



School Re-opening and Return to Learning Plan

MISSION: Evergreen School Division will engage students in learning to become contributing citizens in a democratic society

VISION: Learning Today to Improve Tomorrow

This plan will be updated based on direction from Public Health and Manitoba Education.

LAST REVISED: September 14, 2020

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1. Message from Superintendent Gray

We are planning for a year like no other. Although we all share the same goal – *returning Kindergarten to Grade 12 students safely to in-class learning as much as possible* – there are many questions about how this will be accomplished. This plan provides information about the detailed and specific safety procedures that have been developed for each part of your child's school day, from the moment students board to bus, to the arrival and exit from school. All procedures in this document have been developed based on the direction provided by Public Health and Manitoba Education.

This guide will not answer all the questions that students, families and staff will have, but it is a comprehensive summary of our planning to date. Next week, Principals will send letters to parents/caregivers with further school-specific information (i.e. school entry/exit, cohorts, recess, etc.). In the weeks that follow, our transportation department will follow up with families regarding route information. Our school office staff will be back to work the week of August 31st to answer your calls and email. Visitors are not permitted at this time.

The Evergreen Board of Trustees has supported this planning with guidance and resources. Schools will be provided with increased custodial and supervisory staff, additional supplies and furnishings for students, cleaning/sanitizing materials, and masks and other PPE. Modified and supplemental bus routes are also in development to meet the challenge of transporting our students with fewer seats available on the bus.

Some may believe these measures are too restrictive, and others may take the position that not enough is being done. Our path forward is to follow the direction of public health. As has been true for the length of the pandemic, there will be challenges and changes ahead. Although we do not yet have all the answers, there are compassionate and dedicated people in our schools, at the division and at the provincial level working to implement the layered safety protocols directed by public health. As additional health direction is provided, our practices will be adjusted. We will remain open to your feedback and questions to make our plan better. A link to our re-opening survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D5VQWZ6>

It has always been true that our schools are a reflection of the communities we live in. With the intention of being caring to one another, and with vigilance to the public health measures, we will respond effectively together.

Sincerely,

Roza Gray, Superintendent and CEO

2. Framework for Planning

In addition to provincial direction from Manitoba Education and Public Health, Evergreen School Division is guided by the following planning principles:

- Student and staff health, safety and well-being is a priority.
- Student learning is expected and will be supported by high quality instruction and assessment for every student.
- Working together we can collectively minimize risk; risk cannot be eliminated.

On July 30, 2020, Manitoba Education's framework for Welcoming our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools identified three re-opening levels.

Level 1: In-class learning with public health measures

Level 2: Blended learning (in class and remote)

Level 3: Remote learning (with exceptions)

Further, Manitoba Education announced the expectation that all schools begin at Level 1 in September. This document [Restoring Safe Schools: July 30 - Guidelines for September 2020](#) also provides direction for continued learning through the course of the pandemic.

At the direction of Public Health, as medical circumstances warrant, schools and/or school cohorts will be directed to move from in-class learning (Level 1) to other levels. The decision regarding which level of learning will be provided is made by the Public Health Office.

On August 13, 2020 the province released [COVID-19 K–12 School Settings, Practice Guidance and Protocols](#), as well as documents for parents, including [A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students: What to expect when welcomed back to school](#) and Parent/Guardian Frequently Asked Questions. These parent documents are included in the appendix.

The layered approach to reducing risk of COVID 19 in schools has been part of the Division's planning and has evolved with new direction from public health. Our plan will remain subject to change as advised.

3. Ongoing communication with families and staff

Evergreen School Division will continue to prioritize frequent, transparent, detailed and clear communication with staff and families during this time of uncertainty.

Information will be shared with multiple modes of communication: email, Edsby, social media (Twitter), websites, letters and automated home calling.

Families can expect ongoing communication regarding:

- Academic and well-being supports
- Student learning expectations and monitoring of progress
- Public Health direction

Parents and caregivers can address their questions to schools and division staff via email and telephone. Additionally, survey data will be collected periodically to assess community satisfaction. The division website will continue to provide parents and caregivers a single point of access to all COVID related communication.

Engagement with employee groups remains a commitment as plans are further developed and implementation begins.

4. We heard you

Throughout the time during which our schools have been affected by the pandemic, we have made a concerted effort to communicate regularly with parents. In our June survey results, we learned that approximately 95% of respondents were *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the **communication** they received during the time of the pandemic. We have also sought input and feedback to assist with our planning. This has included asking for input regarding our return to school in the fall, surveying to better understand the remote learning experience, and reaching out for assistance in advance of our transportation planning.

Regarding a return to school in the fall, there is a diversity of opinions. Many parents/caregivers indicate a **desire to return to in-school learning**, provided that direction from Manitoba Public Health is being followed:

- “I firmly believe that school must start again, perhaps with additional safety measures.”
- “Provided an effort is being made to implement reasonable precautions, I am fine with a return to school.”
- “I’m hoping that correct safety measures, including hand-washing and sanitization of schools will be in place.”

Parents/caregivers also express the importance of making a reasonable effort to continue to provide “**breadth and depth**” of programming for students, “I’m concerned about them missing out on Gym and Band/Music classes” as well as the importance of student well-being, “I feel that children are missing out on the value of having peers and teachers around. Their mental health and their education have suffered.”

In survey responses from parents regarding the spring **remote learning experience**, we have learned that approximately 85% of parents surveyed were *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied*. However, it is also clear that remote learning was a challenge for many families, as approximately 30% of parents surveyed indicate that their children were *somewhat reluctant* or *resistant/unwilling* to engage in remote learning.

We are very appreciative of the responses to our survey and telephone contact with families regarding our **transportation planning**. We have learned that 20% of parents in Evergreen are willing and able to transport their own children to school this fall. This will enhance the possibility that we can continue to provide daily bus transportation to eligible students who require this service. A greater number of parents/caregivers transporting their own children to school will help increase our ability to offer timely transportation service that meets public health guidelines for eligible students in Evergreen. Please contact us as soon as possible at transportation@esd.ca if you are a bus-eligible (residence is greater than 1.6 km from catchment school) family who has recently finalized a plan that will allow you to transport your own children to and from school.

5. The Critical Role of Families

The conversations families have, and the actions of parents and caregivers play a critical role in supporting public health in our school communities.

- The most important actions families can take to mitigate the transmission of COVID include:
 - screening your children daily for any COVID symptoms using the tool linked here: https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf
 - *assessing if your child should be tested for COVID* <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>
 - keeping your children at home from school if they are sick or have had close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID.
- Parents/caregivers should also encourage their child(ren) to adhere to the health and safety measures put in place by their school including wearing a mask, physical distancing and practicing good hygiene habits, including hand washing.

- Provide reassurance to your children and youth about their safety and personal health. Telling children that it is ok to be concerned is comforting. Reassure them about their safety and explain there are many things they can do to stay healthy.

For information on talking to children about COVID-19, please visit:

UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>

World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/healthy-parenting/english-tip-6-covid-19-parenting.pdf?sfvrsn=232558c1_8

- Please contact your doctor
 - Regarding the appropriateness of your child wearing a mask due to respiratory concerns.
 - If your child or a member of the household has a compromised immune system as your child may be medically advised not to return to in class learning.
 - If your child has a medical condition that has symptoms similar to COVID to assist you with daily screening.
- Please also follow your school's local protocols for pick up and drop off at school, meetings at the school, and any other local health and safety measures in place.
- Make arrangements to have your child picked up immediately (within an hour) by a parent/caregiver or friend/family member if the school calls stating that the child is exhibiting symptoms of COVID. Please check the registration forms sent home by your child's school in September to ensure the information we have on file is correct.
- Contact your child's school if your child is home ill or in quarantine so learning can be provided.

6. Supporting Student Health & Well-Being

A) What Happens if a Child Exhibits Symptoms?

The parent/caregiver will be notified to come and pick up the child immediately. Caregivers must pick up their child as soon as possible if they are notified their child is ill.

The parent or guardian will be asked to contact Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or the child's health care provider for direction, if required.

If the child is young and requires close contact and care while isolated, staff can continue to care for the child until the parent is able to pick up the child. Staff will be mindful of hand hygiene and avoid contact with the respiratory secretions of the child. A medical mask will be worn by the staff person caring for the child. Parents or guardians will be asked to contact Health Links –

Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or the child's health care provider for direction, if required.

If a parent/caregiver is unreachable to pick up a sick child, school staff will keep the child isolated until the parent or caregiver arrives. If the medical condition requires urgent assessment, or if the parent cannot be located, they will follow standard procedures. Anyone in close contact with the child while waiting will wear personal protective equipment, including a medical mask. Once the student is picked up, the staff member will practice diligent hand hygiene.

Additional environmental cleaning will occur. The focus will be on high-touch areas and areas where the child spent time. All items (e.g., bedding and toys) used by the child while isolated should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child has been picked up.

A sick child can return to the school once it has been determined that it is safe to do so by their health care provider or public health. If that child has a positive test, further direction will be provided by public health. Public Health typically follows up with contacts of cases within 24 to 48 hours of receipt of the laboratory report.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact (notified by public health officials), they need to get tested and isolate from others for 14 days (even if test is negative). Public Health will notify when safe to return to school.

If a student or staff members have travelled to a restricted area but are not symptomatic, they need isolate from others for 14 days. They need to monitor for symptoms and get tested if needed.

