



# Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings

Updated March 30, 2021



## Summary of Key Updates

Updated guidance regarding mask requirements in the following sections:

- Staff Only Spaces (p.15)
- Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities (p.16)
- School Gatherings and Events (p.17)
- Student Transportation on Buses (p.18)
- Personal Protective Equipment (p.28)
- Music Programs (p.38)
- Physical and Health Education/Outdoor Programs (p.38)
- School Sports (p.41)
- Theatre, Film & Dance Programs (p.44)



# Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings



Updated March 30, 2021 – Updates are highlighted

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# Introduction

School supports students in developing their potential and acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities they need for lifelong success. In-person learning, as a part of a student's education, **provides the opportunity for** peer engagement, which supports social and emotional development as well as overall wellness. It also provides many students access to programs and services that are integral to their overall health and well-being.

Based on guidance from the Provincial Health Officer and experience to date within B.C. and other jurisdictions that schools continue to be low-risk sites for COVID-19 transmission, even with increased risk of COVID-19 in some communities, K-12 students can participate in full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools.

To date, the Ministry of Education has allocated \$288 million in provincial and federal funding to support the implementation of enhanced health and safety measures in public and independent schools. Schools and school districts have utilized these funds, as well as local reserves, to increase the number of hand-hygiene stations in schools, purchase cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment, hire custodial staff and support remote learning, among other measures.

## OBJECTIVES

This document was developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Indigenous rightsholders and education partners – including teachers, parents and school leaders – to outline the principles and requirements for maintaining safe learning environments. These comprehensive guidelines build on the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) developed by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) to ensure schools have robust measures in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

These guidelines are intended to support K-12 education employees, students, parents, caregivers, administrators and school community members to:

- Be informed about public health measures and how they support a safe school environment;
- Understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and promoting safe and healthy schools.

## KEY PRINCIPLES

- All schools are to adhere to the standards, guidelines and protocols from the BC Centre for Disease Control and [WorkSafeBC](#).
- The health and safety guidelines outlined in this document have been developed to complement the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC guidance.
- All school districts and independent school authorities are required to have COVID-19 safety plans in place that adhere to the guidance of the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#) and address the health and safety guidelines outlined below.
  - In the case of any variance between these two guidance documents, schools and school districts should follow the health and safety guidelines outlined in this document.
  - Schools and school districts are expected to update their health and safety plans in alignment with updates to the guidelines outlined in this document, and to post their updated plans on their school/school district website.
- Schools should implement psychological safety measures and trauma-informed practice alongside physical health and safety measures.

- Effective and ongoing communication with school leaders, community partners, parents, caregivers, students, unions and employees is an essential aspect of successfully implementing these guidelines.

## COVID-19 SAFETY PLAN REVIEWS

School medical officers noted that most school exposures in fall 2020 did not result in transmission within the school. However, some school exposures did result in additional cases, including clusters and a limited number of outbreaks. While each case was unique, a common recommended action from school medical officers was to review existing COVID-19 safety plans to ensure required measures were in place and were being consistently implemented. A review of the COVID-19 safety plan to ensure it adequately protects workers from transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace is required in the Provincial Health Officer's December 16, 2020 [Workplace Safety order](#).

With this in mind, school and district administrators must regularly review COVID-19 safety plans, and should do so with their Site Committees and Joint Health and Safety Committees and address areas where there are identified gaps in implementation. BCCDC has developed a [COVID-19 School Health & Safety Checklist](#) that can support these safety plan reviews. In addition, school medical officers have recommended the following key areas of focus for schools based on reviews of school exposures to date:

1. Prevent crowding and gathering; pay particular attention to the start and end of the day, and stagger recess, lunch and transition times for students and staff whenever possible.
2. Avoid close face-to-face contact whenever possible.
3. Assign staff to a specific learning group whenever possible.
4. Ensure that the use of masks does not reduce or replace practicing physical distancing between learning groups and other prevention measures, for both students and staff.
5. Ensure prevention measures are in place in staff only areas, including break and meeting rooms.
6. Implement music classes according to the [British Columbia Music Educators' Association and the Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia](#) Guidance for Music Classes.
7. High intensity physical activity should occur outside whenever possible.

