts as school leaders to facilitate learning environments that are safe and engaging for learners, while honouring the provincial guidelines and the diverse opinions/beliefs that may exist within your school communities - has not only benefited the children and families you serve, but it has contributed to the wellbeing of your communities and to the public good.

On behalf of the FISA team (Janet, Magda, Marina and Janette) I wish you all a holiday break filled with fun and much needed rest and a release from the obligations of leadership during these unprecedented and challenging times. Our hope is that this winter break provides you all with a chance to gather with loved ones and friends to celebrate events during this season that are personally significant and bring you joy!

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

I would like to encourage independent schools from around the province to invest some time and review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education). Historically independent school nominations have only represented ~ 5% of the total nominations received (independent schools represent 13.3% of the K-12 sector enrollment) and this is certainly not reflective of the exceptional work being done in independent schools by staff members who are deserving of this recognition.

Please make an effort to identify people within your community that should be acknowledged and affirmed by submitting a nomination for these awards.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**COVID Updates**

·         The Omicron variant has been dominating the news lately and the discussions at the Steering Committee table. The representatives from the PHO and BCCDC continue to monitor and learn more about this COVID variant and closely monitor the experiences and research happening around the globe. At this point researchers believe Omicron is likely more infectious than the Delta variant (which is still the predominant variant seen in BC cases) and the health outcomes may be less severe, especially for those that are fully vaccinated. Therefore, as experienced in other jurisdictions, case counts are anticipated to rise but rates of hospitalizations and critical care cases may rise at a much more stable rate.

·         Over the course of the winter break the PHO, BCCDC and the Ministry of Education will continue to monitor public health indicators to inform guidelines for the January return to school.

·         Both the federal and provincial governments are discouraging international travel over the Christmas break. The requirements for travelers returning to Canada can be found [here](https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid?utm_campaign=gac-amc-travelborder-part2-21-22&utm_medium=sem&utm_source=ggl&utm_content=ad-text-en&utm_term=canada%20travel%20restrictions%20covid&adv=2122-147654&id_campaign=14643232225&id_source=125810504863&id_content=545679435736&gclid=CjwKCAiAksyNBhAPEiwAlDBeLI-Rkd5ZlQULLnbnIb-9L2jA2_6cTUHASTsex39jy7wbxUctrCLnxBoCQycQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds) and the Ministry is working on guidelines to support schools in their communications with staff and students that choose to travel abroad during the break.

·         International students travelling outside of Canada during the holidays should be made fully aware of the most up to date [requirements](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/students.html#exemptions) for re-entry to Canada.

·         As outlined in the [Dec. 16th DM Bulletin](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20211216/covid-2.pdf) if a school becomes aware of a person in attendance who is thought to be required to quarantine or restricted from attending school, the school should keep that individual separated from others until arrangements can be made for the person to go home.

·         Schools that receive confirmation of a school exposure from a Health Authority during the break should continue to complete an [Exposure Report](https://fisabc.ca/independent-school-covid-19-exposure-report-form/) and submit it to ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca.

**The FISA/Ministry of Education****Virtual Regional Tour**

FISA and the MoE were grateful for the number of independent school leaders that were able to attend one of the three Virtual Regional Tour events. Special thanks to Theo Vandeweg, Grant Sheppard and Marnie Mayhew for their Ministry presentation and to Marina from the FISA office for managing the Zoom sessions.

While the feedback we received from attendees was very positive, they also shared a desire for future in-person sessions, when it is safe to do so.

The Virtual Regional Tour powerpoint slides are attached for your review.

**Childcare BC Information Session Recording**A recording of the Dec. 1st Childcare Information Session is available for viewing [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQSmm4mW1xY). This session provided preliminary information regarding the move of the Childcare portfolio to the Ministry of Education. Many questions remain as to how the change in ministerial jurisdiction may impact childcare providers. FISA will continue to engage with MoE officials to ensure that the quality childcare and early learning programs offered through independent school authorities are taken into consideration.

**FISA Update – December 10, 2021**

**Ministry of Education - Deputy Minister**

Scott MacDonald announced today that he will be retiring from his role as Deputy Minister of Education on January 4, 2022. FISA wishes to acknowledge the incredible leadership Scott has provided to the K-12 sector over many years. I have always appreciated Scott’s focus on initiatives that support a world class education system. He recognized the important role school leaders, teachers, support staff and parents played in the quality of learning BC students receive. Scott also valued the use of quality education research and data analysis to inform best practices in learning. But my favourite quote that Scott often used (and he used it today when he informed me of his announcement) is, “We are not a public and independent school system – we are a K-12 education system that works together to produce the best possible outcomes for BC learners.”

Christina Zacharuk has been appointed the new Deputy Minister of Education and FISA looks forward to meeting and working with her - starting in the new year.

**COVID Updates**

·         It is encouraging to see provincial COVID cases trending downward and it is anticipated this trend will continue as more 5 – 11 year olds become vaccinated.

·         With the upcoming holidays and families considering travelling outside the country, please make sure your community is aware of the [Canadian port of entry requirements](https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid?utm_campaign=gac-amc-travelborder-part2-21-22&utm_medium=sem&utm_source=ggl&utm_content=ad-text-en&utm_term=canada%20travel%20restrictions%20covid&adv=2122-147654&id_campaign=14643232225&id_source=125810504863&id_content=545679435736&gclid=CjwKCAiAksyNBhAPEiwAlDBeLI-Rkd5ZlQULLnbnIb-9L2jA2_6cTUHASTsex39jy7wbxUctrCLnxBoCQycQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds).

·         International students travelling outside of Canada during the holidays should be made fully aware of the most up to date [requirements](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/students.html#exemptions) for re-entry to Canada.

·         The FHA RRT has designed a one-page handout that schools may wish to distribute regarding unvaccinated children under 12 years old having their activities restricted, including not being allowed to attend school for 14 days following a return to Canada. See attached.

**The FISA/Ministry of Education Virtual Regional Tour**

FISA and the Ministry of Education are pleased to present an opportunity for independent school leaders and Board members to attend a virtual version of the Regional Tour. The first two sessions occurred this past week and the third and final session will be held on December 14th.

The Regional Tour includes a presentation by the Ministry of Education on ministerial policies, pertinent statistics, and educational updates. The FISA presentation will focus on the advocacy issues and supports we are working on and providing for independent schools.

The last virtual session is scheduled for 90 minutes (if you are able, please set aside 120 minutes as the first two sessions went longer to accommodate some valuable Q & A).

**Dec 14, 2021** **\_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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**Dry Grad 2021-22**

We are pleased to inform you that independent schools with Grade 12 students (Group 1, 2, 3, and 4) are invited to apply for the Dry Grad grant offered by the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB). The deadline for sending an application form to the FISA office is **Wednesday, December 15, 2021**.  You can submit the application by completing this short [survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DG2021-22).

Please note that this year marks the 22nd annual fundraising campaign to support alcohol-free graduation celebrations in communities throughout British Columbia. The campaign will run from March 6 to March 31, 2022. The funds collected will be divided by the number of graduating students and allocated based on number of students. All funds collected will remain in the geographic area (by school district) where the funds are collected, to help fund dry grad celebrations for the class of 2022.

Please also note that the Dry Grad grant will be directed only towards graduation celebrations (after grad activity) for independent school graduates that are alcohol-free in 2022.

**BC Provincial Scholarship Program Recording**

A recording of the Provincial Scholarship Program: What You Need to Know webinar hosted by the BCPVPA is available for viewing [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EC5ebtCDI6U). The presentation slide deck and a FAQ sheet is attached.

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – December 3, 2021**

**Severe Weather and Flooding**

Independent schools, like much of the province, have welcomed the end of the atmospheric river and the severe effects it has had on schools, homes, roads, farms, businesses, and most of all, the impact it has had on the wellbeing of individuals and families that have directly suffered loss due to flooding.

FISA was updated today on the situation in the Fraser Valley and the outlook is skeptically optimistic. There is the possibility of snow or rain this weekend (1-5 cm) but not at the record setting precipitation amounts experienced over the last two weeks. Hwy 1 is open to travel between Abbotsford and Hope with some delays; Hwy 7 remains open with the travel order still in place; Hwy 3 is open for essential travel only with expected delays and Hwy 11 is closed due to road damage, but detour routes are available.