B) Outbreak Management

- In the event of the confirmation of a case of COVID-19 connected with a school, Public Health will lead the response and ensure appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response.
- By health region, pandemic response levels are classified as yellow, orange and red. These correspond roughly to school levels 1, 2 and 3. However, Public Health may set one level for the community and another for schools.
- Which response level (1, 2 or 3) is decided by Public Health based on evidence.
- Divisions and schools cannot decide to change levels or close schools to promote / increase safety.
- Public health will confirm a positive case/cases in a school and immediately inform the school Principal.

- Public health will conduct contact tracing to identify close contacts (those within 2 meters, for more than 15 minutes). Public health officials also determine possible spread beyond the classroom.
- Public health will inform close contacts and advise on need for testing, self-isolation and when they can return to school.
- Public health will support administrators in communication and in taking necessary next steps.
- According to Public Health, school closure will be a last resort and only upon evidence of transmission among multiple cohorts.
- Outbreak information will be included in the Manitoba Media Bulletin once the school community has been notified.
- Schools will clean and disinfect areas where exposures took place. These areas will not be used until they are determined to be safe.
- Schools will work closely with their local public health team, and they will reach out if a situation arises where they require clarification or information. Manitoba Education and Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) will be working with local public health teams and regional health authorities to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information.

C) Reassurance and Communication for Well-Being

We will provide reassurance to children and youth about their personal safety and health. Telling children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting. We will reassure them about their safety, and explain that there are many things they can do to stay healthy, including:

- Hand hygiene: Perform hand hygiene often, with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer—especially after coughing, blowing noses, sneezing, and when handling food.
- Cough and sneeze etiquette: Cough and sneeze into their arm or a tissue. If using a tissue, immediately dispose of it and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Stay home when sick: Children should tell staff if they are not feeling well and make a plan together to stay home from school or other activities.
- Keep clean: Do not touch your face—particularly your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay healthy: Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active and getting enough sleep and fresh air.

We will print the Healthy Practices Poster Series (in particular, the hand hygiene and sneezing posters) and place them around the school. School-aged children may also be encouraged to create their own.

Children want to be heard. They do not need detailed information about events, but they do need to talk about their feelings. We will let them know they can ask questions and answer questions honestly, making sure that the information is suitable for their age level. If answers are not known, we will say so and to look for resources together that can answer their questions. We will remember that children are often listening when others are talking about COVID-19, therefore, we will minimize discussions of COVID-19 that are not related to the specific setting. We will be mindful of how children share information in less supervised settings (e.g., during outdoor play, before and after school, during lunch and snack times). In these settings, children can become misinformed. It will be important for our staff to correct this misinformation as we become aware of it.

7. Supporting Staff Health & Well-Being

Personal Risk Factors / Safeguards for Vulnerable Staff

- Arrangements will be needed for staff who may be at higher risk of COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions or other risk factors. A few staff members may be medically advised not to return to work due to COVID-related risk factors. These situations should be rare and limited to those with compromised immune systems or other medical conditions that increase their risk.
- Staff who may be medically vulnerable are encouraged to seek medical advice from a health care professional regarding attending school / work.
- Staff will have the opportunity to submit a medical note with an accommodation request. All requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis with appropriate accommodations made as per medical requirements.
- PPE will be provided to staff and required as per health guidelines.

What Happens if a Staff Member Exhibits Symptoms?

If a staff member or volunteer in a school becomes symptomatic, they will immediately isolate themselves from other staff and children, notify their supervisor, and go home to isolate.

They will then contact Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or their health care provider for direction. Additional environmental cleaning will occur. Focus will be on high-touch areas and areas where the staff or volunteer spent time. Staff members who are away sick or who are self-isolating must follow the school's human resources policy and collective agreement provisions. Medical notes are not required for staff who have COVID-19 or flu-related symptoms, or for those who are caring for individuals in this situation.

A sick staff member can return to work once it has been determined that it is safe to do so by their health care provider or public health. If that staff member has a positive test, further direction will be provided by public health.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact (notified by public health officials), they need to get tested and isolate from others for 14 days (even if test is negative). Public Health will notify when safe to return to school.

If a student or staff members have travel to a restricted area but are not symptomatic, they need isolate from others for 14 days. They need to monitor for symptoms and get tested if needed.

Mental health and well being

School leaders will continue to promote staff well-being and to develop a positive sense of community among staff before students return. School leaders will provide/co-ordinate thorough training and information sharing re: Provincial, Divisional, and School plans for returning to school.

Staff will continue to be provided with information about trauma-informed learning with the support of divisional staff.

School leaders will make staff aware of resources:

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/bewell/index.html>

AbilitiCBT <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/bewell/virtualtherapy.html>

LifeSpeak app http://www.mbteach.org/pdfs/lifespeak/AppLaunchPoster_EN.pdf

Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/mental-health.html>

Mental Health Commission of Canada <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English>

The Working Mind COVID-19 Self-care & Resilience Guide
https://theworkingmind.ca/sites/default/files/twm_self-care-resilience-guide.pdf

Additionally, staff will be supported through the benefits programs offered by the Division and by Manitoba Teacher's Society.

Level 1: Return to in-class learning (September 2020)

At the direction of Manitoba Education that students are to return to in class learning in September 2020 within public health protocols, **Evergreen School Division has made plans for Kindergarten to Grade 12 student to return to full instructional time.** Kindergarten students will attend three days a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). All remaining grades will have in school instruction full-time, five days a week.

- Special attention will be paid to teach students the expected hygiene practices and public health recommendations.
- Schools will maintain instruction of mandated curricula of core subject areas.
- Electives may be limited to accommodate scheduling if this does not affect educational requirements. To the greatest extent possible, schools will schedule high school classes to avoid spares.
- Schools will implement measures to avoid congestion indoors, including asking students to go home or outdoors, as well as offering supervision in a common area, such as a gym or library, to ensure physical distancing is being maintained.
- Schools will schedule as many outdoor activities as practical.

Please note that at this response level, all students are expected to attend school. Manitoba Education states, “ensuring the safety, health and well-being of all students, staff and families has been a guiding principle in our planning and public health has determined that it is safe to resume in-class learning while following public health guidance.” Further, it is important to note, “although public health measures can significantly reduce the risk of COVID entering and being transmitted in childcare and school settings, the risk is never zero.”

Early detection and proactive measures (see public health measures in this document) to minimize the risk of transmission and will assist with limiting the impact of a case within the school and help prevent disruption of in-class learning and restricted access to the school.

At the direction of Public Health, as medical circumstances warrant, schools and/or school cohorts will be directed to move from in-class learning (Level 1) to other levels. The decision regarding which level of learning will be provided is made by the Public Health Office. Parents / caregivers who wish to keep their children home from school have the following options:

- Home Schooling is an option open to all families. If parent/caregiver chooses this option, they need to register with Home-Schooling Branch (204 945 8138). Learning is planned and delivered by the parent/caregiver. The school/Division will still provide some support with occasional check-ins and assistance.
- Virtual (remote) learning is an option for students who are immunocompromised or for students who have an immediate family member who is immunocompromised. Parents and caregivers must consult with physicians on the need for an accommodation and provide a medical note to the school. Presently, remote learning is *not* available on the basis of

parent/guardian choice. Learning is planned by school and/or Division – based staff, and shared via technology, phone calls and “hard copy” tasks.

1. Mental Health and Well-being (see also *Supporting Staff Health & Well-Being, and Supporting Student Health and Well-Being*)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant stress for many students, families, and staff. We are committed to ensuring our school communities are safe and caring environments where students and staff have predictability and consistency.

School-Classroom-Wide systems conversations began in May, where school teams worked collectively to establish the rules, routines and responses expected across all spaces in the school. The shared work in school-wide planning will establish a school environment that feels safe and predictable for staff and students.

School staff can support student well-being by developing positive trusting relationships with students, organizing the classroom environment so that expectations are clearly understood, and responding to unexpected behaviours in a fair, predictable, and consistent manner.

Research suggests that clear expectations, routines, and consistency are essential for all students, and especially those who feel stress/anxiety at school.

More specifically, school staff will mitigate psychological stress for students, families and staff in the following ways:

All School Staff will:

- Remind students of the school/classroom routines and procedures.
- Reassure students that it is okay to be concerned about their safety and health. Remind students of the actions they can take (including personal preventive practices) to stay safe and healthy.
- Allow students to voice their concerns and worries. Staff should answer questions honestly while ensuring that the information is suitable for the age level and diverse personal experience. When staff are unsure of an answer, they should be encouraged to look for resources with the child/youth that can answer their questions.
- Limit media exposure or ensure information being accessed on-line is reputable. Exposure to too much or misinformed resources/media coverage can give children/youth and exaggerated view of the risks associated with COVID-19. Where feasible and/or appropriate, monitor for misinformation and assist students in accessing reliable sources of information.

- Answer student questions with factual information and lessen the amount of news exposure at school.

The Principal will:

- Clearly communicate routines and procedures to be used in all environments of the school: classroom, outside, washroom, hallways and other common spaces to all school staff and students. Where possible, maintain familiar activities and routines at school as it can reinforce a sense of security for children/youth.
- Support clear communication to ensure parents/guardians are informed of what the school is doing to protect their children and what parents can do at home to prevent the spread of respiratory infections (for example, reinforce hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, increase environmental cleaning). In addition, parents/guardians will be the ones who will make decisions about keeping their children home. As such, open and frequent communication to parents will be important in ensuring children/youth who have symptoms of/or have had recent exposure to COVID-19 stay home from school. Communication should include references to PHAs and should be accommodating for families with disabilities.
- Reassure parents, staff, and students that following the new school procedures will help keep them safe. Ensure staff are aware of and have access to resources for mental health services. Allow parents, staff, and students to voice their concerns and worries.
- Proactively address, monitor for, and appropriately respond to discrimination and/or bullying surrounding COVID-19. The Principal will also make all efforts to ensure that misinformation is clarified, and anti-discrimination/bullying protocols are adhered to.
- Take steps to ensure that accommodations are made so that children with disabilities have access to the same public health information and mitigation measures (for example, accessible hand washing stations, accessible signage, age and disability appropriate language, assistance with personal preventive measures). Principals will develop a plan to ensure children/youth who are hearing impaired have their educational needs met if non-medical masks are worn in their classrooms (this may include the use of transparent masks).