## B.C.'s Five-Stage Framework

The Five Stage Framework for K-12 Education outlines expectations for B.C. elementary, middle and secondary schools for learning during COVID-19. The goal of the Framework is to maximize in-class instruction for all students while adhering to the [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#). This is supported by four foundational principles:

- Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and staff
- Provide the services needed to support the children of our essential workers
- Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance
- Provide continuity of educational opportunity for all students

The framework allows instruction to be adjusted depending on the community risk of COVID-19 in B.C. This will enable schools to move between stages if necessary, based on guidance from the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

While B.C. is currently in Stage 2, school districts and independent schools must have the necessary plans in place to be able to shift between stages if and when required.

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
Learning Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: N/A</li> <li>Middle: N/A</li> <li>Secondary: N/A</li> </ul>	Learning Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 60</li> <li>Middle: 60</li> <li>Secondary: 120</li> </ul>	Learning Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 30</li> <li>Middle: 30</li> <li>Secondary: 60</li> </ul>	Learning Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 30</li> <li>Middle: 30</li> <li>Secondary: 30</li> </ul>	Learning Group Size <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 0</li> <li>Middle: 0</li> <li>Secondary: 0</li> </ul>
DENSITY TARGETS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>	DENSITY TARGETS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>	DENSITY TARGETS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% for all schools</li> </ul>	DENSITY TARGETS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% for all schools</li> </ul>	DENSITY TARGETS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0% for all schools</li> </ul>
IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION: Full-time all students, all grades	IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION: Full-time instruction for all students for the maximum instructional time possible within cohort limits.  Self-directed learning supplements in-class instruction, if required.	IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION: Full-time instruction for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children of essential service workers<sup>1</sup></li> <li>students with disabilities/diverse abilities</li> <li>students who require additional supports</li> </ul> In-class instruction for all other students for the maximum time possible within cohort limits.  Self-directed and remote learning supplements in-class instruction.	IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION: Full-time instruction for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children of essential service workers<sup>1</sup></li> <li>students with disabilities/diverse abilities</li> <li>students who require additional supports</li> </ul> Remote learning for all other students	IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION: Suspend in-class for all students

*Note: as Stage 1 is a return to regular operating procedures, and Stage 5 means that all in-class instruction is suspended, the following health and safety guidelines apply to Stages 2 to 4, unless specified otherwise.*

## Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19. These are more effective in settings such as schools where there is a relatively consistent grouping of people and multiple measures of various effectiveness can be routinely implemented, including:

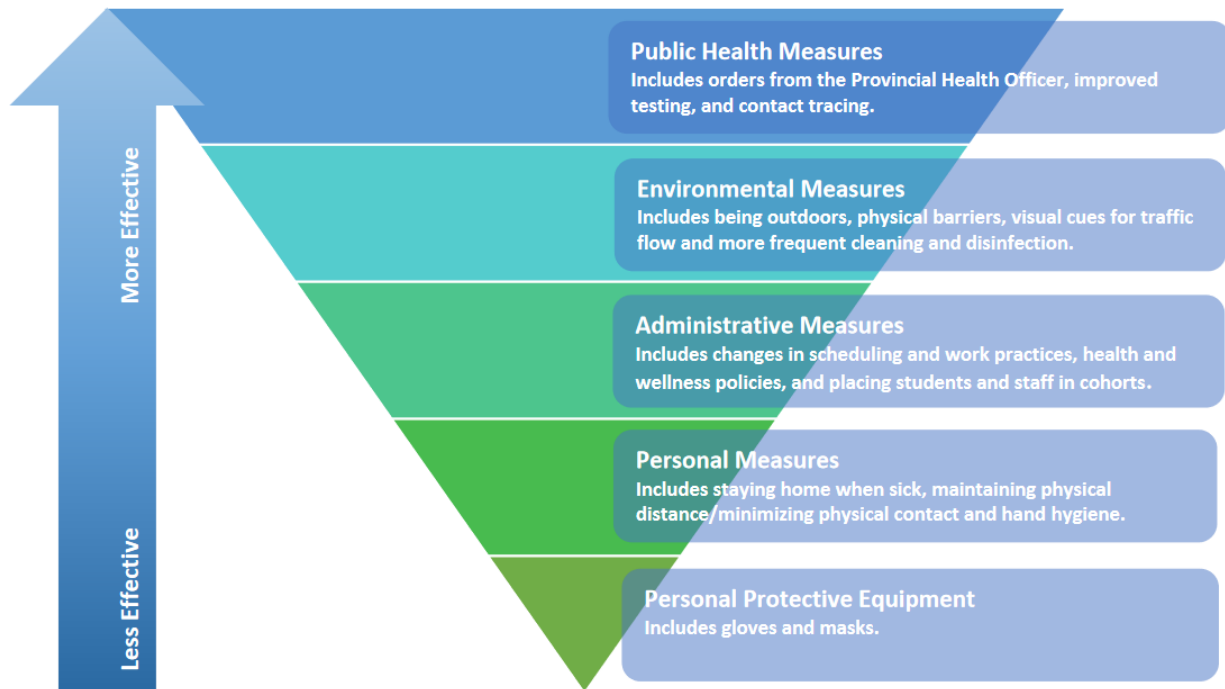
- Robust illness policies for students and staff.
- Reinforcement and adoption of effective personal practices (e.g. diligent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, etc.).
- Various health and safety measures (e.g., enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, using outdoor space for learning activities, grouping students and staff in learning groups to limit in-person interactions, implementing staggered schedules, etc.)

