



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS  
REGIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

October 20, 2020

Dear Parents,

This letter is to update you with respect to our school, and to correct some of the misinformation and rumors which have been circulating throughout our community.

Last week we were informed by Vancouver Coastal Health of a small number of separate, non-related positive cases of COVID-19 in our school community. As a result of these cases, Vancouver Coastal Health has advised some staff members and students to remain home and self-isolate, or has advised those at lower risk to self-monitor for any potential symptoms.

Students who have been instructed to **self-isolate** must remain at home for the period of quarantine specified. Students who are instructed to **self-monitor** may continue to attend school, and are advised by Vancouver Coastal Health to do so. If your student has not received a phone call or letter from Vancouver Coastal Health, then they are considered not to be at increased risk of exposure, and they can safely attend school.

The recommendations from Vancouver Coastal Health are based on extensive contact tracing which takes into account the duration and proximity of potential exposure. The school has assisted with the contact tracing procedure, drawing upon some of the measures we have put into place including fixed seating plans, separation of cohorts, etc.

At this point in time the cases are isolated and individuals who have been isolated are at home for the quarantine period.

Anything else you may have heard or read with respect to the identity or quantity of cases may be incorrect. It is very unfortunate that some individuals have sought to propagate incorrect information on social media, even going as far as to incorrectly identify individuals as active cases who **do not** have COVID-19. They have also posted information to social media despite explicit instructions from Vancouver Coastal Health **not** to. The result of the misinformation and rumors is that a significant number of students are now choosing to stay home from school when they do not need to.

All K-12 schools in British Columbia are currently operating in Stage 2 of the Ministry's Five-Step Framework for K-12 Education. Stage 2 specifies full-time instruction for all students for the maximum instructional time possible within cohort limits" (*Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings updated September 3, 2020*).

There is no direction from the government to provide remote learning during Stage 2. However, our school has elected to provide a synchronous video link service for classes

currently in session. We have chosen to provide this service for students who have been required to stay at home and do not wish to fall behind in their studies during a faster-paced semester schedule. It is **not** intended to provide students who can come to school with an option to stay home.

Under Stage 2 the government's funding for your child's education is dependent on their regular attendance in person at school. The government audits our attendance records on May 15 each year to confirm our funding. Our school is not in a position to provide instruction to students who may not be funded.

If it is your intention to have your child stay home for an extended period of time, then it would be best for you to withdraw your child and have them sign up with a registered distributed learning institution.

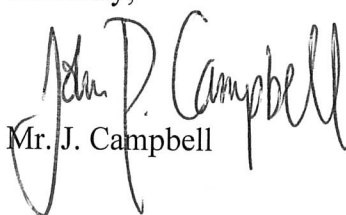
We are confident that the measures we have put in place make it possible for your child to attend school safely. During our contact tracing discussions with Vancouver Coastal Health they have expressed their satisfaction with the measures we have put in place.

In order to continue to provide a safe environment for your child, we would ask you to assist us with the following:

- Please ensure that your child is healthy before sending them to school. If they are sick, they must stay home.
- Please ensure that your child is coming to school with a face covering. These are required in the common areas and when it is not possible to distance from others.
- If your child has been asked to stay home and self-isolate, please inform our office so that we can code their absences correctly and provide them with online support to see them through their isolation.
- Please refrain from posting misinformation to social media. This is most unhelpful for us and for Vancouver Coastal Health as it creates confusion rather than clarity.

We will continue to provide you with the information you need to know, and which we are permitted to share. Please bear in mind that we are bound by privacy requirements from providing certain information, and our communication to specific individuals is sent to us from Vancouver Coastal Health. We urge all parents to read our correspondence carefully so that you have the facts and can make informed decisions.

Sincerely,

  
Mr. J. Campbell