**Vaccines for Students aged 5 – 11**

Vaccinations for children aged 5 – 11 commenced this week, with approximately 2,000 BC children in this age range being vaccinated each day. Here are the information resources provided by BC government agencies:

BC COVID-19 Situation Report for K-12 Schools [posted November 23, 2021]

* [BC COVID-19 Situation Report for K-12 Schools](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_sitrep/K12_Situation_Report/SitRep_K-12_November_2021.pdf)

November 23rd slide presentation, COVID-19 Update: Immunization of children 5 to 11:

* <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Immunization_of_Children.pdf>

November 23rd announcement on COVID-19 pediatric vaccine for children aged 5-11:

* <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0209-002245>

Please feel free to share these links with your wider school community.

**The FISA/Ministry of Education Virtual Regional Tour**

FISA and the Ministry of Education are pleased to present an opportunity for independent school leaders and Board members to attend a virtual version of the Regional Tour. The first two sessions occurred this past week and the third and final session will be held on December 14th.

The Regional Tour includes a presentation by the Ministry of Education on ministerial policies, pertinent statistics, and educational updates. The FISA presentation will focus on the advocacy issues and supports we are working on and providing for independent schools.

The last virtual session is scheduled for 90 minutes (if you are able, please set aside 120 minutes as the first two sessions went longer to accommodate some valuable Q & A).

**Dec 14, 2021** **\_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**International Education and Travel**

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) issued [a news release](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-introduces-additional-measures-to-address-covid-19-omicron-variant-of-concern.html) on Tuesday, November 30th regarding new border measures in response to concerns over the new Omicron variant. A quick summary of the salient points follows:

* Effective Dec 1, foreign nationals who have been in any of the following countries within the previous 14 days will not be permitted entry into Canada: Botswana, Egypt, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.
* All fully vaccinated travellers arriving by air from departure points other than the United States will be subject to arrival testing.
* Fully vaccinated travellers will be required to quarantine while they await the results of their arrival test.

·         Unvaccinated travellers, with right of entry to Canada, will continue to be tested on arrival and at day 8, and quarantined for 14 days. However, those arriving by air will now be required to stay in a designated quarantine facility or other suitable location while they await the result of their on-arrival test.

FISA has reached out to the MoE to seek further clarification on the full implications and protocols for students/staff returning from out of country travel.

**Access to Services (COVID-19) Act**

This week’s DM Bulletin provides a very informative [Q&A document](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20211203/access2.pdf) related to the Access to Services Act. FISA applauds the efforts of this government and the Ministry of Education for their timely response to the safety concerns some BC schools faced earlier in this school year. As you notice in the documentation, virtually all BC schools are protected through this Act and FISA is aware and appreciative of all the work the Ministry staff put into ensuring independent schools were included in this legislation.

**FISA Mental Health and Wellness Webinar Series**

The FISA Mental Health Coordinators, Michelle Hussey and Jamie Morris, are pleased to partner with Dr. Shirley Giroux to provide an introduction to Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) through a two-part webinar series. The first of which will take place on Dec. 7th from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (PST) with the date of the second webinar to be scheduled after Winter Break. CSL is one of the featured strategies in the MoE’s [Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools 2021](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/key-principles-and-strategies-for-k-12-mental-health-promotion.pdf). CLS encourages a deliberate focus on creating and nourishing a school culture where everyone feels safe, connected, and respected. As part of the Dec. 7th webinar participants will be introduced to the core leadership principles of CLS, experience firsthand two of the foundational practices, and explore ways to apply CLS in their own lives and in their school communities. Dr. Giroux is a Registered Clinical Counsellor with many years of experience working in independent schools. She is a certified CSL Master Practitioner (one of eight in Canada). Learn more about Dr. Giroux’s [work with CSL here](https://systemsawareness.digication.com/shirley-giroux-project/about).  Both webinars will be recorded and available for viewing in the [FISA Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/).

**You are invited to a Zoom meeting.
When: Dec 7, 2021 11:30 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://ca01web.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Ytf-ipqz0iHNYVWQf-A9hB5wvIshB0p9zT>

**BCPVPA Webinar: Moral Distress**

FISA greatly appreciates the BCPVPA’s offers for independent school leaders to join their public school colleagues in webinars that address topical issues.

In this time of uncertainty caused by the pandemic, Principals may be contending with Moral Distress emerging from increased public scrutiny and constantly changing provincial mandates on how to deal with COVID in their schools.

In this webinar hosted by BCPVPA, we invite Lee Smith to share his doctoral research on Moral Distress with our members. He will define Moral Distress, differentiate it from other ethical dilemmas, and speak about the possible implications of Moral Distress that educators and leaders face. This webinar will offer information and context to school leaders who may feel they are facing greater public scrutiny and stress regarding the administration of COVID-19 guidelines in schools while provincial mandates are constantly evolving.

**Tuesday December 7, 2021 @ 3:30 PM**

[**Register**](https://bcpvpa.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Eb_jViGCQNWkwJI-3BW68w)

**Dry Grad 2021-22**

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FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – November 26, 2021**

**Severe Weather and Flooding**

The weather events of the past couple of weeks have caused a great deal of damage, many problematic travel restrictions and heightened anxiety and loss for many residents in BC. This has certainly been the case for many independent school communities who have had to make major adjustments to their regular school operations. I am very heartened by the many stories that come my way of how independent school leaders and their communities have rallied during these challenging times to support others and for the resiliency they display in prioritizing safety and learning continuity.

In the most recent update I received this afternoon from the Ministries of Education and Transportation they shared:

·        The forecast for Saturday and Sunday once again calls for large amounts of rain to fall on the southern BC coast. This is to be followed by another large rainfall on Tuesday and Wednesday.

·        Hwy 1 is now open between Abbotsford and Hope but without normal conditions (construction, slower speed requirements).

·        Hwy 7 remains open and the traffic congestion has reduced. The regulations, updated yesterday, continue to apply for Hwy 7 travel with checkpoints set up to ensure there is no discretionary travel on this road.

·        The [DriveBC website](https://www.drivebc.ca/#listView) is updated regularly and is a good source for up to date travel information. You can also have updates sent directly to you by registering at <https://email.drivebc.ca/choose.php>

With the uncertainty of how the upcoming weather will impact your school, I encourage you to use the available information and consult with your association leadership, as you arrive at the decision that is best for your community. The option to switch to remote learning until you deem it safe and prudent to return to regular operations does not require Ministry approval. Please inform the FISA office if your school temporarily closes for in-person learning due to travel restrictions or conditions caused by the heavy rainfall/flooding so that we can keep apprised of the situation faced by schools.

Independent schools in flood impacted areas are encouraged to continue to track any emergency-specific expenses your school is incurring (TTOC costs, hotel rooms, bus rentals…) as FISA and the affected public-school districts will pursue emergency funding support.

**COVID-19 Exposure Reports**

Schools that receive confirmation from their Health Authority of a COVID-19 case within their school community are to submit an [Exposure Report](https://fisabc.ca/independent-school-covid-19-exposure-report-form/) to the ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca on the day of the exposure or the following morning if the notification from Health is received after hours. Self-disclosure of a positive COVID-19 test result does not necessitate the completion of an exposure report form until the time that the Health Authority verifies that the school is considered an exposure site. Health Authority verification of the school being confirmed an exposure site varies and includes the following:

-       a school receives self-isolation or self-monitoring letters to distribute behalf of Health,

-       a school receives an email from Health saying that the case investigation is complete, and no further action is needed

-       a school is listed on the Health Authority’s website listing school exposures

In each of the scenarios above an Exposure Report form is due. First Nations schools are welcome to submit a report or to request assistance from the FISA Rapid Response Team, but are not required to do so.

**Vaccines for Students aged 5 – 11**

Here are the latest BCCDC data links from the November 23rd PHO briefing:

BC COVID-19 Situation Report for K-12 Schools [posted November 23, 2021]

* [BC COVID-19 Situation Report for K-12 Schools](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_sitrep/K12_Situation_Report/SitRep_K-12_November_2021.pdf)

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Please feel free to share these links with your wider school community.