The Classroom Teacher will:

- Clearly teach all classroom routines and procedures. Where possible, maintain familiar activities and routines at school as it can reinforce a sense of security for children/youth. On the first day of school practice only those routines and procedures necessary for the first few days of school; introduce new routines and procedures, as necessary. Remind students of routines and procedures when unexpected behaviours occur.
- Maintain open and clear communication with parents.

The Guidance Counselor will:

- Support classroom teachers in teaching skills that will help counter negative thoughts related to COVID fears.

- Ensure students/parents are aware of and have access to resources for mental health services.

The Resource Teacher will:

- Support classroom teachers in accessing social stories for students with complex needs to understand new routines and procedures related to COVID-19.
- Work with the Principal and Classroom Teachers to consider how programming for students with disabilities can be adjusted to accommodate the lost time of instruction and other related services.

2.Recovery Learning

Students will receive instruction and support with adjusting to new school routines and expectations. Clarity and consistency of expectations and routines are important features to support student well-being and mental health.

Regular check-ins and assessment will play an important role in supporting students' well-being and learning.

Some students had lower participation in remote learning than others, and teachers will be creative in addressing the achievement and learning gaps that may exist.

- High School:
 - High School students who were identified as 'requiring recovery learning' were prepared in June of 2020 to be provided with a somewhat individualized learning plan for fall of 2020. Individual progress and success for these students is monitored and supported by staff and administrators in each school. This includes students who did not participate in remote learning in the spring of 2020.
- Early and Middle Years:
 - Transition meetings occurred between teachers so that the next years' classroom teacher was informed of student needs. Classroom profiles have been developed to support teacher planning.

We will continue a balanced approach to conducting informal and more formal 'low-stakes' diagnostic assessments, observations and conversations to inform next learning steps for each student. We began this work through individual and small group meetings between students and teachers in June 2020.

Individual schools will have more specific information about plans for recovery learning.

3.Special Programs

Manitoba Education has released specific guidelines for some of the specialized programming that is offered in Evergreen School Division. Further, public health direction (including physical distancing, and school cohorts) have had impact on our ability to provide

- a) **Junior Kindergarten:** JK will be delayed until later in the school year. This program will be revisited in the new year to assess the potential for a spring start.
- b) **Choral/ Band:** Musical activities involving singing or wind and brass instruments may increase the risk of COVID transmission. Choir and band practices pose a higher level of risk, and therefore may be delayed or limited pending additional public health clarification. Other aspects of the music curriculum will be emphasized.
- c) **Physical Education:** Activities that involve movement will be held outside as much as possible. Indoor or outdoor non-contact sports (e.g., tennis and soccer) are permitted, as long as physical distancing can be maintained during the play, except for brief exchanges. Contact sports and games, as well as the use of shared equipment is strongly discouraged. We will limit the sharing of equipment and engage in frequent cleaning.
- d) **Middle years explorations/ cross campus courses:** All travel between campuses is suspended indefinitely to reduce possible transmission and due to the limits of our transportation system.
- e) **Vocational courses:** Vocational education programs including School Apprenticeship Program (HSAP), Cooperative Vocational Education (CVE), Credit for Employment (CFE), as well as all other credits involving work experience or practicums, including placements for Career Development Life/Work courses, Career Development Internships (CDI), and the Community Service Student-Initiated Project (CSSIP) will resume permitted current public health orders (e.g., social distancing, applicable PPE use, and hygiene-related recommendations) are in place and are followed.
- f) **Career Trek:** This program is cancelled for the 2020/21 school year.
- g) **Field and Sport Trips:** Travel for all extra-curricular performances and athletic events are suspended. Field trips requiring group transportation will not be scheduled. However, field trips that within walking distance of the school are permitted provided physical distancing and other safety protocols described in this document are followed. All field trips beyond a reasonable walking distance are cancelled and should not be planned.
- h) **Extra-Curricular Activities:** Public Health guidelines regarding determine the extent to which various activities may be permitted. The Division will follow the direction of the governing bodies of the respective sports and the Manitoba Athletic Association. Where it is determined safe to do so, a team, group or club can meet while maintaining physical distancing provided touched surfaces are wiped down. Clubs that cannot maintain physical distancing are cancelled until further notice.

- i) **Child Care Centers:** The Division will work cooperatively with childcare centers and programs to support continued operation with the development of an approach to shared spaces, cleaning protocols, access to space, etc.

4. Supporting students with special education needs

There are unique challenges experienced by students with special learning needs during this time and additional supports may be required, the details of which may be highly individualized for each student. This includes:

- Considering changes in the school environment or remote learning needs when reviewing and updating Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Creating congregated classrooms as a temporary COVID-19 response measure for students' special learning needs in order to offer regular, everyday timetabling
- Considering additional planning for students with special learning needs to support a smoother transition to school
- Safely supporting the return of medically fragile students by consulting with local public health authorities on any new risk factors for the student, implementing staff training, and potentially continuing remote learning where return is not possible
- Accommodating the needs of students who require significant personal support, including considering options for personal protective equipment for both staff and students
- Considering alternate attendance options for students, depending on their needs Manitoba Education continues to work with Manitoba Families and education stakeholders to further develop guidance and support for students with special needs and students at risk.

Individual schools will provide additional detail on supporting students with special education needs.

Additional resources and considerations:

https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/guides_support_students.pdf)

5. Expectations for Class Attendance

All students are expected to participate fully, even when remote learning is required. Students will be assessed on their work, reflective of their performance and learning. Schools are critical to the mental health and well-being of children. As directed by Manitoba Education, our planning has focused on returning as many students to in-class learning as possible, while following public health measures.

Because students and staff must stay home when sick, we are planning for absenteeism. Classroom teachers will support the development and provision of at-home learning packages for students who are isolating or quarantined. We have undertaken strategies for the recruitment and retention of substitute teachers and other staff members.

Due to the nature of the contact among teachers, staff and students, and the ability to maintain physical distancing, substitute teachers, clinicians and other staff can work across multiple schools. Protocols have been developed to ensure student and staff safety. Restrictions may be put in place if the risk level increases.

6.Assessment and Evaluation

Student assessment and evaluation will proceed.

- Reporting for the Provincial Grade 3/4 and Middle Years assessments for the 2020/2021 school year is suspended to ensure the focus is placed on supporting students' return to in-class learning and recovery learning needs.
- Grade 12 provincial tests are scheduled to proceed as normal. Schools will be notified if the public health situation warrants a change to the provincial tests. In the event of cancellation, other forms of assessment will be used to determine students' marks.
- Report cards will be provided to all students, including in situations where remote learning is required.

7.Professional Learning Priorities

There is recognition of the value and importance of professional learning as part of the pandemic response planning.

- A strong focus should be placed on recovery learning, remote learning, mental health and well-being.
- Schools will need to align their professional learning and continuous improvement planning with these themes
- The Division will follow public health guidance and travel restrictions when developing their professional learning plans.

Transportation

Physical distancing and/or cohorts are required on school transportation. For more information refer to the guidelines for transportation to schools.

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/reopening/transportation.html>

The Provincial guidelines indicate the following with respect to cohorting on school transportation.

“Groups of students on a bus may be considered a cohort for the purposes of transportation to and from school. Once at school, these students may also be placed in additional cohorts. Cohorts help limit interactions between groups.”

Parents/caregivers/students are encouraged to provide their own transportation, including carpooling, walking or cycling, to avoid possible virus exposure on the bus. Note that carpooling can also be a risk for transmission. For advice on how to minimize this risk, please visit

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/transportation.html>

The following guidelines will be in place for school bus drivers and students:

- Students with symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend school or be passengers on buses. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>
- Drivers with symptoms of COVID-19 will not drive the school bus. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>
- **All school bus passengers** as well as the driver, are required to wear a non-medical mask. These should be put on before getting on the bus. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 may choose to remove their mask once they have exited bus. Guidelines on how to wear a mask can be found here <http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/updates/prepareandprevent.html>
- Drivers will have disposable masks available should a child forget or misplace their mask. Children will not be allowed to enter the bus if they refuse to wear a mask, unless they have a medical exemption on file with the school.
- All drivers will perform hand hygiene before and after being on the bus. Parents are asked to assist their children in performing hand hygiene before and after being on the bus as well.
- Where capacity allows, we will leave the seat immediately behind the driver unoccupied.
- When possible and as weather permits, we will open windows and/or roof vents to allow for increased ventilation.