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures that should be taken to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Control measures at the top

<sup>1</sup> For more information on essential service workers, see the “Services and Supports” section of the [Operational Guidelines](#).

are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.

### The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease



## SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Schools can support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviours.
- Sharing reliable information, including from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, to parents, families and caregivers.
- Promoting required safety measures in the school through the use of visual aids like floor markings and signage.

In line with the K-12 Education Restart Plan's goal of maximizing in-class instruction for all students within current health and safety guidelines for schools, staff should utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventive practices and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> This includes where a student, staff, or other adult (including visitors) cannot comply with a specific safety measure due to health or behavioural reasons – in these circumstances, schools/districts should work with these individuals (and their parents/caregivers, if applicable to a student) to explore other environmental and administrative measures to ensure their safety and the safety of others.



# Learning Groups and Physical Distancing

Reducing the number of close, prolonged, face-to-face interactions an individual has in a day continues to be a **key component of B.C.'s strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19**. This can be accomplished in K-12 school settings through two different but complementary approaches: learning groups (cohorts) and physical distancing.

## LEARNING GROUPS

A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term (e.g. a school quarter, semester or year) and who primarily interact with each other. A learning group could be made up of a single class of students with their teacher, multiple classes that sometimes join for additional learning activities, or a group of secondary school students with the same courses.

- In Stage 2, members of the same learning group must minimize physical contact.
- In Stages 3 and 4, staff, as well as middle and secondary school students, will have to maintain physical distance at all times (even if they are part of the same learning group).<sup>3</sup>

The composition of learning groups should remain consistent for all activities that occur in schools (i.e. students and staff cannot be part of more than one learning group at the same time). Students and staff from different learning groups can interact with one another while practicing physical distancing (see the [Interacting with Learning Groups](#) section for more information).

Learning group composition can be changed at the start of a new term (e.g., quarter, semester). Outside of these transition points, composition should be changed as minimally as possible except where required to support optimal school functioning. This may include learning, operational or student health and safety considerations. No additional safety protocols are required following a change in learning group composition.

School administrators should keep up-to-date lists of all members of a learning group, and others who work with that learning group (e.g. itinerant teachers, TTOCs), and their contact information to support swift communications from the school and to share with public health to support contact tracing, if needed.

Consistent seating arrangements are encouraged where practical. This can further reduce the number of close, prolonged face-to-face interactions a person has, and assist public health should contact tracing need to occur.

Learning groups are a recommended public health measure to help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Organizing students and staff into learning groups helps to reduce the number of different interactions and potential exposure to COVID-19 and supports better contact tracing if there is a confirmed case in a school community.