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FISA and the Ministry of Education are pleased to present an opportunity for independent school leaders and Board members to attend a virtual version of the Regional Tours that were historically hosted in person throughout the province. The sessions will include a presentation by the Ministry of Education on ministerial policies, pertinent statistics, and educational updates. The FISA presentation will focus on the advocacy issues and supports we are working on and providing for independent schools.

The three virtual sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes, with time allotted for Q & A’s.

**Nov 30, 2021 \_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**
Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckde6rpzwiH9XqW5YOf646eDEY\_iUNVJgT**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckde6rpzwiH9XqW5YOf646eDEY_iUNVJgT)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Dec 1, 2021 \_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIvd-6hrjsiGdRlYFDSfIdneLG3cf8ejvy-**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIvd-6hrjsiGdRlYFDSfIdneLG3cf8ejvy-)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Dec 14, 2021** **\_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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Both webinars will be recorded and available for viewing in the [FISA Video Gallery](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/).

**Collaborative Systems Leadership Dec. 7, 2021, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm (pst)**

Register in advance:

[**https://ca01web.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Ytf-ipqz0iHNYVWQf-A9hB5wvIshB0p9zT**](https://ca01web.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Ytf-ipqz0iHNYVWQf-A9hB5wvIshB0p9zT)

**BCPVPA Webinar: Moral Distress**

FISA greatly appreciates the BCPVPA’s offers for independent school leaders to join their public school colleagues in webinars that address topical issues.

In this time of uncertainty caused by the pandemic, Principals may be contending with Moral Distress emerging from increased public scrutiny and constantly changing provincial mandates on how to deal with COVID in their schools.

In this webinar hosted by BCPVPA, we invite Lee Smith to share his doctoral research on Moral Distress with our members. He will define Moral Distress, differentiate it from other ethical dilemmas, and speak about the possible implications of Moral Distress that educators and leaders face. This webinar will offer information and context to school leaders who may feel they are facing greater public scrutiny and stress regarding the administration of COVID-19 guidelines in schools while provincial mandates are constantly evolving.

**Tuesday December 7, 2021**

**03:30 pm**

[**Register**](https://bcpvpa.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Eb_jViGCQNWkwJI-3BW68w)

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – November 19, 2021**

**Severe Weather and Flooding**

If dealing with a pandemic wasn’t bad enough – many independent schools had to respond to some severe challenges this week due to flooding, landslides and the associated travel impediments. Independent school leaders rose to the occasion, as did their school communities, and there are many inspiring stories of how independent schools provided much needed and timely support during some very traumatic times. Including hosting a pig roast for evacuees and truck drivers!

**Vaccines for Students aged 5 – 11**

Earlier today the federal government released information that they have approved a COVID-19 vaccine that “may be offered” to 5 – 11 year olds. BC is anticipating this vaccine will be made available towards the end of November or early December. You can anticipate more information on vaccines in next week’s DM Bulletin.

Dr. Ballem, Exec. Lead for BC’s COVID-19 Immunization Efforts, told the Steering Committee yesterday that BC feels that the most effective way to enhance vaccination rates is to primarily use community clinics (in some situations schools may consult with their local health authority to possibly host vaccinations on-site). The PHO is working on messaging for parents to encourage vaccine uptake (shared on health websites and through social media) and schools will be asked to share information with their communities.

Parent consent is required for vaccine access for 5 – 11 year olds and mature minor consent will not apply for this vaccine and this age group.

**The FISA/Ministry of Education Virtual Regional Tour**

FISA and the Ministry of Education are pleased to present an opportunity for independent school leaders and Board members to attend a virtual version of the Regional Tours that were historically hosted in person throughout the province. The sessions will include a presentation by the Ministry of Education on ministerial policies, pertinent statistics, and educational updates. The FISA presentation will focus on the advocacy issues and supports we are working on and providing for independent schools.

The three virtual sessions are scheduled for 90 minutes, with time allotted for Q & A’s.

**Nov 30, 2021 \_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**
Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckde6rpzwiH9XqW5YOf646eDEY\_iUNVJgT**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckde6rpzwiH9XqW5YOf646eDEY_iUNVJgT)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Dec 1, 2021 \_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIvd-6hrjsiGdRlYFDSfIdneLG3cf8ejvy-**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIvd-6hrjsiGdRlYFDSfIdneLG3cf8ejvy-)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**Dec 14, 2021** **\_ 6:00 - 7:30 PM Pacific Time**

Register in advance for this meeting:
[**https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG**](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMudu6gqTIuE9S12iuFmOhMausNArPWExyG)After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**District Authority Scholarship (DAS)**

FISA manages the District Authority Scholarship process for independent schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education. Last year 435 awards in the amount of $1,250 each were distributed to graduates from independent schools across BC. New this year is the subdivision of the mega Fraser Valley/Interior/North DAS region into a 1) Fraser Valley (Coquitlam to Hope) and 2) Interior/North (using the Northern and Interior Health Authority boundaries). The Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island/Gulf Island DAS regions will remain the same as in previous years. Students with an independent online school as their school of record should submit DAS applications to the region where the school is located.

DAS Information Sessions for school counselors and administrators will be held as follows:

**Metro Vancouver Schools: Nov. 23rd 9:00-10:00 a.m.**

Chairperson:Máebh Carragher, Assistant Chairperson: Katie Larson

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86794420461?pwd=WmJ4aGJETmpEWDhqdGplc0duUHVDUT09>

Meeting ID: 867 9442 0461

Passcode: 502643

**Fraser Valley Schools: Nov. 25 from 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

Chairperson: Chris Blesch

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88160194804?pwd=dVVwWDRaUm4rZHNnS2Nhcy91bjViUT09>

Meeting ID: 881 6019 4804

Passcode: 637626

**Interior & North: Nov. 26 from 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

Chairperson: Mike Campbell

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83096226970?pwd=bGJuWjdMZGhQUUk5MUhIRERZWHdWUT09>

Meeting ID: 830 9622 6970

Passcode: 705780

**Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands** will not have an info session. Instead, Simon Tuffin, Chairperson, will reach out to schools in this region via email.

The info sessions will be recorded and available for viewing on the FISA website [here](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/).

DAS application forms will be posted in mid-December to the FISA website [here](https://fisabc.ca/scholarships-awards/).

If your school has not already done so, please identify a DAS Lead to receive future correspondence by completing [**this survey**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DAS2021-22)**.**

**The Provincial Scholarships Program: 'What You Need to Know' Webinar**

The BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association (BCPVPA) has graciously offered the opportunity for independent school scholarship administrators and counsellors to register for the webinar they are hosting on provincial scholarships on November 24th, 2021.

The webinar will include an introduction by Rob Hicks, the Ministry of Education’s Director of Student Transitions, overseeing the Provincial Scholarship Program in addition to dual credit policy and post-secondary partner relations. The webinar includes a presentation by Shona Perron, Program and Policy Lead, and Lescia Raagner, Provincial Scholarships Administrator.

[Register](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fprotect-us.mimecast.com%2Fs%2FHDtzCjRN9gTnDM1iW4pMh%3Fdomain%3Dbcpvpa.insite.com&data=04%7C01%7Ckevin%40bcpvpa.bc.ca%7Ca717e842381e462dda1208d9a39a7533%7Cd2d64be1ffd740919e56436738f2af8d%7C0%7C0%7C637720706052618225%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=JqNFbL0OXZfRtGdSaokRyUJTiJOexpv%2BojougnbbyzY%3D&reserved=0)
**November 24, 2021 3:30 - 4:30 PM**

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – November 12, 2021**

**COVID Updates – International Travel**

The opening of the U.S./Canada border and the upcoming Winter Break may have families considering international travel. Schools should be aware of the [federal travel guidance around COVID-19,](https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/exemptions#unvaccinated) especially the restriction in attending school for unvaccinated students for 14 days following the international travel, including travel to the U.S.  Unvaccinated students ages 12-17 are required to follow all quarantine requirements. Unvaccinated students under the age of 12 who are accompanied by someone who qualifies for the fully vaccinated traveler exemption are not required to quarantine, however, these students have the [following restrictions](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/fully-vaccinated-travellers-without-covid-19-symptoms-returning-canada/fully-vaccinated-en.pdf):

For the next 14 days, the children must:

·         not attend school, camp or daycare

·         not attend large or crowded settings, indoors or outdoors, such as an amusement park or sporting event

·         not take buses, subways, trains or other crowded transportation

·         not attend a setting where they may have contact with vulnerable people (e.g. long term care facility)

·         stay in a place that allows the child to avoid all contact with any person that:

·         has an underlying medical condition that makes the person susceptible to complications related to COVID-19

·         has a compromised immune system from a medical condition or treatment; or

·         is 65 years of age or older

·         limit contact with others:

·         remain with their fully vaccinated parent or guardian, as much as possible

·         wear a mask and physically distance when in contact with non-household members

There is no allowance for unvaccinated students to return to school within 14 days following international travel, regardless of who they travel with or if they receive a negative PCR test result. Schools may wish to inform parents/guardians as to these federal regulations and to communicate school procedures for students who will be absent due to international travel.