- Seats will be assigned so the same students are seated in the same seats every day for regular bus routes. Seating assignments will be communicated to parents as part of the transportation letter sent home to parents before the return to school.
- Where possible, seat one student per seat on the school bus. Students from the same household can also sit together on one seat.
- Where one student/household per seat is not possible, we will seat students from the same in-school cohort on the same seat on the bus.
- Students with special needs who require a companion to ride the bus may sit next to their companion (treated as if they were from the same household and/or in-school cohort).
- All students with mobility issues will be provided transportation. Students with special needs will be prioritized for transportation so that our vulnerable students have no additional obstacles to attending school.
- Regardless of seating arrangements, we will ensure that up-to-date lists of bus riders and drivers are maintained daily to enable contact tracing if required.
- When unable to practice physical distancing while assisting students using mobility devices or child restraint systems, additional considerations may be necessary (see https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/guides_support_students.pdf)
- As per routine protocols, students are required to remain seated in their own seats and should not move around the bus.
- Students may transfer from one bus to another to get to and from school. These students will be considered members of two bus cohorts.
- Children are asked to maintain two metres of physical distancing when lining up to get on the bus, and when exiting the bus.
- Bus pick-up and drop-off of students at the school will be staggered where possible, to avoid crowding at the school entrance.
- Buses may be loaded from back to front and unloaded from front to back; one student or household should stand up and exit at a time to minimize close contact between students.

- We will ensure there is enhanced cleaning of seats and other high-touch surfaces (e.g., windows, railings) before each new group of students attends the bus. Buses will be cleaned before each run of the day.
- Subject to public health guidance and risk of COVID-19 transmission, additional measures for physical distancing may be required during the school year.

Public Health Orders and Guidance

Evergreen School Division is committed to following the public health guidance to reduce the risk to our staff and students.

Our re-entry protocols have been informed by the Provincial Practice Guidance and Protocols which can be found here [COVID-19 K–12 School Settings, Practice Guidance and Protocols](#)

1. Specific Protocol Teaching

Teachers will instruct students regarding pandemic related protocols. Various resources will be provided to teach student hand washing, respiratory etiquette, proper physical distancing protocols, mask use (as appropriate) etc. Ongoing monitoring and reminders will occur to support student behaviour.

The prominent display of signs and posters will highlight the importance of hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette, proper mask use and staying home when sick.

2. Staying Home When Sick/Screening Practices

Screening protocols will be in place for all people entering schools. Those with symptoms are to stay home and seek medical advice. Screening information will be posted at all entrances and provided to families. Information will be communicated to all staff and families about when to stay home.

Screening for symptoms is critical to identify any potential cases of COVID-19 as quickly as possible before exposure to others. If someone is unsure whether they or their child should be tested and self-isolate, they should be directed to the COVID-19 Screening Tool at <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>.

All screening that identifies suspected cases of COVID-19 should be referred to Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257.

Symptom and exposure screening must occur at the start of each day.

- Staff must self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Staff who have any symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home, isolate, and be excluded from work. Schools must maintain records of staff absenteeism.
- Parents / guardians are responsible for assessing their children daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or other infectious respiratory disease by completing the daily screening check before sending the child on the bus or to school. School staff may support screening at school in cases when student did not self-screen at home.
- Signage, with exclusion criteria, will be posted at all entrances to the school.
- A student or staff member who meets any of the exclusion criteria will not be admitted to the school and will be advised to immediately isolate and consult Health Links – Info Santé or their health-care provider. Those with symptoms should be tested. If the test is negative for COVID-19, they can return 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If individuals do not get tested, they should isolate for 10 days from symptom onset, and they may return if symptoms have resolved at that time.
- A chronic stable cough, sneeze, runny nose or nasal congestion that is unchanged and clearly linked to a known medical condition such as asthma or allergies, is not an absolute requirement for exclusion. As well, children who are crying can exhibit a runny nose. Changing or worsening of chronic symptoms require isolation and contacting Health Links – Info Santé. Staff may exercise judgment based on the symptoms, but when in doubt, will err on the side of caution by excluding the child and advising the parent or caregiver to contact Health Links – Info Santé or their health-care provider.
- Routine screening or monitoring of temperatures with a thermometer or other device to assess for fever is not recommended. Normal temperatures can vary throughout the day and can be different between individuals. It is recommended that parents and staff focus on monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19, as outlined in the Screening Tool and poster at https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf

3. Physical Distancing / Cohorts

Physical distancing of two metres or six feet between all individuals should occur whenever reasonably possible in a school setting.

- Where possible, spaces will be arranged to encourage the recommended separation. For example, space children to avoid close contact and assign a designated chair and table for each child.

- Schools will manage the flow of people in common areas, including hallways, to minimize crowding and allow for the ease of people passing through. Young children will have easy-to-understand visual prompts. For example, tape on the floor, hoops, mats, or other items that can mark off personal space. Play activities may be organized with a visual cue about how many children should be in that area (e.g., two chairs next to an activity with markers or numbers taped to the floor).
- Schools will use separate entrances (if feasible), and may implement staggered entry and exit times.
- We will avoid close greetings (e.g., hugs and handshakes).
- We will stagger staff break times and avoid large, in-person staff meetings.
- Assemblies and gatherings are discouraged and will not take place in our schools at this time.
- Physical barriers will be used, where appropriate, when physical distancing cannot be maintained. This includes plexiglass barriers for high-traffic areas, such as reception desks.
- Fire drills and lock-down requirements will be considered within the COVID-19 environment, as current procedures are not conducive to physical distancing. Modifications of drills to achieve goals will be considered.
- Patriotic observances (O Canada): In consideration of public health advice regarding singing and choral programs during the pandemic, schools should play a recording of O Canada in and refrain from singing the anthem until public health guidance changes.

A) Cohorts/Groups—It is recognized that strict physical distancing at all times—particularly with young children - is not practical in the school setting. When physical distancing is not possible, cohorts will be used to limit exposure and facilitate contact tracing if a case is identified. Students will likely be part of multiple cohorts from within and outside of the school setting. The purpose of cohorts is to limit the mixing of students and staff so that, if a child or employee develops an infection, there are fewer possible exposures and contact tracing can be more easily done.

Cohorts involve keeping groups of students (e.g., classes) together and avoiding interactions with other groups.

- Physical distancing within the cohort is required to the greatest extent possible, including a minimum of one-metre separation between students in the cohort when seated at desks or tables. This will be the most common scenario for classrooms in Evergreen.
- The recommended maximum cohort size is no more than 75 students (with exceptions as approved by Manitoba Education). There is no limit on the number of cohorts in a school, as long as distinct cohorts of 75 can be separated to prevent contact with other groups. Each cohort must be able to arrive, depart, and participate in school activities without co-mingling with members from other cohorts as much as possible.
- Whenever possible, children and staff will be kept together with the same cohort throughout the day, including lunch breaks and recesses. Locations of classrooms, use of additional space, and timetabling by cohorts have all been considered to reduce mixing.
- Our schools will stagger schedules and movement of cohorts as much as possible to avoid cohorts being in shared spaces (e.g., foyers, hallways) at the same time.
- We will avoid the movement of classes of students, and as much as possible, teachers move between classrooms instead of students.
- We will keep daily records that include the names of students, staff and volunteers of cohorts.

B) Classroom configuration Where physical distancing is not possible, students will remain within cohorts to reduce exposure to others. Cohorts will distance themselves from other groups to limit exposure. In these instances, there will be at least one metre between students as they sit at their desks in classrooms. Classrooms may be configured to support physical distancing with the use of alternate space (such as unused classrooms, libraries and multi-purpose rooms). Two metres of physical distancing will be planned to the greatest extent possible.

C) Student Flow Inside the Building Inside the school there will be directional signage in halls and stairwells regarding physical distancing. Tape and other visual cues will be utilized for physical distancing within the buildings where needed. The principal will share defined procedures and guidelines that all individuals must follow.

D) Student Drop-Off Parents / guardians must remain off school grounds or within their vehicle when dropping off their children. They must not enter the school unless pre-arranged and approved by the principal.

E) Student Arrival and Entry To minimize congestion, the principal will assign all students an entry door into the school. Students will be asked to move directly to their designated entry door and wait for permission to enter the building while staying two metres apart where possible. The principal will develop a schedule for student entry and designate supervisors for

each entry door and as necessary throughout the building. Student entry times may be staggered and may not necessarily align with established bell times. All staff and students must practice hand hygiene prior to entering the building and before entering their classroom. Hand sanitizer will be made available at school and classroom entrances in addition to the sinks available. Once in the school, students will head directly to their class.

F) Seating Plans Desks will be separated from each other to the greatest extent possible given the size of the classroom and number of students. If two meters cannot be arranged between desks / tables, students should be arranged so they are not facing each other (e.g. arranged in rows or a semi-circle). Students will be assigned a specific seat that will assist should there be a need to contact trace.

G) End of Day / Student Pick-Up Parents / guardians must remain off school grounds or within their vehicle while waiting for their children. They must not enter the school unless approved by the principal. Teachers will ensure all students utilize hand sanitizer prior to leaving their last class. Schools will communicate their plan to address students exiting the school in an orderly manner with appropriate supervision, maximizing the number of exit doors as practical while adhering to physical distancing guidelines. This may mean that schools may require classes / learning spaces to have staggered dismissal times while ensuring bus schedules are maintained. Students waiting for pick up are to wait outside in a supervised designated area while following physical distancing guidelines. During inclement weather, the principal will make alternate arrangements for the waiting area.

H) Recess / Breaks Schools will develop a coordinated exit and entry schedule utilizing as many separate doors as practical for grades or cohorts to leave their space to go outside for recess and to return to class. Recess breaks will be staggered to reduce the number of students exiting the school, playing, and re-entering the school. Supervisors will monitor for physical distancing while having recess break.

Public Health advises that playgrounds and play structures are low risk for transmission. There are no specific requirements for cleaning play structures.