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<sup>3</sup> Stage-specific health and safety expectations are subject to change, further to updated public health guidance from the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

## Maximum learning group sizes (inclusive of students and staff)

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: no limit</li> <li>Middle: no limit</li> <li>Secondary: no limit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 60</li> <li>Middle: 60</li> <li>Secondary: 120</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 30</li> <li>Middle: 30</li> <li>Secondary: 60</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 30</li> <li>Middle: 30</li> <li>Secondary: 30</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary: 0</li> <li>Middle: 0</li> <li>Secondary: 0</li> </ul>

Examples of what learning groups can look like in elementary, middle and secondary schools are available on the [B.C. Government website](#). Refer to the [Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts](#) section for more information.

Learning group size limits were established by provincial medical health officers based on a number of considerations including:

- **Compared to some other community settings, schools are considered “controlled environments” in that they** have a comprehensive set of safety measures in place, a consistent and limited group of people accessing the building, and the majority of those people are children who are at lower risk for transmitting COVID-19. The combination of these features reduces the risk of bringing more children and youth together in schools.
- The significant academic, social and emotional benefits of providing more students with more in-class learning time in a closer to normal learning environment – minimizing learning gaps, increasing peer interaction and support, decreasing feelings of isolation.
- The typical format of instruction in B.C. (e.g. one teacher with a consistent group of students in elementary, multiple teachers and inconsistent groupings of students in secondary).
- The low community prevalence of COVID-19 currently in B.C., particularly amongst school-aged children.
- Provincial contact tracing and testing capacity.

Learning groups are smaller for elementary students recognizing that younger children are less able to consistently implement personal measures such as hand hygiene, reducing physical contact and recognizing and articulating symptoms of illness

Learning groups are larger for secondary students due to the increased ability of students in that setting to be able to consistently practice personal measures, like physical distancing and hand hygiene, and recognize and articulate symptoms of illness. Due to the typical format of instruction of multiple teachers working with different groupings of students across a larger number of curricular areas, learning groups are also larger at the secondary level to enable flexibility in meeting students’ learning needs.

Elementary and middle schools are likely able to implement learning groups without reducing the number of individuals typically within the school. Secondary schools may need to reduce the number of individuals

typically within the school at the same time to operate within learning group size limits. This may be necessary due to the larger number of people and the increased frequency of classroom exchanges that typically occur within secondary schools.

In rare circumstances, and upon Ministry approval, school districts and independent schools may request a variance from the learning group size guidelines outlined in the Five-Stage Framework for K-12 Education.

- These exemptions must be school-specific and based on significant operational implications for a school or school district, result in a relatively small increase to learning group sizes (e.g. increase from 60 to 62), and be implemented in a manner that preserves all other required health and safety measures.
- The school district or independent school authority must outline the rationale for the request and include a recommendation from the local medical health officer in its Stage 2 Restart Plan submitted to the Ministry of Education. The school district or independent school authority needs to have engaged in conversations with its local medical health officer, local unions and school-based staff prior to submitting the request.
- Any learning group exemptions should be clearly stated in the school district/authority's safety plan.

See the [Key Contacts and Additional Resources](#) section of the Operational Guidelines for Medical Health Officer contact information by Health Authority.

Medical Health Officers are physicians who work within health authorities and have authority and responsibilities outlined in the [Public Health Act](#). These include directing the public health response to local public health threats, like COVID-19. School medical officers are Medical Health Officers who have additional authority and responsibilities outlined in the [School Act](#). They are responsible for directing the local public health response to any public health threat that affects schools, like COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. Every school has a school medical officer.

## INTERACTING WITH LEARNING GROUPS

Schools should minimize the number of adults (staff and others) who interact with learning groups they are not a part of as much as possible while continuing to support learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment. Staff outside of a learning group must practice physical distancing (2m) when interacting with the learning group. For example, an itinerant educator (e.g. a teacher teaching on call, an Indigenous support worker, a teacher candidate, a district specialist) can teach/support multiple learning groups but must practice physical distancing from students and other staff and avoid close face-to-face interactions. See section on [Itinerant Staff](#) for additional guidelines.

