

PAC Meeting
Thursday Apr 29, 2021
Virtual meeting - by Zoom

Attendance:

Executive (Enoch Lam, Tim Vines, Bryan Dar Santos & Jennifer Baker); regrets from Fiona Lo
Administrators (Jacquie LaVoie and Cynthia Ramamonjisoa)
PAC members - 86 peak total Zoom attendees, including PAC exec and School Admin

Call to order at 7:08 by Denise Cousineau, seconded by Gwen Floyd.

PAC Exec Report

- 30 new laptops have been purchased and are in use.
- Spirit wear is available with deadline tomorrow.
- Yearbook will be happening, for sale now on Munch-a-Lunch; credits are usable for purchase; class photos have been taken with a re-take scheduled for next week; parent lead is Denise Cousineau.
- Bike to School week May 31-June 4th; parent lead is Lisa Corriveau.
- PAC seeking executive and committee leads for next year. Committees:
Food (pizza day), Bike to school, Halloween Haunt, After School programs, Book Fair, Diversity, Ski Club, Yearbook, Choir, Donations/fundraising, Kindergarten Welcome, Gardening, Munch-a-Lunch coordinator, District PAC representative.
- Treasurer report (presented by Enoch Lam; regrets from Treasurer Fiona Lo): Direct donations at 75% of expected; many expenses not possible due to pandemic circumstances therefore there is still in surplus (~\$7,500) despite projected loss. Budget document available for review upon request.

Guest Speaker

Presentation by Dr. David Goldfarb, medical microbiologist/pediatric infectious disease specialist at Women's & Children's hospital, as well as LEB parent. *Very brief notes of Dr. Goldfarb's data-supported presentation and Q&A are below; these notes were recorded in brief to the best of our ability and have not been verified by Dr. Goldfarb.*

- Children have low risk of severe acute disease with COVID-19 despite traditionally often being more vulnerable to other respiratory diseases.
- Variants increase risk of mortality (data shown for B.1.1.7) for all ages but risk is still very low (absolute mortality risk of <0.005%).
- Children are less likely to get infected when exposed to contacts, estimated to be ~44% lower risk relative to those older than 20 years old (meta-analysis data presented), though reasons are not fully understood.
- Contact tracing in schools in several jurisdictions (Australia, Ireland, Singapore) has found limited infection rate and transmission in schools relative to those in homes.

- Ongoing study at BC schools that Dr. Goldfarb is involved with is looking at exposure risk for staff and students via serology testing, as well as health and well being. Active virus tests also being done for close contacts of school cases.
- Greater community transmission has led to some volatility and somewhat greater positivity rate for children in recent weeks. Analysis of school cases (staff or students attending a school) have not shown greater rates than in the public.
- VCH schools situation - similar to other jurisdictions, the school rate generally reflects the community rate.
- Variants of concern in VCH: as of March 29th 37 cases of several variants; a mix of students and staff infected. VOC situation getting more complex.
- In summary: schools are not devoid of risk, but it's not as bad as it could be given the densities of people and number of known cases in schools.

Q&A with Dr. Goldfarb

Q: How is transmission in Fraser Health schools?

A: not as familiar with specific Fraser Health data; presented data for BC and more for VCH. Most regions in BC are similar trends but lower than FHA.

Q: Does spot testing for VOCs provide adequate information?

A: Majority of cases currently are variants, so those tests don't necessarily provide extra information; difficult to determine where to invest focus, main area of interest would be variants breaking through in vaccinated populations. Variety of tests and sequencing efforts mean strategic implementation is required, and different VOCs don't necessarily require different clinical response.

Q: Other jurisdictions are closing schools, why not BC?

A: Different approaches in different jurisdictions are based on a variety of considerations; benefits of schools are recognized. Close monitoring on in-school transmission, including studies mentioned in the presentation, and it has not been recommended at this time.

Q: Does asymptomatic testing lead to false negatives?

A: A complex issue; infectiousness of asymptomatic cases are lower, perhaps less so than pre-symptomatic stages; some tests can pick up trace positivity for a long period after infectiousness (long tail);

Q: Can children carry the virus without testing positive?

A: Up to 1/3 of children or more may have asymptomatic infections or have very few symptoms but have similar viral loads and therefore testing should work, including serology testing.

Q: To what extent can symptomatic patients transmit?

A: The more symptomatic you are the more likely you are to transmit; many asymptomatic or very mildly symptomatic can be positive and transmit because they are experiencing more social contacts due to less isolation.

Q: Has reducing school sizes in high school in some districts been effective at reducing transmission?

A: So far very little transmission has occurred within secondary schools in VSB.

Q: Case notifications in a class prompt parents to keep kids home, does this possibly help in reducing spread despite it not being a public health measure?

A: Infectious cases in schools have been followed up and told to isolate to determine the rate of transmission to close contacts and it has been very low in other jurisdictions; being repeated here. We do know less about P1 variant than others, this is being monitored closely.

Q: Why does public health not use school information to determine close contacts?

A: Not first-hand knowledge; some further integration and greater efficiency is still being attempted.

Q: Please describe mild symptoms in children.

A: C&W collection centre study has shown that younger kids aren't great at describing or relaying symptoms, so more common symptoms in kids can be fever, loss of taste & smell (minority of cases but strongly linked to COVID-19), nasal congestion, fatigue. Generally mild cold or flu symptoms.

Q: Are close contacts defined by contact tracers only?

A: Some jurisdictions use different definitions; US CDC definition is used for 'close contacts'. Lower amounts of exposure should lead to less positivity.

Q: How similar is the situation at LEB to cited data?

A: Data is not yet clear, no specific information available for those cases.

Admin Report - Jacquie & Cynthia

COVID-19 update:

- Notification process at the school: Vancouver School District Health & Safety Team in constant contact with Vancouver Coastal Health who are monitoring cases in the school community; happening in real time however some delays are natural.
- A case in a division leads to notice to the whole division, without names of children, and a general letter is sent to the whole school. The statement about "no reason to be concerned" in this letter has been poorly received by some parents and this feedback has been shared with the District.
- VCH is tasked with contacting relevant individuals, this is not a school responsibility. The Health & Safety department at the District is also helpful.
- Confidentiality: we appreciate parents sharing information with Admins directly but this is not required, as it helps precipitate a faster response. No personal information is shared with the wider community.

- Over 90% of cases identified in schools have not resulted in additional transmission within the schools; safety protocols in place are being maintained; cohorts have been shown to be helpful at containing spread.
- VCH and VSB are making test kits available at the school for kids who show symptoms at school so that families can take them home to do a test.
- An identified exposure prompts a review of health and safety protocols.

Q&A not suitable due to inadequate time, but answers to the many questions in the chat will be attempted to be addressed and circulated at a later time. Further questions may be submitted to the Admin or PAC email.

Quebec virtual exchange - this is ongoing despite some complications with the paired school doing some remote learning.

Grade 7 leaving ceremony - a plan is formulating with students and teachers; ideas welcome; safety protocols will be followed.

Early Warning Network (for earthquakes): no one school has a sensor as there is a geographic network. City of Vancouver working with Emergency Management BC (EMBC) to work out a plan.

PAC funds have been used for: 30 laptops, diversity coloured markers and crayons now available for each division, a virtual musician in French, and some sensory materials have also been purchased and allocated as needed. Appreciation expressed for support of PAC and LEB families.

Enoch adjourns the meeting at 8:22 pm.