In addition, schools which have not already done so are advised to create procedures as to the steps the school will take if a student, who has been instructed to self-isolate by Public Health or due to international travel, attempts to attend school during the self-isolation period.

**The FISA/Ministry of Education Virtual Regional Tour**

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[Register](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fprotect-us.mimecast.com%2Fs%2FHDtzCjRN9gTnDM1iW4pMh%3Fdomain%3Dbcpvpa.insite.com&data=04%7C01%7Ckevin%40bcpvpa.bc.ca%7Ca717e842381e462dda1208d9a39a7533%7Cd2d64be1ffd740919e56436738f2af8d%7C0%7C0%7C637720706052618225%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=JqNFbL0OXZfRtGdSaokRyUJTiJOexpv%2BojougnbbyzY%3D&reserved=0)
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**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – November 5, 2021**

**FISA/Independent Schools Branch (ISB) Regional Tour**

FISA is presently working with the ISB to establish dates for a virtual Regional Tour. Historically (pre-pandemic) FISA and the ISB travelled around the province to meet with local independent school leaders and Board members to share independent school data, Ministry policy considerations and updates and to review the focus of FISA’s advocacy and school support initiatives. Both parties are looking forward to once again visiting the different regions within BC in person when it is safe and prudent to do so.

You can expect to see the scheduled dates announced next week and we are anticipating three evening events to occur in late November and early December.

**COVID Updates**

To assist schools which may be considering offering overnight trips for students (such as traveling to participate in provincial sport tournaments) the VCH RRT and the FHA RRT have developed COVID-19 overnight trip guidance documents. The two guides are similar to each other with slight variations. These guides are provided as a resource and schools are welcome to modify them to suit their own context or to choose not to use the guides and to develop their own process to ensure health and safety when offering overnight trips. The VCH RRT has also developed a sample informed consent form which can be adapted as needed. The consent form and a copy of each of the guides are attached to this email. FISA thanks the VCH and FHA RRTs for the effort that went into creating such extensive resources and for their openness in sharing them with independent schools.

**Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)**

As part of our accountability to the Ministry, each year FISA provides a summary report on the mental health and wellness initiatives facilitated at the school, authority, association and FISA levels. A key requirement of this grant is that decisions on mental health and wellbeing supports are research based, targeted and informed by data.

The FISA Mental Health Committee (FMHC) explored research instruments that could supply the data that independent school organizations could use to inform their mental health supports and meet the grant accountability requirements. The FMHC proposed to the FISA Board that a partnership with UBC, and the use of the MDI survey would best meet this need. Therefore, last school year the FISA Board approved funding for all grade 4 independent school students to participate in the MDI survey. For this school year the Board approved MDI survey access for all grade 4 and grade 8 independent school students. Schools that engage in the MDI in more than one school year also have the benefit of being able to compare their results over time. This ongoing data collection can help schools recognize areas of growth and make informed decisions about where to focus their efforts for improvement.

All of the schools that participated in the MDI last year received a school level report and the 5 FISA associations received an association report and FISA received an independent school sector report. The FISA mental health coordinators, Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey recently provided a virtual session, **MDI data: Now What? How schools can make use of their MDI**and the recording of this session is available [here](https://fisabc.ca/media/video-gallery/)**.**

FISA encourages all independent schools to register their grade 4 and grade 8 students to participate in the MDI survey this year. Last year independent schools reported the grade 4 MDI survey was easy to administer for teachers and took about 60 minutes of class time to complete. Our hope is that all schools will use their no-cost access to MDI to provide them with the required data to meet their requirement to provide the targeted and tailored mental health and wellness supports for their school communities.

Please complete the following survey at your earliest convenience to indicate your interest in participating and to let the team know if you have any questions : [Link to survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19R53izm5BbS4qdNRZPkMpvTxmwbm_iy4zlHdMbzQgaU/edit)

Please connect with Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and/or Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca) if you have any questions or concerns.

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

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**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – October 29, 2021**

**COVID Updates**

The recently revised [PHO Gatherings & Events Order](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/restrictions#pho-order) requires adults that lead/coach, assist or supervise a program for children or youth must provide evidence that they have received two doses of vaccine. The Ministry of Education has confirmed ([DM Bulletin COVID Update](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20211029/covid-update-oct-29is.pdf)) this does not apply to K-12 school educational activities, extracurricular events and before and after-school programs. Schools must continue to follow any pertinent Regional Health Orders.

**FISA Survey Request**

FISA has requested all independent schools to participate in a survey that will provide FISA with data to effectively support our advocacy efforts with upcoming policy decisions flowing from Bill 8 -2020. To date FISA has received 105 school responses from the over 300 FISA member schools.

The survey will remain active until Wednesday, November 3rd. The survey takes no more than 5 minutes to complete and responses received before the deadline will be included in our advocacy discussions. Click here for the[**survey link**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBB820)**.**

**Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)**

FISA was pleased to secure equitable and proportional funding for independent schools so they could fully participate in the Ministry of Education’s Early Initiative Grant to support BC student mental health and wellness. Independent schools have received over $1M in funding over the past 3-years to support this important work.

As part of our accountability to the Ministry, each year FISA provides a summary report on the mental health and wellness initiatives facilitated at the school, authority, association and FISA levels. A key requirement of this grant is that decisions on mental health and wellbeing supports are research based, targeted and informed by data.

The FISA Mental Health Committee (FMHC) explored research instruments that could supply the data that independent school organizations could use to inform their mental health supports and meet the grant accountability requirements. The FMHC proposed to the FISA Board that a partnership with UBC, and the use of the MDI survey would best meet this need. Therefore, last school year the FISA Board approved funding for all grade 4 independent school students to participate in the MDI survey. For this school year the Board approved MDI survey access for all grade 4 and grade 8 independent school students. Schools that engage in the MDI in more than one school year also have the benefit of being able to compare their results over time. This ongoing data collection can help schools recognize areas of growth and make informed decisions about where to focus their efforts for improvement.

All of the schools that participated in the MDI last year received a school level report and the 5 FISA associations received an association report and FISA received an independent school sector report. To assist schools in understanding their reports and determining how they can effectively use this research data to enhance the mental health and wellness of their community, Jamie and Michelle, FISA’s Mental Health Coordinators, will host some webinars, the first one on Nov. 5th. In these sessions Michelle and Jamie will also share resources and provide ideas for actions that schools can apply to their unique school settings.

**MDI data: Now What? How schools can make use of their MDI reports**

**Friday, November 5th at 9:00 – 10:00AM**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85933150304?pwd=UzNlMFRzeTNxVU4wMFduMTYrQm5JZz09](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85933150304?pwd%3DUzNlMFRzeTNxVU4wMFduMTYrQm5JZz09&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1635981470170488&usg=AOvVaw3BZPsokwmMH3ttIg9Xacj_) Meeting ID: 859 3315 0304 Passcode: 684332

Feel free to submit any MDI related [questions in advance of the webinar through this link](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/G6V7LCX), in order to give Jamie and Michelle an opportunity to prepare fulsome answers. The session will be recorded and available for later viewing.

FISA encourages all independent schools to register their grade 4 and grade 8 students to participate in the MDI survey this year. I recognize that last year there was a challenge for some schools to participate due to a conflict with the changed administration dates for FSA testing. As the FSA schedule was not amended this year, our hope is that all schools will use the MDI to provide them with the required data to meet their requirement to provide the targeted and tailored mental health and wellness supports for their school communities.