Unless staff members belong to the same learning group, they should maintain physical distance (2m) from one another at all times. Masks are not a replacement for physical distancing between staff from different learning groups.

There are different considerations for elementary and middle/secondary students when socializing outside of their learning group. Schools should make sure these considerations are clearly communicated and explained to students.

### Elementary students:

- When interacting with peers outside of their learning group, students should:

- minimize physical contact when outdoors;
- maintain physical distance (2m) when indoors. If a student is unable to physically distance, the student should socialize within their learning group or where they can be supported to physically distance.

Elementary-aged students are less able to consistently maintain physical distance.  
Outdoors is a lower risk environment than indoors.

Middle/Secondary students:

- When interacting with students and staff outside of their learning group, students should maintain physical distance (2m).
- Middle and secondary school students capable of consistently maintaining physical distance, when it is required, should be expected to do so. If a student is unable to physically distance, the student should socialize within their learning group or where they can be supported to physically distance.

Multi-Learning Group Instruction:

Students from different learning groups can be in the same learning space at the same time if physical distancing can be maintained (as per the requirements outlined above), and there is adequate space available to prevent crowding of those from within the same learning group. Masks are not a replacement for physical distancing between students from different learning groups in the same learning space.

Multi-Learning Group Services:

Students from different learning groups may be required to be together to receive beneficial social supports, programs or services (e.g. meal programs, after school clubs, etc.). Within these supports or services it is expected that learning groups are maintained, and physical distancing is practiced between learning groups, as much as is practical to do so while still ensuring the support, program or service continues.

For information on mask requirements for K-12 staff and students, see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section.

## ITINERANT STAFF AND SPECIALISTS

Schools should minimize the number of staff who interact with learning groups they are not a part of as much as possible while continuing to support learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment.

As such, school districts and schools should seek to assign staff to a specific learning group wherever possible, to help minimize the number of interactions between students and staff, while continuing to support students who may need special assistance. Examples could include assigning an educational assistant to a learning group where they can support one or more students in the same learning group, or assigning a teacher teaching on call or a teacher candidate on practicum to a learning group if they have been offered an extended assignment at a single school. Schools and school districts must consider learning group size limits when assigning staff to learning groups.

Staff not assigned to a learning group must practice physical distancing when interacting with the learning group. For example, a learning assistance teacher or a counsellor can work with students from multiple learning groups, but they should maintain physical distance from students and other staff as much as possible.

In situations where staff outside a learning group cannot practice physical distancing, other measures must be explored, such as reconfiguring rooms, securing an alternate space to allow for physical distancing, installing a physical barrier made of transparent materials, or providing virtual services where possible. If none of the strategies outlined above are viable options, staff should practice physical distancing as much as possible while providing services. In addition, all K-12 staff are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) in schools – see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section for more information.

Even with the requirement for K-12 staff to wear non-medical masks in schools, school districts and independent school authorities should ensure that other preventative measures (e.g., assigning staff to a learning group, maintaining physical distance outside of a learning group, reconfiguring space, installing barriers, etc.) have been fully explored.

See [the Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts](#) section for more information.

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing refers to a range of measures aimed at reducing close contact with others. Physical distancing is used as a prevention measure because COVID-19 tends to spread through prolonged, close, face-to-face contact.

- Within learning groups, physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact, minimizing close, prolonged, face-to-face interactions, and spreading out as much as possible within the space available.
  - Young children may not be able to consistently reduce physical contact.
- Outside of learning groups, physical distancing should include avoiding physical contact and close, prolonged face-to-face interactions, spreading out as much as possible within the space available, and ensuring there is 2 meters of space available between people from different learning groups.
- For situations where members of different learning groups interact:
  - If people will be in the same space for an extended period of time (>15 minutes), the space should be sufficiently large, and/or should have limits on the number of people so that 2 meters of space is available between people from different learning groups.
  - If people will be in the same space for transition purposes (e.g. changing between classes), and other measures are in place (e.g. markings on the floor, staggered transition times), there should be enough space to ensure no physical contact but 2 meter physical distancing is not required.
- Within and outside of learning groups, there should be no crowding.
- Staff and other adults should seek to reduce the number of close, face-to-face interactions with each other at all times, even **while** wearing a non-medical mask. This includes during break times and in meetings.