Schools will also:

- Schedule outdoor play to maintain cohorts of children and staff.
- Maintain separate containers of equipment for each class or cohort, and clean between recess periods.
- Mark zones, manage group sizes, and avoid contact among groups.
- Ensure handwashing or hand hygiene is performed before and after recess.

- Ensure crossing guards receive additional information about how to physically distance while performing their duties
- Reinforce among children that sharing food or water bottles is not allowed.

Non-medical masks can be removed during outdoor play to provide a mask-free break.

I) Lunch & Food Handling Staff and students will practice physical distancing guidelines to the best of their ability while eating lunch. Common lunchroom areas may be used but will be cleaned after each use. Students must not share utensils, dishes, and water bottles or drink containers. Students will be asked to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating. Students may be asked to help wipe down their own desks or tables used for eating. Use of student shared microwaves is not permitted.

The best practice is that parents and guardians provide their own food for their child. If this is not possible, the following guidance applies:

- Staff will serve all food items.
- Utensils (not fingers) will be used by staff to serve food.
- Shared food containers will be removed from eating areas (e.g., snack bowls, pitchers of water or milk, salt and pepper shakers).
- When using single service packets of condiments, we will provide the packet directly to each child, rather than self-serving from a bulk container.
- For snack programs, we will dispense snacks directly to children and use prepackaged snacks only.
- Kitchens and food preparation areas that could be accessed by children or visitors will be restricted.
- Food handling staff will practice meticulous hand hygiene.
- Students will not participate in food preparation.

J) Class Transitions / Breaks Students may have class transition breaks in their daily schedule to permit moving to the student's next class, washroom breaks or refilling water bottle. Where possible, teachers will be encouraged to move rather than students. Principals may stagger the end of various classes to reduce the volume of students transitioning at once. Students will be encouraged to practice physical distancing and to follow posted traffic flow protocols during class transitions.

K) Lockers Depending on the school, locker use will be limited or discontinued to avoid congregation in hallways. School plans will provide more details on this.

L) Washrooms Regular washroom access is maintained for students while schools put measures in place to attempt to reduce the number of students using a washroom at any one time. Washroom capacity will be posted, and students will be expected to wait, while practicing

physical distancing from each other, if the washroom capacity is exceeded. Washrooms will be cleaned regularly. Signage will be placed about washing hands and physical distancing.

M) Shared School Spaces Common areas including gymnasiums, libraries, foyers and multipurpose spaces may be used for instructional purposes to maximizing physical distancing where possible. Playgrounds remain open for student use. Schools with common areas (ie breakfast program) will ensure student physical distancing occurs, and that the space is cleaned and disinfected after each use. The in-school location designated for COVID-19 quarantining will not be used for other purposes.

N) Assemblies / Multi-Grade Interaction In an effort to reduce interactions between cohorts, multi-classroom / cohort gatherings such as assemblies, whole grade, or whole school groupings are prohibited. Unless students are part of an identified cohort, creative recombining of students should be avoided. Practices such as reading buddies, house teams, student lounges etc. should be discontinued. In place of in-person gatherings, virtual options should be considered.

4. Hygiene Practices

Additional sinks will be installed and made available to students to limit congestion during hand washing.

Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the recommended hand hygiene practice. Staff and students will engage in frequent hand hygiene, including at the following times:

- the start of the day and before going home
- before and after recess
- after going to the washroom and helping children with washroom routines
- after a diaper change (both children and staff)
- before and after preparing food
- before eating or drinking
- after getting hands dirty
- after wiping nose or handling dirty tissues
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose
- after soothing a crying child
- before and after putting on and taking off a mask
- before and after being on a bus
- after cleaning tasks (staff)

School staff will help young children to ensure handwashing is done correctly.

Where possible, encourage and supervise hand hygiene and make alcohol-based hand sanitizer available at all building access points and throughout the facility. Young children require supervision when using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Good hygiene practices can be taught in an age-appropriate and playful manner. One idea is to have timers to help ensure students wash for an adequate time. See how many 20-second songs the children can identify. Be creative—engage the children in coming up with games and other ways to encourage everyone to wash their hands for 20 seconds.

Respiratory etiquette should be modelled, taught and reinforced regularly. This includes coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve, as well as properly and promptly disposing of any used tissues, and exercising proper hand hygiene.

Personal items (e.g., hats, hair accessories, lip balm, food and drinks) should not be shared.

Avoid touching one's mouth, nose or eyes, and encourage children to do the same.

As part of these routine measures, signage should be posted and highly visible, and it should include visual cues that remind staff and children to perform hand hygiene (e.g., sneezing or coughing into their elbow, putting used tissues in a waste receptacle, and washing hands or using hand sanitizer immediately after using tissues). Several printable resources, including posters and factsheets, are available online at the following websites:

- <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/resources/index.html>
- <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/posters/>

5.Facility

Increased frequency of cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing, particularly high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, is required.

A) Classroom Set-Up Classrooms, desktops, and countertops will be decluttered of all non-essential items to allow for custodial cleaning. Soft furnishings that cannot be easily cleaned must be removed.

B) Enhanced Cleaning / Sanitizing A three times per day sanitation schedule will be implemented for all high touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, light switches, electronic devices, chairs, desks, art supplies, toys, games, gym equipment, tools and equipment). This cleaning / sanitization will occur after the students have entered, once in the middle of the day, and at the end of the day after students have exited the building.

C) Cleaning / Sanitizing Supplies Each classroom will have cleaning supplies provided and

accessible to all staff members so that they may perform additional cleaning in their spaces as desired. Information will be provided regarding use and safe storage. Each teacher will be issued hand sanitizer for their classroom so that student hands can be sanitized upon entry to class.

D) Ventilation There is less likelihood of transmission in well ventilated environments.

Therefore, staff will:

- Avoid the recirculation of air to the greatest extent possible, and ensure filters are clean.
- Ventilate indoor environments with fresh air—whether by increasing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings as much as possible or by opening windows and avoiding or reducing recirculation—will dilute the air exhaled by the occupants, including any infectious particles. Even if this is not feasible for the whole facility, consider this for higher risk areas (e.g., where crowding may be an issue).
- Minimize the use of fans and limit them to the lowest settings if they are needed. Direct air flow away from people and surfaces. Ensure that these surfaces are cleaned along with other high-touch surfaces.
- Assess the risk of opening windows and doors (i.e., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms). Do not prop open fire doors to increase ventilation or to reduce exposure to frequently touched door handles.

6.Visitors to Schools

A) Parent / Caregiver Meetings Parents will be informed of the process to book a meeting time with school office staff or teachers. These meetings may be face-to-face, keeping physical distance, or by electronic means.

B) Visitors and Volunteers Schools will minimize visitors and volunteers at school facilities. When their presence is necessary, visitors and volunteers must self-screen and adhere to physical distancing and hygiene practices in place for students and staff.

In the event that a visitor (e.g. parent) must access the school, they must first complete the screening process (see Section 1). If successful, a mask must be worn (school will provide disposable masks if needed).

C) Community Use of Facilities Permits for community evening and weekend facility use continue to be suspended with the exception of childcare centers operating in schools. This will facilitate the increased cleaning requirements and the increased flexibility that schools will require to repurpose gyms and multipurpose rooms for use as classrooms.

7.Shared Items

A) Personal Items / No Share Policy Staff and students are to utilize their own personal items (e.g. electronic devices, writing instruments, school supplies) and minimize any shared items.

B) Shared School Technology Schools are encouraged to divide devices into cohorts and / or grade levels to limit the number of people that contact the device in a day. Devices are to be cleaned after each individual's use following the device cleaning protocol.

C) Water Fountains / Water Bottles Water fountains will remain covered and unavailable to students and staff. Water bottle filling stations will be available for use. Students and staff are encouraged to bring their own filled water bottle each and every day.

8.Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Non-medical masks can play a role in reducing the transmission of COVID-19. Wearing nonmedical masks is an **additional** personal practice that can help to prevent the infectious respiratory droplets of an unknowingly infected person (the wearer) from coming into contact with other people. Non-medical masks have not been tested to meet any standards.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing and handwashing. Those wearing masks should be reminded, in age-appropriate language, not to touch their mask and to comply with other personal preventive practices, such as frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing as much as possible.

Non-medical masks are recommended in situations where a person cannot maintain a two-metre physical distance for extended periods of time and is in close proximity to a person outside of their regular contacts. This includes on the bus, in school hallways and for some students, the classroom.

- All students in Grades 4 to 12 and all adults (teachers, staff, visitors, volunteers) must wear non-medical masks in all school settings.
- While seated in classroom, if physical distancing of two metres is in place, and with the teacher's permission, students may remove their masks.
- If physical distancing of two metres is in place, adults may choose to remove their mask.
- Kindergarten to Grade 3 students can choose to use non-medical masks.
- All students in any combined Grade 3 – 4 classes must wear masks.

- All school bus passengers and the driver are required to wear non-medical masks. These should be put on before loading. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 may choose to remove their mask once they have exited bus.
- Students in any grade may, or may not, be wearing a mask at school or on school buses, depending on their *personal circumstances*. It is important that children understand that no one should be treated differently for wearing a mask or for not wearing a mask.

USING A NON - MEDICAL MASK:

- Non-medical masks should not be worn by anyone who:
 - is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to age, ability or developmental status)
 - has breathing difficulties
 - is under two years of age
- Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will be considered.
- Requests need to be made to the Principal.
- Students are encouraged to bring their own non-medical masks.
- Non-medical masks will also be made available for students.