Please complete the following survey at your earliest convenience to indicate your interest in participating and to let the team know if you have any questions : [Link to survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19R53izm5BbS4qdNRZPkMpvTxmwbm_iy4zlHdMbzQgaU/edit)

Please connect with Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and/or Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca) if you have any questions or concerns.

**Confirmation of Safe School Coordinator Information**

This is an item you will find in the [October 22nd DM Bulletin](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#label/DM/FMfcgzGlkXvwBPsBzLjTQStzbXtfMbKm) and the deadline for the submissions was today. **I encourage all independent schools to complete the response form asap. Every school must complete and submit a response form - even if the information on the Safe School Coordinators list is still accurate and does not require edits.**

You can access the fillable response form as an attachment to this email.

**Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS)**

The Ministry of Education and FISA recently facilitated two parent focus group sessions, hosted by the J Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The feedback from the dialogue facilitators reflected the passion and commitment PIOS parents have for the online education they receive from their school. While there were thousands of parents that desired to share their stories directly with the Ministry, they can be confident the selected parent delegates represented them well.

FISA applauds the work the Ministry personnel did to make these parent focus groups a reality. Eleanor Liddy, Marnie Mayhew, Grant Sheppard, Erin Kelly and Zamiha Premji worked behind the scenes to ensure the independent online school parent delegates’ voices were heard. Gabe Linder, as the Chair of the FISA Online School Committee, also played a key role in ensuring the selection of parent delegates was equitable and fair.

Amidst the uncertainty of future online learning policies in BC, FISA will continue to work with the 16 PIOS to advocate for choice and accessibility within the online education sector.

**Active School Travel Pilot Program**

The goal of this pilot program is to promote community health and support more students walking, biking and scooting to and from school.

Please review the [program](http://bchealthycommunities.ca/active-school-travel/) details and consider joining the information session on Thursday, November 4th from 10:00–11:00am (registration available through the program link).

**Draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy**

The Ministry has recently made available the [draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/121/2021/09/Draft-K-12-Student-Reporting-Policy.pdf). This policy references only the School Act, and therefore is not binding on independent schools. However, the Ministry welcomes all perspectives and independent school leaders would be well suited to provide thoughtful and insightful comments through the survey available here <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/studentreporting/>. **The deadline for feedback is November 5, 2021.**

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**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – October 22, 2021**

**Employer Vaccination Policies**

The FISA president, Ed Noot, serves on the provincial ad hoc committee that was tasked with creating the draft [K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination policies](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20211022/vaccinepolicyguidelinedraftoct222021.pdf). The intent of this resource is to provide a coordinated approach for employers that may be considering implementing an employee vaccine policy. The guidelines will provide K-12 employers with incremental steps through a process that identifies factors employers should consider in their decision-making process.

Independent school authorities/employers have the ability to establish the terms of employment, which may include reasonable health and safety measures. FISA strongly encourages independent school employers to review this document and the “[A Human Rights Approach to Proof of Vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://bchumanrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19-vaccine-guidance-Oct.-2021-update.pdf)” as part of your due diligence as an employer contemplating a potential employee vaccine policy.

**COVID Updates**

On Tuesday, October 19th Dr. Henry announced the provincial health officer order restricting capacity limits to 50% for inside organized events and gatherings will be revised to allow 100% capacity in those settings where the BC Vaccine Card is in place and proof of vaccination status is checked.

Today the Ministry of Education announced that K-12 schools will continue to comply with the existing [guidelines for gatherings and events](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20211022/october-22-covid-19-update-is.pdf) with indoor events restricted to 50 spectators or 50% of capacity and outdoor events can have up to 5,000 spectators or 50% of capacity – whichever is greater.

As a reminder, the September 24th [DM Bulletin FAQs](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20210924/2021-09-24---covid-update-isb.pdf) confirmed that all K-12 school activities are excluded from proof of vaccination requirements. This applies to any person involved or attending a K-12 school activity - educational or extracurricular. Schools should follow any additional Regional Health restrictions that may apply.

The BCCDC released its [BC COVID-19 Situation Report for K-12 Schools](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_sitrep/K12_Situation_Report/SitRep_K-12_October_2021.pdf) which provides an in-depth review of COVID-related K-12 matters. You are encouraged to review this report and share the information with your school communities.

**FISA Survey Request**

In last week’s FISA Update there was a request for all independent schools to participate in a survey that would provide FISA with data to effectively support our advocacy efforts with upcoming policy decisions flowing from Bill 8 -2020. To date FISA has received fewer than 50 school responses from the over 300 FISA member schools.

The survey should take no more than 5 minutes and asks independent schools to provide the one-way distance traveled (in kilometers) by the student that travels the furthest to your school site (I.E. FISA High School – 45km). Click here for the[**survey link**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBB820)**.**

**Active School Travel Pilot Program**

The goal of this pilot program is to promote community health and support more students walking, biking and scooting to and from school.

Please review the [program](http://bchealthycommunities.ca/active-school-travel/) details and consider joining the information session on Thursday, November 4th from 10:00–11:00am (registration available through the program link).

**Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)**

In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, FISA BC is pleased to offer the opportunity to all independent schools to be able to have your **Grade 4** and **Grade 8** students participate at no cost to your school. Like last year, this initiative is courtesy of a special grant for mental well-being in schools provided by the Province of BC through the Ministry of Education.

Please complete the following survey at your earliest convenience to indicate your interest in participating: [**Link to survey**](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19R53izm5BbS4qdNRZPkMpvTxmwbm_iy4zlHdMbzQgaU/edit)

Please connect with Michelle Hussey (michelle\_mhc@fisabc.ca) and/or Jamie Morris (jamie\_mhc@fisabc.ca) if you have any questions or concerns.

**Confirmation of Safe School Coordinator Information**

This is an item you will find in today’s DM Bulletin and FISA would like to reinforce that **all independent schools must complete the response form – even if the information on the Safe School Coordinators list is still accurate and does not require edits.**

You may have also noticed that the response form link was not functional. The Ministry has been made aware of this. You can access the fillable form as an attachment to this email.

**Draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy**

The Ministry has recently made available the [draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/121/2021/09/Draft-K-12-Student-Reporting-Policy.pdf). This policy references only the School Act, and therefore is not binding on independent schools. However, the Ministry welcomes all perspectives and independent school leaders would be well suited to provide thoughtful and insightful comments through the survey available here <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/studentreporting/>. **The deadline for feedback is November 5, 2021.**

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

**The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.**

**FISA Update – October 15, 2021**

**Addition to the FISA Team**

I am very pleased to inform you that FISA has successfully completed our search for a new executive assistant. Janette Cholakian has joined our organization and we look forward to her sharing her gifts and talents in support of our member schools. If the last name sounds familiar, it should - Janette is the sister of Marina Cholakian, FISA’s other executive assistant.

This also means that Magda will actually be able to retire. I cannot express how fortunate FISA was to have Magda agree to return to our office after her short-lived retirement. Her vast institutional knowledge and the relationships Magda has developed with independent schools during her time with FISA has greatly contributed to our organization’s success and the accomplishment of our mission. Magda has graciously agreed to continue to support the work of FISA and foster the transition of Janette and Marina over the next 3-months.

**Employer Vaccination Policies**

As mentioned in last week’s FISA Update, the Ministry of Education (MoE) created an Ad Hoc Committee (AHC), with representation from the provincial education partners (FISA President, Ed Noot, represents independent schools on this committee), to produce a guidelines document for Independent School Authorities and School Districts that may consider a vaccine policy for their employees. Here is some salient information that a K-12 employer should be aware of when considering a potential employment vaccine policy:

·         The MoE is not the employer for public or independent schools. Independent School Authorities and Public School District Boards are the employers in the K–12 sector.

·         Decisions regarding any potential employer vaccine policy are not covered by a PHO Order.

·         FISA advocates for K-12 employers to have the right to determine if an employee vaccination policy would be appropriate, considering the context of their school/school district.

·         K-12 employers must consider the possible impacts an employee vaccine policy may have on the operations of their school and the continuity of student learning.

·         K-12 employers will need to consider legal precedent, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, employment law, reasonable policy accommodations and privacy laws.

