

BOARD OF EDUCATION

October 27, 2021

Dear Students, Parents, Caregivers and Staff,

As you may know, for the last number of weeks our Board of Education has been engaged in in-depth discussions, consultations and work to consider whether or not a vaccine mandate for staff could or should be introduced in New Westminister.

First and foremost: our Board stands behind supporting vaccinations as one of the most important ways that we can protect the people we live and work with. But as vaccine mandates are one of many interventions available, we must also use the data and recommendations from our health and regulatory bodies to guide us, as we weigh the possible benefits against the risks and challenges.

Our considerations have been based on a number of factors, including:

- We used the [K-12 Sector Guidelines for Vaccination Policies](#) document as a guide – a document created by an Advisory Committee of education and health stakeholder groups, convened and led by the Ministry of Education.
- We sought and were provided [detailed data](#) and guidance from the health authorities who are the lead in this health crisis, information that was jointly presented by both Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health, which included these highlights:
 - The data from the first six weeks of the year continues to show us that the number of school-associated cases of COVID-19 are lower than case counts or transmission in general community ... showing us that the protocols we have in place are working.
 - New Westminister, as a city, continues to be one of the leading municipalities when it comes to measuring full vaccination rates.
 - Transmission is significantly reduced when target immunization rates are met. In BC those rates are between 80 and 90%.
 - Schools can safely operate with lower than 100% vaccine coverage.
- We asked for an internal HR analysis, including:
 - Confirming that the communities the majority of our staff live in also share some of the highest rates of being fully vaccinated.
 - [BCTF produced research](#) that shows the vaccination rate of teachers already exceeds that of the general population (according to the survey, 94% of teachers

- in BC report being fully vaccinated, with another 1% saying they are partially vaccinated and intending to get their second dose).
- Analysis looking at privacy concerns, possible implications of needing to provide accommodation for staff, and potential subsequent impacts on school staffing levels and the learning supports available for students.

After carefully weighing the data and guidance and taking into consideration the measures we already have in place, and those that can be applied if additional need arises, the Board of Education has decided that we will not move forward with a staff vaccine mandate in New Westminster.

Again, our Board of Education fully supports vaccinations. We will continue to work alongside health authorities as we seek out more ways to encourage and support vaccinations for every staff member who is eligible and would like to join their peers in taking this step.

In thanks,



Gurveen Dhaliwal
Board Chair