Choosing a mask:

- parents/guardians/caregivers must ensure their child's mask fits well and covers the nose, mouth, and chin without any gaps and does not require frequent adjustments
- parents/guardians/caregivers should pay attention to the materials used. Not all masks are created equal. Homemade masks must be made of a minimum of two layers, use tightly woven material (e.g., cotton or linen), and fit securely with no gaps
- masks with ear loops are easier to put on and take off, and are recommended for younger students because ties/strings may be a choking hazard
- reusable non-medical masks should not have any holes or valves that are open to the air. Holes or valves allow respiratory droplets to escape from the non-medical mask and decrease its ability to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- lanyards that go around the child's neck and tie to the ear loops of the mask to keep the child from losing or misplacing it are not recommended because dangling a mask from one's neck contaminates the mask, and encourages the wearer to touch, adjust, and/or move the mask unnecessarily
- students should use either a clearly labelled clean bag or a clean container to store their reusable mask when they need to remove them (e.g., at lunch time)
- once a reusable mask has been removed, it should be washed before being worn again
- for students with a hearing impairment who need to see someone's mouth to communicate, there are also non-medical masks with clear fronts
- follow the directions on any store-bought non-medical masks regarding how many times it can be reused. Remember to wash and thoroughly dry the non-medical mask after

each use. Do not reuse homemade non-medical masks if any breakdown in the fabric, such as a hole or a tear, is noticed.

Knowing how to wear a mask properly is critical to everyone's safety. An improperly worn mask will not protect others from respiratory droplets and can increase the wearer's risk of getting an infection.

- Do not touch your mask or face while wearing it.
- Practise good hand hygiene while wearing the mask.
- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately before putting your mask on and immediately after taking it off.
- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after touching or adjusting your mask.
- Do not share your mask with others.
- Do not dangle your mask from one ear, or pull it below your nose or mouth so it is only covering your chin.
- Change your mask as soon as it becomes damp or soiled.
- To remove the mask safely, remove it from behind using the ear loops. Do not touch the front of the mask.
- Note: Masks with ear loops rather than strings/ties should be used for students, especially younger ones, as strings/ties may be a choking hazard.
- Immediately after removing the mask, either throw it out (if a disposable mask) or place it directly into the washing machine or into a designated container/bag until you return home. Then into the washing machine if a reusable mask.
- Students and staff will need 2 or more masks per day as once they are removed for eating, recess, etc. they are considered used, and need to be replaced. If removed carefully, they could be stored in a safe location (sealed plastic bag for example).

USING A MEDICAL MASK (surgical or procedural mask) is required when unable to maintain a distance of two metres or six feet from a child who is exhibiting signs or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.

- To put on a mask safely, perform hand hygiene by handwashing with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Place the mask on your face carefully so it covers your mouth and nose, handling it with the strings or elastic ear loops as much as possible, and mould the nose bridge to ensure it does not move while it is on.
- Avoid touching the mask once you have put it on. If the mask needs to be adjusted, hands should be cleaned before and after adjusting the mask.
- Never pull the mask down below the nose, mouth, or chin.
- Never dangle the mask from one ear or both ears.
- To remove the mask safely, remove it from behind using the strings or elastic ear loops.

- Do not touch the front of the mask.
- Discard the mask immediately, ideally in a no-touch receptacle. Perform hand hygiene by handwashing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/prepareandprevent/index.html> for the latest guidance on the use and care of masks.
- Consideration can be given to teachers and staff to wear face shields or coverings and eye protection, in addition to a mask (not in place of a mask).

Visit the following Public Health Agency of Canada page to access a poster and guidelines for how to safely use a non-medical mask or face covering: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

There is no role for the use of N95 respirators in schools. N95 respirators are for use by healthcare workers performing specific medical procedures. Gloves are only required as per regular practices and current policies.

Level 2: Blended Learning (in class and remote)

Teacher-directed remote learning will be an essential component of K to 12 education throughout the pandemic. When remote learning is needed, students may work independently on their own, as well as work with a teacher in real time. Blended in-class and remote learning plans may need to be implemented on short notice. Mechanisms to maintain ongoing contact with students who are participating in remote learning are critical to keeping students engaged.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| School day structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• K-8 students and students with special needs are prioritized for in-class learning.• Grades 9 to 12 will participate in teacher-led remote learning, with limited use of school facilities for specific programming and assessment |
| Physical distancing measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two metres of physical distancing is required, to the greatest extent possible. Create more space for children in all classrooms with desks spaces two metres apart. This may require smaller class groupings.• Multiple groups of students can operate within a school setting at the same time, provided groups are kept separate. |
| Teaching focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize core curriculum and required courses.• Facilitate regular contact with students to keep them engaged in remote learning. Standards for remote learning must be clearly articulated.• Ensure access to learning resources for all, including technology and addressing connectivity issues.• Schedule high school student appointments and small groups for assessment, planning, and special programming as needed, following limited use guidelines. |

- If remote learning is required to meet public health measures, a minimum of two of six days in a cycle will be provided for high school students. Web cameras can be used, with an appropriate privacy impact assessment, to allow students to follow along with their class from home for real-time learning.
- As much as possible, we will continue to provide devices to families in need of technology in order to support blended learning.
- We will continue to offer 'drive-up' wifi hubs in each of our school communities.
- Printed material will be made available when other means of solving connectivity challenges are not possible.
- Programming will be provided on-line with use of Microsoft Teams and Edsby and supplemented with paper packages as necessary.
- School support teams will be in touch with students and family to monitor academic progress and well-being.
- As necessary, Division staff will support schools to engage students and families in remote learning.

Level 3: Remote Learning (with exceptions)

A guiding principle of our planning is that every student will have consistent, reliable, and appropriate connection to school learning and belonging, regardless of location, barriers, special needs, or challenges. Students, parents and caregivers will also have accessible and reliable supports.

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| School day structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remote learning in place,• Schools are closed to the public with the exception of Kindergarten to Grade 6 students of critical workers |
| Physical distancing measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two metres of physical distancing is required, to the greatest extent possible. Early Learning and Child Care guidelines will be followed with reduced class sizes and strict infection prevention and controls in place. |
| Teaching focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The key focus is on literacy, numeracy, and other curricular areas as time and resources permit.• Facilitate contact with all students to keep them engaged in remote learning.• Ensure access to learning resources for all, including technology and connectivity issues. |

- Children (grades K-6) of critical care workers will be provided with full time in-class learning.
- Students with special education needs will be provided with in-class learning.
- Consideration will be given to students with connectivity concerns for some level of in-school support, depending on the circumstances.
- Teachers will provide a blend of synchronous and asynchronous teaching.
- Staff will be physically present in the school.
- As much as possible, we will continue to provide devices to families in need of technology in order to support blended learning.
- We will continue to offer 'drive-up' wifi hubs in each of our school communities.
- Printed material will be made available when other means of solving connectivity challenges are not possible.
- Programming will be provided on-line with use of Microsoft Teams and Edsby and supplemented with paper packages as necessary.
- School support teams will be in touch with students and family to monitor academic progress and well-being.
- As necessary, Division staff will support schools to engage students and families in remote learning.

WELCOMING OUR STUDENTS BACK: RESTORING SAFE SCHOOLS

A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students:
What to expect when welcomed back to school

August 13, 2020



A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students: What to expect when welcomed back to school.

Restoring Safe Schools

Our shared goal: Kindergarten to Grade 12 students return to school with as much in-class learning as possible, while staying safe.

Our planning puts your child's health and safety first, along with teachers, staff and families within the school community. Specific safety procedures will be in place for each part of your child's school day from the moment students board the school bus to when they arrive at and leave the school.

Here's how:

1. Physical distancing will be practiced to the fullest extent possible in all parts of the school throughout the school day. This will include (but is not limited to): controlling the way students enter and exit the school at designated entrances, one-way or marked hallways, leaving space between desks and tables, staggering start and end-times for recess and lunchtime, timetabling to avoid spares, and limiting bathroom occupancy at any given time.
2. Where two metres physical distancing not possible, students will be distinct cohorts (groups), separate from other students, to reduce the risk of virus transmission throughout the school day.
3. Masks offer an added layer of protection. Students in Grade 5 and above, as well as teachers and staff, are strongly recommended to wear a non-medical mask in common areas throughout schools and when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Younger students can wear masks too.
4. Masks will be required when on school buses for all students in Grades 5 and above. Boarding and exiting the bus will be done with physical distancing and assigned seats.
5. Extra masks will be made available at all schools throughout the school year for those who do not have their own.
6. Extra handwashing and sanitizing stations will be set up and monitored to ensure students utilize them.
7. Special attention will be paid to younger students to ensure they follow all safety procedures, such as wearing a mask where required or strongly recommended and keeping their hands washed and sanitized.
8. All parents will be reminded regularly that students must stay home when sick or exhibiting any symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19.
9. Increased cleaning and disinfecting will occur around the school and throughout the day, especially high touch surfaces.
10. Any incident of COVID-19 in a school will result in immediate contact by Public Health with instructions if that student and/or cohort must self-isolate, if they need to be tested and when they can return to school.



How can parents/caregivers help keep students and schools safe?

Screen for symptoms every morning:

Check every morning. If your child has COVID-19 or flu related symptoms, keep them at home.

An up-to-date list of symptoms can be found at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/about/index.html>

Use the [Self-Assessment tool](#) to check if your child should be tested for COVID-19. Call Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 if you notice symptoms or if you need more information. Screening information will be sent home for you to reference at the start of each day.