·         K-12 employers should investigate potential costs associated with legal due diligence and potential employee accommodations they may consider.

·         The AHC’s goal is to produce a document for Independent School Authorities and School Districts that will provide guidelines for K-12 employers that may consider an employee vaccine policy.

·         FISA strongly recommends that independent schools that may be considering instituting an employee vaccination policy, await the release of the AHC’s guidelines, as they could prove to be valuable in your decision-making process.

It is FISA’s hope that these guidelines will supply valuable information and support for all K-12 employers as they consider important human resource policy decisions.

**COVID-19 School Exposure Webinar**

Many independent school leaders have reached out to members of the FISA Rapid Response Team (RRT) with COVID-19 related questions or for assistance with a school exposure. To serve schools in a proactive manner, the RRT will host a webinar on October 20th from 1:30-2:30 pm (PST) to go through the steps a school should take when they experience a COVID-19 exposure.

**Topic: Navigating a COVID-19 School Exposure 2021-2022**Time: Wed., Oct. 20, 2021 from 1:30-2:30 pm (PST)

[**https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84024454538?pwd=cHl4QlpXMGZyZnBnWkQydUdSTGlGdz09**](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84024454538?pwd=cHl4QlpXMGZyZnBnWkQydUdSTGlGdz09)

 **Meeting ID: 840 2445 4538
Passcode: 741216**

Dial by your location   +1 647 558 0588   +1 778 907 2071   +1 204 272 7920   Meeting ID: 840 2445 4538Passcode: 741216

**Independent School Funding**

BC independent schools received supplemental funding from two sources this year.

·         **$1.2M** was allocated in this year’s provincial budget to support **COVID Health and Safety** expenses. This grant was distributed to all Group 1, 2, and 3 schools and Provincial Independent Online Schools based on last year’s student FTE enrolment. The per student grant amount was approximately $15/student.

·         The one-time**$650K COVID Recovery Plan**grant.This grant is to be specifically used to support mental health and wellness initiatives in schools and should align with the [Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/key-principles-and-strategies-for-k-12-mental-health-promotion.pdf) document released in late July, 2021. This grant was also distributed to all Group 1, 2, and 3 schools and Provincial Independent Online Schools based on last year’s student FTE enrolment. The per student grant was approximately $8/student.

**Draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy**

The Ministry has recently made available the [draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/121/2021/09/Draft-K-12-Student-Reporting-Policy.pdf). This policy references only the School Act, and therefore is not binding on independent schools. However, the Ministry welcomes all perspectives and independent school leaders would be well suited to provide thoughtful and insightful comments through the survey available here <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/studentreporting/>.

**BCTC**

The BC Teachers Council will be conducting a survey for teachers that completed their teacher education program within the last 5 years and are now teaching within the BC K-12 system. FISA encourages those certificate holders that receive a request to participate in the survey to do so. The data collected helps to enhance teacher preparation programs, the profession and ultimately the learning experience for BC learners.

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**

FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nominations from our sector are proportionally low and do not reflect the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist within independent schools.

The deadline for completed nominations is January 7, 2022.

**Survey Request**

Bill 8 – 2020 grants the opportunity for independent school authorities and public school district brick-and-mortar schools to deliver all or part of an educational program to their students through online learning (offering an online program to students outside your authority or district requires an agreement with the Minister. The 16 Provincial Independent Online Schools (PIOS) operate under an agreement with the Minister).

BC School Districts have well defined geographic boundaries for their brick-and-mortar schools that determine the students that can be provided an online program by their district. Independent school authorities are not bound by geographic boundaries and FISA would like to get a sense of the furthest distance a student travels to each of our member schools. This data will be used by FISA to inform anticipated discussions with the Ministry to determine a range independent brick-and-mortar schools will be allotted to provide online programming for their students.

For each independent brick-and-mortar school, I ask that you provide the one-way distance (in kilometers) that the student that travels the furthest to your school site travels each day (I.E. FISA High School – 45km). Click [here](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBB820) for the [survey link](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBB820).

**FISA Update – October 8, 2021**

As we enter the Thanksgiving long weekend, I would like to share FISA’s sincere appreciation to the people that ensure independent schools operate well, especially within a pandemic environment filled with the pressures brought on by uncertainty, misinformation, fear and high levels of emotion and change. I recognize the complexity that school leaders face as they navigate their communities through the maze of provincial guidelines, COVID exposures and passionate parents with strong ideological beliefs. It is well known that our young people thrive within the school communities you lead.

Despite the message that is often portrayed in the media, schools are safe, kids and families are happy to be learning with their peers and research indicates that schools play an integral role in the health and wellbeing of the children and families. I know I will be joined by many others this weekend in giving thanks for the commendable service independent schools are providing during this pandemic to support students and the public good in BC.

**Employer Vaccination Policies**
The provincial government announced on Tuesday, October 5th that BC public service employees (~ 30,000) will be required to be vaccinated by November 22nd. This requirement does not apply to government agencies, Boards and Crown Corporations, or the K-12 sector. The Ministry has no authority to mandate or require employee vaccinations in the K-12 sector. Independent School Authorities and School District Boards are the employers and will need to perform due diligence if they consider pursuing a vaccination requirement for their employees.

The PHO does have the authority to mandate a vaccine requirement, as they did with the health sector, but there is presently no indication that Dr. Henry will do so.

The Ministry has created an ad hoc committee to review this matter and FISA is representing independent schools on this committee. The committee’s goal is to provide school employers with guidelines that outline factors employers should consider as part of their employee vaccination requirement decision making process. The committee will not be providing legal advice for school employers. We encourage independent school authorities to wait for the committee’s findings to be released before finalizing any employee vaccination policies, should the authority wish to implement such a policy.

**COVID-19 School Exposures**
Many independent school leaders have reached out to members of the FISA Rapid Response Team (RRT) with COVID-19 related questions or for assistance with a school exposure. To serve schools in a proactive manner, the RRT will host a webinar on October 20th from 1:30-2:30 pm (PST) to go through the steps a school should take when they experience a COVID-19 exposure.

**Topic: Navigating a COVID-19 School Exposure 2021-2022**Time: Wed., Oct. 20, 2021 from 1:30-2:30 pm (PST)[**https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84024454538?pwd=cHl4QlpXMGZyZnBnWkQydUdSTGlGdz09**](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84024454538?pwd=cHl4QlpXMGZyZnBnWkQydUdSTGlGdz09) **Meeting ID: 840 2445 4538
Passcode: 741216**Dial by your location   +1 647 558 0588   +1 778 907 2071   +1 204 272 7920   Meeting ID: 840 2445 4538Passcode: 741216

**Student Online Safety Sessions**
Schools are encouraged to have students in grades 8-12 take part in the Ministry’s student online safety sessions which will explore practices of digital citizenship and the consequences of cyberbullying. Teachers may register on behalf of their class and stream the event for the students to view together. These sessions are offered as part of the*erase* training series.

·         Nov. 22, 2021 10:30-11:30 am (PST)
<https://event-wizard.com/SocialMediaAwarenessStudentNov222021/0/register/>

·         Nov. 22, 2021 1:30-2:30 pm (PST)
<https://event-wizard.com/SocialMediaAwarenessStudentNov222021pm/0/register/>

To view the full *erase* schedule visit <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/erase/documents/erase-training-schedule.pdf>.

**School Trespassers**
Due to some recent occurrences where schools have experienced unwelcomed guests or protesters in or near schools, the BC government is considering options that would offer a level of protection for schools.

One available remedy for independent schools facing such situations would be to access the [BC Trespass Act](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/18003#section2).

Notice requirement:

·         Signs must be posted and visible at ordinary points of access to the property

·         Notice of trespass can also be given orally or in writing

Contact a peace officer to enforce a trespass prohibited order.

**Draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy**
The Ministry has recently made available the [draft K-12 Student Reporting Policy](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/121/2021/09/Draft-K-12-Student-Reporting-Policy.pdf). This policy references only the School Act, and therefore is not binding on independent schools. However, the Ministry welcomes all perspectives and independent school leaders would be well suited to provide thoughtful and insightful comments through the survey available here <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultation/studentreporting/>.

