



Letter to teachers and staff  
June 25, 2020

Dear educators and school staff,

I want to thank you for your incredible efforts in these unprecedented times. It has not been easy, but the entire school system has truly pulled together to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and provide safe environments for students, staff and communities, all while supporting continuity of learning for our students.

From the start, you embraced new ways to engage students. You adapted their curriculum for Zoom and other digital platforms while offering additional resources to students who needed them, supporting their education in ways you may never have before. You made sure, in an uncertain time, that students were engaged by organizing virtual music performances, phys-ed video challenges, Indigenous cooking classes and video scavenger hunts.

Right after spring break, you welcomed almost 5,000 children of essential service workers and children with complex needs safely back into the classroom.

Some of you were also redeployed to help with everything from cleaning to meal programs. In fact, almost 75,000 healthy meals were distributed to families every week from March to June thanks to your efforts.

To support families who lacked technology for remote learning, school districts, with your assistance, arranged almost 23,000 computer and technology loans helping families with everything from internet connections to tech support.

I know custodians took extra care to maintain the highest safety standards for students and staff; I know staff found creative ways to celebrate their graduates while maintaining appropriate social distance; and I have heard numerous examples of school staff, teachers and administrators going above and beyond to connect with students. I am so grateful for all of your efforts.

When we expanded in-class learning on June 1, you welcomed almost 200,000 students back into the classroom while still supporting many students who continued with remote learning. Behind the scenes, your efforts included creating greater space between desks, mapping out hallway travel patterns for students and staff, providing more guidance around hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, cleaning of high-contact surfaces and many more extraordinary measures. Your hard work did not go unnoticed! We've received tremendously positive



feedback, with so many parents telling us how much it has meant to make those in-person connections again, boosting children's physical and emotional wellbeing. We continue to receive calls and requests from other jurisdictions that want to learn from our approach. Your contribution has been paramount to the success we've seen so far.

Our goal is to have even more students in class in September, as long as it is safe to do so based on the advice of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. But it is absolutely critical you know that we are prepared for several return to school scenarios based on how the situation evolves over the summer and the science-based advice of Dr. Henry. More information is available in our [year end news release](#) published today, June 25<sup>th</sup>. As you may be aware, the Ministry of Education has developed a [five-stage approach](#) to operate schools. Schools have plans in place for each stage, ensuring they are ready to make changes if there is a second wave of COVID-19. The health and safety of our students is our highest priority.

I have also appointed a steering committee with BCTF, CUPE, other education partners and public health representatives to guide our planning going forward. The Committee will review lessons learned from March to June; identify existing and potential issues and propose solutions; update the Education Programs Guide for all return to school scenarios; and develop and support parent and teacher resources. As we have throughout, we will follow the direction of Dr. Bonnie Henry our Provincial Health Officer, while working closely with the BCTF, CUPE and all our education partners to ensure we are safely supporting students, teachers and staff.

You have demonstrated heartening resilience, leadership and strength throughout this crisis. Because of your hard work, B.C. is on the right track, but we have much more to do. What we have learned already, through these past few months, is that we are stronger when we work together. Remember, this is not forever; this is just for now.

I hope you enjoy some relaxing and recharging time. Have a safe and happy summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rob Fleming,  
Minister of Education



## More Information

- 5-stage K-12 Education Restart plan  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf>
- Accurate, timely information about schools, programs and educational services, including regularly updated frequently asked questions in multiple languages, is available at: [www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools](http://www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools).
- For the provincial health officer's orders, notices and guidance, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance](http://www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance).
- The best source of COVID-19 health information can be found at the BC Centre for Disease Control website <http://www.bccdc.ca>.
- For mental health and online safety support, all families have access to ERASE – Expect Respect and a Safe Education – available here: [www.erase.gov.bc.ca](http://www.erase.gov.bc.ca).
- If your child is struggling with a problem big or small, they can also call the Kids Help Line, a free resource available to them at: 1-800-668-6868.