If your child develops symptoms at school, they will be isolated and parents/caregivers will be called. Please pick your child up promptly. Make sure the school has your current contact information and a back up to call if you can't be reached.

Physically distance

Keep a safe distance during drop offs and pick ups. Avoid visits to the school. Please email or call the teacher or school administrator when you need to talk.

To keep numbers low on buses we are asking parents and caregivers to drive their students to school instead of the school bus if possible. Talk to your school bus coordinator.

Pack a mask and encourage your child to wear it especially in common areas and when physically distancing is not possible.

Be prepared to talk about COVID-19

Provide reassurance to children and youth about their personal safety and health. Telling children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting. Reassure them about their safety and explain there are many things they can do to stay healthy.

For more information on talking to children about COVID-19, please visit:

UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>

World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/healthy-parenting/english-tip-6-covid-19-parenting.pdf?sfvrsn=232558c1_8



Students: What to expect?

Back to school will look different but your teachers and principals are excited to have you back. They are working hard to make sure schools are ready. Your school will help explain the changes. Here are some of the big differences:

- When arriving at school, moving in the hallways and eating lunch, teachers and staff will be helping students spread out and remember to physically distance.
- Students may be asked to stay in their own group/cohort to decrease contact with others. (A cohort is a group of students who stay together, mostly for the classroom but can be increased to 75 for recess and other activities).
- All students can wear a mask. Students in Grade 5 and above are strongly recommended to wear a non-medical mask in common areas and when physical distancing is not possible. Teachers and staff will have masks too. Masks will be available at school and on the bus if you do not have one.
- Students may be asked to sit in the same seat every day, especially on the bus.
- For high school you likely will have days you are learning at home. Follow the class schedule and talk to your teacher if you need extra support. Learning, assessment and marking will continue for all.
- As the situation is changing, your teachers, principals, parents and caregivers may provide new information throughout the school year.

Here are some ways to stay safe and healthy:

- ♦ Stay home when you are sick. Watch for symptoms.
- ♦ Tell staff, parents and caregivers when you are not feeling well.
- ♦ Wash your hands especially after coughing, blowing noses or sneezing, and when handling food.
- ♦ Do not share food or personal items.
- ♦ Cough and sneeze into your arm or tissue. Do not touch your face, particularly your eyes, nose and mouth
- ♦ Keep two metres of distance from others and avoid close contact. Think of a bike in between you and others.
- ♦ Instead of giving high fives, fist pumps or hugs, smile and wave to say hello.
- ♦ Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active, getting enough sleep and fresh air.
- ♦ Ask questions. It is ok to talk about your concerns and fears. We are all in this together.



Have more questions?

More information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including resources, planning documents, and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found at [Latest COVID-19 Education News](#).

You can also visit EngageMB at <https://engagemb.ca/welcoming-our-students-back-restoring-safe-schools> to ask your questions. We'll share your question and the answer for others to see. Questions can also be answered privately, if they are not appropriate for sharing.

[My Learning at Home](#) is a resource to assist families to support their children in remote learning from home.

Current information about COVID-19 in Manitoba can be found at <http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/>.

August 7, 2020

Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools

Questions and Answers

Is student attendance at school mandatory?

- School attendance is mandatory for children aged 7 to 18 in Manitoba. All students are expected to participate fully in learning, even when remote learning is required.
- Division-level remote learning will be in place for students who have been medically advised not to return to in-class learning due to COVID-related risk factors.

Will students attend school five days per week?

- Students in Kindergarten through Grade 8, as well as those with special needs, will be in class full days, five days per week while we are in *Level 1: In-class learning response level* (see *Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools* at www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/covid/k-12-reopeningplan-stage-2.pdf).
- Grades 9 to 12 students will return for up to five days per week of classroom instruction if high schools can reduce the risk of transmission by effectively timetabling, implementing physical distancing measures and the use of cohorts, and supporting any contact tracing that may be required. The priority remains that students are to be ensured as much in-class learning as possible.

If students stay home because they feel unwell, how will they receive their assignments?

- Classroom teachers will support the development and provision of at-home learning packages for students who are isolating or quarantined.

How will students keep learning if they must remain at home for an extended period and they do not have access to a computer?

- When remote learning is required, students will have access to learning resources, including technology, and connectivity issues will be addressed.
- A guiding principle of our planning is that every student will have consistent, reliable, and appropriate connection to school learning and belonging, regardless of location, barriers, special needs, or challenges. Students, parents, and caregivers will also have accessible resources and supports.

If parents are uncomfortable with the risk of having their children resume classroom learning, do they have the option of asking for virtual learning opportunities or extra tutoring resources?

- Virtual learning is not an option. Ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of all students, staff, and families has been a guiding principle in our planning, and public health has determined that it is safe to resume in-class learning while following public health guidance. This includes screening, enhanced hand hygiene, physical distancing, the use of cohorts, and outbreak management, which are paramount in keeping as many students as possible in schools this fall and throughout the pandemic.
- Division-level remote learning will be in place for students **who are medically advised** not to return to in-class learning due to COVID-related risk factors.
- School staff and administrators will continue to support students in their return to in-class learning. Mental health and well-being are critical factors in returning to in-class learning plans. As such, regular check-ins and informal assessments will play an important role in supporting transitions.

How will students get to school?

- School buses will be running in September for those students who are eligible for school bus transportation.
- For the short term, parents are encouraged to transport their own children to school, if at all possible.
- Schools will be implementing protocols to ensure that entry and exit from the school are managed to avoid congestion.

How far apart will students be sitting from one another on the bus?

- When possible, one student per seat is recommended; however, children from the same household and students in the same in-school cohorts may also sit together on the bus.
- Students will have assigned seats on the bus and must remain in those seats at all times while on the bus.

Will students, teachers, and staff be required to wear a mask at school or on the bus?

- Masks are not currently required. As the public health situation evolves, this may change. Students, teachers, and staff are welcome to wear non-medical masks if they so desire.

Will there be screening for students before they enter the school?

- Students and staff will need to self-screen at home before going to school. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their own child's self-screening. School staff may conduct screening at school.

Are visitors and volunteers allowed in schools?

- Schools will minimize visitors and volunteers at school facilities. When their presence is necessary, visitors and volunteers must first self-screen and adhere to physical distancing and hygiene practices in place for students and staff. Community use of schools will be suspended, with the exception of child care centres operating in schools.
- Independent schools with shared rental agreements will need to ensure that public health measures are followed if the owners of the buildings have utilized space that is also used by the school.

Will smaller class sizes be implemented to allow for physical distancing, and, if so, will extra school space be converted to classrooms (e.g., gyms)?

- Schools and divisions will ensure physical distancing among students, teachers, and staff to the best extent possible, including through the use of alternative spaces like multi-purpose rooms if needed. Class sizes will not be capped, as public health advice does not warrant reducing the number of students to a specific number.

How far apart will students be sitting from one another at school?

- Public health recommends two metres of physical distancing. When this is not possible, students will remain within cohorts to reduce exposure to others. Cohorts will distance themselves from other groups to limit exposure. In these instances, there must be at least one metre between students as they sit at their desks.

Will students be sharing a locker with another student?

- Students are encouraged to keep personal belongings with them when they return to school. Depending on the school, locker use may be limited or discontinued.

Will the library be open?

- Individual schools will make this determination, as this space may be needed as an instructional space to accommodate physical distancing of students.

Will there be sharing of books in the library?

- Schools are able to operate libraries. Schools will undertake increased frequency of cleaning and sanitization throughout the building, particularly where there are high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas.

Will students eat lunch at school? Will there be cafeteria service?

- School divisions will determine whether non-bussed children will remain at school for lunch. Lunch and recess breaks will be staggered throughout the day and, whenever possible, students will remain together with their class or cohort during these breaks. Not all schools offer cafeteria service; for those that do, it will be a local decision whether or not they remain open.
- Students must bring their own lunches, or provided lunches must be individually wrapped in disposable containers. Schools can continue to offer breakfast and lunch programs with necessary adjustments to ensure health guidelines are in place. Schools will have no-sharing policies in place.

Will in-school child care facilities require that masks be worn and/or will they operate at reduced capacity to allow for social distancing?

- Public health advice in *COVID-19 Early Learning and Child Care Practice Guidance* (June 2020) (see www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/famcirculars/Covid-19_Practice_Guide_ELCC_April92020.pdf) indicates that the use of non-medical masks (cloth or homemade masks) within child care settings is not recommended. However, some staff and children may choose to bring and wear a non-medical mask while in the centre. Masks are not recommended for children under two years of age.
- Also, as of June 1, 2020, licensed child care centres, including facilities in schools, can continue to provide care for up to 24 children. Larger centres with separate rooms and external entrances can accommodate up to 24 children per room. Home-based child care providers can also continue to operate with the number of children for which they are licensed.
- Schools will be asked to work cooperatively with child care centres to ensure that these centres can continue to operate.

Will hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies be provided or should staff and students bring their own?

- Hand sanitizer, hand soap, and necessary cleaning supplies will be provided at the school. Hand sanitizing stations will also be set up at all school entrances.

Will there be special breaks for hand washing and desk cleaning?

- Staff and students will wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the following times:
 - at the start of the day and before going home
 - after going to the washroom
 - before preparing food
 - before and after eating
 - after getting hands dirty
 - after wiping noses or handling dirty tissues
 - after coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose
 - after cleaning tasks (staff)
- Commonly touched surfaces, including desks, will be disinfected at least twice daily.