**BCTC**
The BC Teachers Council will be conducting a survey for teachers that completed their teacher education program within the last 5 years and are now teaching within the BC K-12 system. FISA encourages those certificate holders that receive a request to participate in the survey to do so. The data collected helps to enhance teacher preparation programs, the profession and ultimately the learning experience for BC learners.

**BC Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education**
FISA encourages independent school leaders to review the [Premier’s Awards for Excellence in Education page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/excellence-in-education) and I am sure you will recognize that there are many people within your independent school community that are deserving of a nomination in several of the categories. Independent school representatives have previously won awards but the nomination numbers from our sector are low and not indicative of the high quality of people and accomplishments that exist in independent schools.

**FISA Update – October 1, 2021**

**Health and Safety**

* Recent decisions by the Vancouver and Surrey School Boards to impose mask regulations that were out of alignment with the K-12 provincial guidelines initiated some inquiries from independent schools to the FISA office. The most recent [public health order](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-face-coverings.pdf)on face coverings (Section 13 - September 28, 2021) states:

 **13***Nothing in this order prevents an operator, school or post-secondary*

*institution from having additional requirements in relation to face coverings.*

Earlier today Minister Whiteside and Dr. Henry announced that the [K-12 Guidelines](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf) have been amended and will require mask use for K-12 students starting on October 4, 2021.

In advance of the announcement, Dr. Rika Gustafson shared the following message with K-12 school leaders:

* + As anticipated, K-12 case counts are increasing, as those under the age of 12 are not yet eligible to receive a vaccination.
	+ The volume of testing for K-12 students has increased dramatically but the 5 -11 age group has the lowest percentage of positive diagnoses among the unvaccinated population.
	+ Transmission continues to be primarily from home or community gatherings/activities outside of school.
	+ The Delta variant is more infectious but young people are experiencing milder symptoms and illness.
	+ Getting vaccinated when accessible, staying home when you are sick, proper hand cleaning protocols and mask use are all effective ways to control the spread of COVID-19.

This information is supported by [Dr. Henry’s analysis](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20210929/briefingcovid192021092816.pdf) contained in today’s DM Bulletin.

* The BCCDC posted a [document](http://www.bccdc.ca/schools/Documents/Contact_tracing_schools_2021.pdf) on September 28th that reviews the contact tracing and notification process health authorities are to be using.

**Rapid Response Team**

FISA continues to provide support to independent schools experiencing a COVID-19 exposure event through our Rapid Response Team (RRT). As BC is a large province, we have a large team!

        FISA Association Leads

o   Elizabeth Moore – ISABC

o Ed Noot – SCSBC

o   Phil Hills – ACSIBC

o   Kent Dykstra – AMS

o   Sandy Marshall & Lesya Balsevich – CISBC

·         Regional Health Liaisons

o   Edgar Veldman – Northern Health

o   Peter Terpstra – Island Health

o   Art Therrien – Interior Health

o   Andrew Shirkoff – Vancouver Coastal Health

o   Stuart Morris – Fraser Health

·         Mental Health Coordinators

o   Michelle Hussey

o   Jamie Morris

·         FISA Office

o   Janet Dhanani

o   Shawn Chisholm

The ISCOVIDLead@fisabc.ca email address is monitored daily, including on weekends, by Janet and it is the main way to access RRT support when needed.

Independent school authorities that operate brick and mortar schools which are considering temporarily closing all or part of their school to in-person learning programs due to a COVID-19 situation **must consult with their local health authority and the FISA RRT in advance of making the decision** **to close** (including moving all or part of your school to online learning platforms). The final decision will remain with the school authority, but the health authority official and RRT will assist in assessing the situation. If a school is unsure of how to connect with their health authority, the FISA RRT will assist in making the connection.

First Nations Schools are welcome to contact the FISA RRT for support as needed. However, First Nation Schools are not required to submit COVID-19 exposure reports or to consult with the RRT when determining whether to close their school due to a COVID-19 situation.

**FSA Update**

When a user inputs a PEN for a student who is already enrolled at another school in the **“PEN”** field of the **“Add or Re-enroll Student(s)”** screen, a message similar to “This PEN is currently enrolled in Sample School 11-A” will be displayed. This is not an error message. It is for informational purposes only.

The user can continue to input information in the **“Legal Last Name, Legal First Name and Grade”** fields and select the **Save**button at the bottom of the page to enroll the student.

If you have questions, please contact Denise.Philadelphia@gov.bc.ca.

**FISA Update – September 24, 2021**

**COVID-19 Additional Funding**

Earlier this week, the Ministry provided notification to school authorities outlining the authority’s Recovery Plan funding amount. FISA is appreciative of the provincial government’s efforts to provide one-time additional funding to assist Group 1, 2, and 3 independent schools with costs incurred in support of health and safety compliance measures. However, we have expressed our disappointment with the government’s allocation process. Independent schools will receive 7.7 % of the $15.6M allocated to BC K-12 schools, yet independent schools serve over 13% of the student population. FISA continues to advocate for the fair and equitable funding distribution of supplemental grants that target public health initiatives for all BC children.

We take solace in the fact that the $650K provincial grant to support mental health in schools funding was allocated in an equitable and proportional manner. The Ministry requested FISA’s assistance in determining how best to use these funds. The FISA Directors voted to distribute the grant directly to independent school authorities based on FTE enrollment to use in support of local initiatives aligned with the [Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/key-principles-and-strategies-for-k-12-mental-health-promotion.pdf). The Ministry will inform school authorities in the coming days as to their mental health funding amount. Each of the FISA associations will provide a report to the Ministry as to grant usage among their member schools.

**COVID-19 Health and Safety Update**

Today’s DM Bulletin included a much-anticipated [Q & A](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20210924/2021-09-24---covid-update-isb.pdf)document that addresses topics such as proof of vaccination requirements, temporary school closure procedures, and symptoms of illness/return to school guidelines. This guidance is sure to be well received by the K-12 sector as it provides sought after clarity to some of the most pressing COVID-19 related concerns.

FISA anticipates that the Ministry will provide further guidance in addressing mask exemptions for students, staff, and visitors shortly. In the meantime, we remind schools that 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-guidlines.pdf) state that all K-12 staff and students in Grades 4-12 are required to wear a mask indoors and on school buses, with specific exceptions allowed. School leaders can use [BCCDC mask use](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks) messaging when communicating with their school communities as to the role that mask usage plays as one of the many layers of protection to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially as members of the school community may be immune-compromised or have other health sensitivities and these conditions may not necessarily be disclosed widely.

**Provincial Truth and Reconciliation Day**

One of the privileges of working in the FISA office is witnessing the good work happening in independent schools across the province. We are humbled in hearing about the various ways schools are honouring the Sept. 30th Truth and Reconciliation Day. Whether it is through connecting with a local First Nations band, listening to the wisdom of an Elder in-person or virtually, holding difficult conversations regarding Canada and Indigenous relationships - past and present, honouring the residential school survivors, or engaging in self-reflection as to your own relationship with this land and its peoples, we encourage you to consider Sept. 30th not as “The” day of Truth and Reconciliation but as “a” day of continual progress towards the goal of being the fair, friendly, and just nation that we proclaim ourselves to be.

**FISA Update - September 17, 2021**

**Health and Safety**

* After the first couple of weeks of most IS reopening, there remain many questions from the K-12 sector that require clarification. FISA is appreciative of schools that have reached out and shared their questions. Please be assured that these questions are shared by many other IS and have been shared with the BCCDC and the MoE. I request your patience as we await further clarification from these organizations. There is ongoing work happening to produce an education sector specific FAQ document, within a very dynamic and changing environment, and we anticipate this will be shared with schools as soon as possible.

* After several questions from IS on contact tracing/school notification, FISA would like to provide some clarification on the adjustments health authorities (HAs) are making:
* While the process may have changed the outcomes remain the same – everyone with a lab confirmed COVID-19 positive test result has their case investigated by contract tracers.
* All confirmed cases and close contacts will be contacted directly by their respective HA.
* Schools may not be contacted by the HA unless it is necessary to do so (a cluster at the school, requires more information on close contacts, confirmation that the school is an exposure site…).
* Vaccine status will inform the direction the HA will give to the confirmed cases and the close contacts (most likely fully vaccinated close contacts will be requested to self-monitor while unvaccinated contacts will be asked to self-isolate).
* The [COVID-19 Exposure Report form](https://fisabc.ca/independent-school-covid-19-exposure-report-form/) should be submitted to ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca on the same day that a school learns of an exposure from the HA. Exposure Reports do not need to be submitted for self-disclosures of a positive test result, until the HA confirms the school is an exposure site.
* The FISA Rapid Response Team (RRT) is available to assist schools with a COVID-19 exposure (self-disclosed or HA confirmed). Contact ISCovidLead@fisabc.ca for assistance.

