



Dear Parent/Caregiver,

**Re: Communicable Disease Closures and Continuity of Learning Plans for ARES**

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) is working to enhance safety for all staff and students as the risk from the Omicron variant continues. We have also developed plans for continued student learning in response to the real possibility of school closures.

**Enhanced Safety**

To keep everyone safe and reduce the likelihood of school closures, and to minimize the spread of the virus in schools please continue to:

- Do daily health check and stay home when sick.
- Wear masks in accordance with the [Provincial Health Officer order on masks in public indoor settings.](#)
- Clean hands regularly.

**Some safety enhancements in our school's Communicable Disease Plan include:**

*Note: ARES has maintained a high level of safety protocols since the beginning of this pandemic and many these enhanced safety protocols have been in place at ARES since the beginning of the year, including the staggering of breaks, and virtual assemblies.*

- 1. Implement strategies that prevent crowding during class transition times. For example, stagger start/stop times and recess/lunch breaks.**
  - ARES has 2 recess times that are split between the upstairs and downstairs. The downstairs classes are out on the playground while the upstairs classes are still in class learning, and again at lunch the upstairs is outside playing while the downstairs is eating and then they switch.
- 2. Hold school gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, etc.) virtually.**
  - At ARES all full school and/or large event gatherings will be held virtually.
- 3. Hold staff-only gatherings (e.g., meetings, professional development activities) virtually.**
  - At ARES all gatherings for staff will be held virtually.
- 4. Limit visitors to those who are supporting activities that directly benefit student learning and well-being (e.g., teacher and EA candidates, immunizers, meal program volunteers, etc.).**
  - At ARES any appointment needed at the school needs to be booked in advance and with an appointment.
  - At ARES all visitors must sign in and out at the front doors, and must adhere to all protocols in the building, including Mask wearing, hand hygiene, and social distancing.

**5. Pause extracurricular sports tournaments (consistent with the December PHO Order).**

- At ARES all extracurricular activities are on pause. This includes the Drama Club which will take a two week pause with the intention to begin again on Tuesday January 25, 2022.

**6. Use all available space to maximize space between people. For example, different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations (e.g., different desk and table formations).**

- At ARES staff have been working to arrange desks so that students are not sitting directly face to face. In some instances where tables are the only furniture available for students, the staff has added additional tables to distance the students and increase the space between children.
- At ARES the breakfast program will change the seating arrangement to a U-formation to ensure students are not sitting directly face to face. We will also encourage students to do a take and go option for breakfast.

**7. Everyone able to do so wears a mask.**

- Please ensure you are sending your child with a proper fitting mask, and are washing and/or replacing the mask daily. We have masks available for students on an emergency basis. Students must wear masks while indoors at all times, and on school buses. Masks are not required outside, and classes take many opportunities throughout the day to get outside and have mask breaks.

**8. Do daily health checks.**

- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/kindergarten-to-grade-12/covid/daily-health-check-english.pdf>

**9. Stay home when sick.**

### School Closures

Decisions about closures are made separately based on what is happening in the school. Most students affected by closures will transition to remote learning.

#### Types of Possible School Closures:

- **Health closure** of a school determined by the local health authority due to the COVID-19 case count in, or related to, a school.
- **Functional closure** of a school determined by the school or school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high absenteeism of all staff or certain employees required for a school to function and the inability to replace those absences.

**Service Disruption:**

- A **Transportation Closure** due to a lack of staff to be able to provide the required level of transportation services for students. This would likely be due the absenteeism of bus drivers and/or mechanics and the inability to replace those absences. This will not lead to a school closure.

The decision to close schools is under the authority of the Medical Health Officer or the Superintendent ([School Act ss.90 \(2\)](#)).

**Notice to Families**

Any school closure will be announced as early as possible so families can prepare for child care. The principal will communicate to staff and all families informing them of the upcoming closure and the anticipated length of the closure.

Transportation closures because of lack of bus drivers or inability to operate buses safely will be announced as early as possible so families can prepare for transportation to schools. Schools will remain open to students in the case of a transportation closure.

Students are to wait at their assigned bus stop no longer than 15 minutes for pick-up and then return home.

Notice of any closure will also be communicated through the following:

- School and district websites
- SD8 app and social media
- Email from the school principal
- Other media, as appropriate

**Continuity of Learning**

During a school closure, learning will transition to remote learning.

**Staged Closure Process**

- Day 1: Students and families will be informed of the upcoming closure and the anticipated length of the closure, and the school will remain open.
- Day 2: Transition Day. Only students of essential service workers and students with diverse learning needs will attend school.  
Day 3: School administrators, TTOCs, custodians, and students of essential service workers and students with diverse learning needs will remain on-site. All other staff and students must work remotely.

Families are asked to advise their principal to arrange for support for families of essential service workers and students with diverse learning needs. Families that do not have access to Internet are asked to contact their teacher to arrange for printed resource materials during the closure.

During a functional closure, in consultation with Public Health, on-site school services will be provided to students of essential service workers and students with diverse learning needs. School administrators, custodians, and students of essential service workers and students with

diverse learning needs will remain on site. All other staff and students will work remotely, and students will transition to remote learning.

Teachers may arrange collection of supplies for students by families as required.

In the case of a health closure, the school district will seek guidance from Interior Health to confirm if on-site supports can safely continue to be provided.

Thank you for your continued patience and participation while we all work together through the complications of this pandemic. At the core of everything we do is providing a nurturing environment so all learners can excel.

If you have any questions about our enhanced safety protocols, possible closures or other information related to School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, please contact me.

Sincerely,

**Darryl Adams | Principal**

**Adam Robertson Elementary School**

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