Will there be additional cleaning and sanitization?

- Increased frequency of cleaning and sanitization, particularly high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, will be required.
- Commonly touched surfaces will be disinfected frequently—at least twice daily.
- Ample hand-cleaning supplies will be available at all sinks in washroom and kitchen areas.

Who is going to clean the desks at the end of each day?

- Custodial staff will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting at the school.

Will there be recess?

- Yes. Lunch and recess breaks will be staggered.

Can students use playground equipment?

- Yes. Outdoor activities are encouraged and outdoor spaces and playground structures can be used.
- Public health indicates that playgrounds and play structures are low risk for transmission.
- Each class or cohort will have a separate container of equipment. The equipment will be cleaned between recess periods.
- Zones will be marked to manage group sizes and to minimize contact among groups.
- Contact sports and games, as well as the use of shared equipment, is strongly discouraged.

Will there be gym class?

- Physical education will continue with necessary modifications for physical distancing. When possible, it is likely that this will occur outside.

Will students continue to play in group sports, such as on volleyball teams?

- Sports teams may continue as long as the school ensures they follow up-to-date information regarding Manitoba's *Restoring Safe Services Sports Guidelines* (see www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/sports-guidelines.html).

Will there be music and choir?

- Schools will need to assess their ability to offer choir.
- Schools must ensure that they follow Manitoba's *Restoring Safe Services Sports Guidelines* (see www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/sports-guidelines.html) and *Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists* (see www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/music-guidelines.html).

Will there be as many electives offered in high school?

- Core curriculum and required courses will be prioritized for the return to classroom learning. Electives may be limited in some schools to accommodate physical distancing and scheduling.

Will there be provincial tests?

- A decision about Grade 12 provincial tests will be made and communicated by the end of September. This will depend on the public health situation and the extent to which students are able to access classroom learning.

Will schools shut down if there is a positive case identified in a school?

- Decisions about school closures will be made on a case-by-case basis with public health leading the response and providing guidance, including ensuring appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response.
- Public health will advise staff and students if they have been in close contact, if they need to self-isolate or self-monitor, and when they can return to school.

What happens if a student in a class tests positive? Will parents be notified?

- In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 connected with a class, public health will lead the response and provide guidance, including ensuring appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response. Public health will advise staff and students if they have been in close contact, if they need to self-isolate or self-monitor, and when they can return to school.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19 in a class or cohort, would other students who have been in close contact not be allowed back to school for 14 days?

- There is no single answer to this question. Public health will take the circumstances of the individual situation into consideration and provide direction on a case-by-case basis. Public health will assess the amount of contact and risk of transmission to inform these decisions.

August 13, 2020

Parent/Guardian Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child need to wear a mask during all hours of the day?

- Wearing a mask will be encouraged throughout schools when physical distancing is not possible.
- Students (Grade 5 and up), teachers, staff, visitors, and volunteers are strongly recommended to wear non-medical masks in common areas and where physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Students under Grade 5 can also use non-medical masks.
- There may be times throughout the day that students will have sufficient space to be physically distanced so that masks can be removed, such as during lunch breaks or mask-free play outdoors at recess.
- Masks will be provided at the school if needed. Non-medical masks will be added on the school supply list as well.

Can my school mandate masks if the department is strongly recommending them?

- No. The goal is to create as much provincial consistency as possible, specifically when it comes to public health advice.
- Recommendations may change over time. Public health officials make recommendations based on a number of factors, including the rates of infection and/or transmission in the community.

Does my child need to wear a mask on the bus?

- Yes. Students in Grade 5 and up are required to wear medical masks before they are allowed on the bus and while they are on it.
- A mask will be provided for them if they do not have one.
- Students in Grade 4 and lower will not be required to wear a mask, but they can wear a non-medical mask if they choose.

Will my child have to share a seat on the bus?

- Specific guidelines for school transportation have been developed and updated as the public health information evolves.
- Where possible, there will be one student per seat. Students who are seated together will be members of the same family or members of the same cohorts in the school.

Will the bus driver wear a mask?

- Yes. Drivers are also required to wear a mask.

Does my child need to wear a mask in the hallways?

- Although school divisions are working to reduce hallway traffic and reduce congestion in common areas, it is strongly recommended that students in Grade 5 and up wear non-medical masks in common areas and where physical distancing is not always possible.
- Students in Grade 4 and lower may wear a mask if they choose.
- Teachers and staff will also wear masks when in common areas and when physical distancing is not possible.

Does my child need to wear a mask in their classroom during regular class time?

- If a school is able to accommodate two metres of physical distancing in a classroom, no.
- If students are in close proximity to each other, such as moving around the classroom and away from their desks, non-medical masks are strongly recommended for Grades 5 and up. For students Grade 4 and lower, non-medical masks can be worn if desired.
- Measures are being put in place in the classroom to ensure that there is safe, mask-free time throughout the day, in consultation with public health officials.

What if my child loses their mask at school?

- Schools will provide masks to students and staff who need them.
- Schools will also have a supply of non-medical and medical masks on hand.

Does wearing a mask mean that other public health measures can be reduced?

- No. Wearing non-medical masks is an **additional layer of protection** that can help to prevent the infectious respiratory droplets of an unknowingly infected person (the wearer) from coming into contact with other people. This follows public health advice that a mask may be a helpful tool to reduce the risk of infection or transmission when an individual cannot be two metres from others.

Who should not wear masks?

- Non-medical masks should not be worn by anyone who
 - is unable to remove the mask without assistance (for example, due to age, ability, or developmental status)

- has breathing difficulties
- is under the age of 2

What happens if there is a case in a school?

- Public health officials will lead the response if there is a positive case in a school. This will mean contacting those who would be considered close contacts and advising them of the need to self-isolate or self-monitor.
- Schools will clean and disinfect areas that public health deems required, and the space will not be used until it is determined to be safe.
- Information will be shared with parents in those schools when a case has been identified.
- Schools will be identified in the Manitoba COVID-19 Bulletin when a case has been identified.

Will they close my school if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

- Not unless there is evidence of transmission across multiple cohorts.
- Public health measures that reduce the contact between groups of students will allow for individual classes or cohorts to be excluded from school and advised to self-isolate at home, instead of the entire school. Classes or cohorts that are not exposed can continue to attend school. If there is evidence of transmission between cohorts in the school, the school may be closed and switch to remote learning for a period of time.

How will schools help my child adjust to going back to school when it will look so different?

- Schools and school divisions are all planning strategies to respond to the mental health and well-being needs of their students, staff, and families, and they will be posting plans on their websites by August 17 so that you can access them.

How can I talk to my child about COVID-19?

- Provide reassurance to children and youth about their personal safety and health. Telling children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting for them. Reassure them about their safety, and explain that there are many things they can do to stay healthy. Seek out credible resources and information.
- For more information on talking to children about COVID-19, please see the following resources provided by UNICEF and the World Health Organization:
 - UNICEF
www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return
 - World Health Organization
www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/healthy-parenting/english-tip-6-covid-19-parenting.pdf?sfvrsn=232558c1_8

Will my child's temperature be taken when they arrive at school?

- No. Parents and caregivers will need to screen their children before sending them to school.
- Schools may also support children with self-screening, but temperature checks at school are not recommended. Normal temperatures are different for everybody and can vary throughout the day.

Will teachers have access to fast-tracked COVID-19 testing?

- Currently there is no fast-tracking for any essential workers beyond health care.
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and should be tested for COVID-19. If the COVID-19 test result is negative, they should stay home until symptoms have resolved for 24 hours. If not tested, all individuals with symptoms should isolate at home for 10 days after symptom onset.
- If anyone is identified as a close contact to a case, they will be required to self-isolate for 14 days due to exposure, regardless of whether their COVID-19 test is negative.

Will students with special needs be in congregated classrooms? Isn't this a step backwards from the department's philosophy of inclusion?

- The goal is to have as many students back to in-class learning as possible, including students with special learning needs.
- School is going to be different for everyone this fall, including students with special needs—many of whom may not be able to stay home independently if parents are working.
- Grouping some students together and getting creative about programming and timetabling is a temporary COVID-19 measure that is intended to get kids back in school as much as possible.

Will my child's choral program run this year?

- As there are no specific interventions that eliminate the risk from these group activities at this time, it is difficult to provide specific guidance for choral or for wind instruments. Schools may consider cancelling these activities for the upcoming year or, initially, for the fall term, as further evidence on their risk becomes available. If music programs continue, they must implement additional measures as recommended in *Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists* at www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/covid/restoring-vocalists-instrumentalists.pdf.

Where can I get information on my specific school?

- Detailed school division plans will be posted by August 17. This will include information on
 - the school-day structure and learning plan
 - how the school division will that ensure public health orders and guidance are followed

- how the school division will address the mental health and well-being of the school community, including teachers, staff, students, and families
- how information will be communicated to students, staff, and families
- Before the start of the school year, schools will communicate directly with parents and caregivers to provide them with information about the school year and about ongoing plans for instruction and supports.

Where can I get more information?

- More information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including resources, planning documents, and frequently asked questions, can be found at *Latest COVID-19 Education News* at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html.
- You can also visit EngageMB at <https://engagemb.ca/welcoming-our-students-back-restoring-safe-schools> to ask questions. We'll share your question and the answer for others to see. Questions can also be answered privately if they are not appropriate for sharing.
- *My Learning at Home* is a resource to assist families to support their children in remote learning from home. It can be found at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/mylearning/learningathome/index.html.
- Current information about COVID-19 in Manitoba can be found at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/.