* Requirements for schools in relation to the proof of vaccine (POV) order are also evolving.
* POV was instituted to encourage greater vaccine uptake in BC.
* It is not intended to disrupt K-12 learning events.
* Further information is required to determine school POV practices when normal school operations intersect with the gathering and events orders (field trips, spectators attending school events…). At this point IS are advised not to implement school specific POV policies, and to await further clarification from the MoE.

***erase* Training Opportunities**

The *Hybrid Basic Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) / Basic Digital Threat Risk Assessment (DTA)* offered last year has been renamed to *Overview of the Provincial VTRA Protocol and Digital Threat Assessment*.

There are two *Overview of the Provincial VTRA Protocol and DTA*sessions arranged specifically for independent school personnel. These sessions meet the inspection requirements for Basic VTRA and Basic DTA training.

November 9, 2021 9:00am to 3:30pm (online) - Register [HERE](https://event-wizard.com/OverviewDTAVTRAOnlineNov92021/0/register/)

January 24, 2022 9:00am to 3:30pm (online) - Register [HERE](https://event-wizard.com/OverviewDTAVTRAOnlineJan242022/0/register/)

Independent school personnel are also welcome to attend the trainings open to both the public and independent school sectors, as listed on the **main erase training schedule**[**HERE**.](https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/erase/documents/erase-training-schedule-2021-22.pdf)

*erase* training is current for a maximum of 3 years. Training taken in 2018-2019, or before, is expired and needs to be refreshed this school year. For more information regarding the*erase* training requirements for independent schools visit the Ministry's[Safe & Caring School Communities](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/legislation-policy/independent-schools/safe-caring-school-communities) webpage.

**Independent School Policies**

* FISA and the Ministry of Education collaborated over the past year to update the **STUDENT RECORDS REQUIREMENTS AND BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (2012).** The [revised document](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/independent-schools/student_record_independent_schools.pdf) (2021) can be accessed through the [FISA website](https://fisabc.ca/), under the Policy Aids tab. The revisions pertain to Part III - ACCESS TO AND DISCLOSURE OF STUDENT RECORDS and clarify that professionals who are planning for, or delivering education, health, social or other support services to a student will be granted access (consent not required).

**2020 – 2021 FSA Results**

* Each school year the MoE facilitates a FSA Marking Monitoring process to review the accuracy of in-school FSA assessments. Several IS teachers participated in this process along with their public school colleagues this past summer. During these sessions sample FSA assessments are reviewed by several evaluators to determine the accuracy of the initial assessment. I am pleased to report that the independent school grade 4 & 7 samples were determined to be over 95% accurate. Well done! A copy of the FSA 2020/21 District Marking Monitoring Report IS is available in the ‘members only’ section of the [FISA website](https://fisabc.ca/).

**FISA Weekly Update Archive**

We have established an archive of the FISA weekly updates which is accessible through the “members only” section of the https://fisabc.ca/ website. Please contact info@fisabc.ca if you have difficulty logging in. Thank you to the principal who offered this helpful suggestion.

**FISA Update - September 10, 2021**

Welcome back!

The initial feedback FISA has received from independent schools is that the 2021 – 2022 school startup has been smoother than the previous school year, even though a changing pandemic environment still requires clarification and resolution of issues that come your way.

I do want to share my appreciation for the efforts the Ministry of Education, the BCCDC and the Provincial Health Officers put in this summer to be responsive to the changing dynamics of the pandemic. Balancing health and safety practices that provide safe school environments while being as minimally invasive as possible to ensure effective school operations – is an art!

Of course, these guidelines require implementation in schools and I salute the dedicated efforts of the leaders in independent schools who navigate these additional demands to establish safe and impactful school communities.

**Health and Safety**

* With the start of school, planning is well underway for fieldtrips that provide enhanced learning experiences for students off school grounds. With the advent of a provincial vaccine card, with requirements for people 12 years and older, many schools are looking for clarification on offsite school trips. The government’s [vaccine card website](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/vaccinecard.html#required) was updated today so please take time to review this document and any further information contained in the DM Bulletin. This website provides some direction for schools but many other, more nuanced questions still exist and FISA continues to make the Ministry of Education aware of scenarios that require clarification.

Examples of places where proof of vaccination are not required:

* Before and after school programs for K to 12 students
* Worship services
* Before and after school programs for K to 12 students
* Student events and activities in K to 12 public and independent schools
* Indoor organized events with less than 50 people, except adult sports
* Hotels, resorts, cabins and campsites
* Public libraries

Examples of places that will require a vaccine card are:

* Indoor concerts, theatre, dance and symphony events
* Gyms, exercise facilities/studios and recreation facilities
* Indoor organized events with 50 or more people. For example: Wedding receptions, organized parties, conferences and workshops

* The fall is historically when class and student photos occur and having most of the people in the picture wearing a mask can be aesthetically displeasing. Please know that the current guidelines do allow for temporary removal of masks for the purpose of identification (which can apply to class photos). Please spread students out as much as possible for the photo and, where feasible, encourage the photos to be taken outside.

* Independent schools are encouraged to establish a mask exemption request process that reinforces the Ministry’s guidance which states “All students in Grades 4 -12 are required to wear a mask" expect when an exemption is granted as per the exceptions listed on page 20 of the [guidelines](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf).

**Rapid Response Team**

* FISA was once again selected to facilitate the work of the Independent Schools Rapid Response Team (ISRRT). FISA will continue to receive school exposure reports and provide supports, along with your respective association COVID Leads, for schools that require direction. The ISRRT Health Authority Liaisons will also share public health updates to schools within their jurisdiction. With an eye to pandemic recovery, the ISRRT also has added two members (Jamie Morris and Michelle Hussey, FISA Mental Health Coordinators) that will focus on providing schools with mental health and wellbeing resources and virtual Pro D.

**School Closure Policy**

* In the September 3rd DM Bulletin there was an item addressing the requirement for a [School Closure Policy](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20210903/indepschoolclosurepolicy.pdf) for independent schools. For schools scheduled for External Inspections or Monitoring Visits this school year you will have noticed that this policy is contained within the inspection catalogues. To be clear, this policy commences in the 2021/22 school year and school authorities of **all new independent schools** **are required to develop and maintain a school closure risk mitigation plan during the first five years of operation** to minimize the impact of a potential school closure on the school community. Therefore, independent schools and authorities established previous to 2021/22 are **not** required to have a school closure policy.

**International Students**

* The Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA) created an international student portal for students arriving at the Vancouver International Airport, to streamline the entry process. The CBSA has put the [YVR Student Portal](https://www.yvr.ca/en/students) on hold. Some challenges were identified due to pandemic factors and irregular air service connections, resulting in students not arriving on the day they originally planned and had communicated via the portal.

**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.**](https://fisabc.ca/services/schools/formsapplications/) FISA thanks the BC Arts Council and the Province of BC for their generosity in making these grants possible.

**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 27th 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.

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**FISA Update - August 27, 2021**

**2021 – 2022 School Start Up**

* On August 23rd Dr. Henry announced the implementation of a vaccination passport for non-essential public gatherings. The BC vaccination passport requirement commences on September 13th 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](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf)  and commenced on August 25th.

* 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](https://www.fraserhealth.ca/news/2021/Aug/fraser-health-releases-data-review-of-covid-19-transmission-in-surrey-schools#.YSk1C9NKjjA) and [Vancouver Coastal Health Authority](http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/school-exposures) 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](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/international-education/resources#health) - 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 24th 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>

The August 24th 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-guidlines.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 9th, 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 3rd the BC government announced that provincial employees will be granted a statutory holiday on September 30th 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 30th 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](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/scholarships/scholarships-awards/bc-international-student-ambassador).

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.

*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), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.*

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