Physical distancing requirements vary between stages 2, 3 and 4:

STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical distancing (2m) for K-12 staff and for middle and secondary school students when interacting outside of their learning groups</li><li>Physical distancing (2m) for elementary students when interacting outside of their learning groups while indoors.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical distancing (2m) for K-12 staff, middle and secondary school students at all times.</li><li>Physical distancing (2m) for elementary students when interacting outside of their learning groups while indoors.</li></ul>	

To support physical distancing requirements, the following strategies should be implemented where possible:

- Avoid close greetings (e.g. hugs, handshakes).
- Regularly remind students about keeping their hands to themselves. Use visual supports, signage, prompts, video modelling, etc. as necessary.
- Create space between students/staff as much as possible:
  - Configure classroom and learning environment differently to maximize distance between students and adults (e.g., different desk and table formations). Seating arrangements where students directly face one another should be avoided where possible, particularly for middle and secondary schools.
  - Use consistent or assigned seating arrangements where practical.
  - Store excess equipment (e.g. equipment that might not be of use during the pandemic) in order to open more space in schools.
- Implement strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times.
  - Focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather or crowd.
- Where possible, stagger recess/snack, lunch and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Take students outside more often, where and when possible.
  - Organize learning activities and breaks outside including snack time, place-based learning and unstructured time.
  - Take activities that involve movement, including those for physical health and education, outside.
- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage greater space between students and staff as much as is practical to do so.
  - For elementary students, adapt group activities to minimize physical contact and reduce shared items.
    - Offer manipulatives and items that encourage individual play, and that can be easily cleaned and reduce hand-to-hand-contact and cross-contamination.
    - Prioritize the acquisition of adequate amounts of high-touch materials, such as pencils or art supplies, in order to minimize sharing between children.

- For middle and secondary students, minimize group activities and avoid activities that require close face-to-face contact.
  - Note: for guidelines specific to courses/subject areas that tend to involve a significant number of group activities (e.g. culinary programs), see the section on [Curricular, Programs and Activities](#).
- Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
- Use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. It is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure the fire code is adhered to.
- Ensure communication of physical distancing guidelines is relayed in multiple formats for ease of understanding (visual supports and representation, prompts, video modelling, signage, videos using sign language, etc.).
- Consider installing barriers made of transparent material in places where physical distance cannot be regularly maintained, and a person is interacting with numerous individuals outside of a learning group. This may include at a front reception desk where visitors check in, a library check out desk, or where food is distributed in a cafeteria. See [guidance from WorkSafeBC on designing effective barriers](#) for more information.

For information on mask requirements for K-12 staff and students, see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section.

### Staff Only Spaces

Experience to date underscores the importance of COVID-19 prevention among adults, as well as students, in the school setting. Schools and school districts must ensure physical distancing is practiced within staff only spaces, including during break times, [in addition to mask use](#). To support this, schools can implement the following strategies:

- Utilize floor markings and signage to direct traffic flow and prevent crowding (e.g. in the break room, by the photocopier, etc.).
- Hold meetings virtually whenever possible.
- Ensure staff practice physical distancing (2m) during face-to-face meetings. Staff are also required to wear masks when [indoors – see the the \[Personal Protective Equipment\]\(#\) section for more information](#).

[WorkSafeBC guidance for offices](#) lists measures that should be considered and implemented as applicable to the workplace for **staff in office environments (both inside and outside of 'bricks and mortar' schools)**.

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/DIVERSE ABILITIES

### Expectations for School Districts and Schools

School districts and independent schools are expected to implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

School districts and independent schools must ensure that supports and services typically provided to students with disabilities/diverse abilities or medical complexity continue across all stages. This should include ongoing discussion on needs assessments to better understand the supports that students and families may require (see

the Services and Supports > Supports for Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities section of the [COVID-19 Operational Guidelines](#) for more information).

Students with disabilities/diverse abilities who are not able to physically distance are not to be excluded from a learning group. Prevention and exposure control measures should be implemented to support students to access learning within a learning group (e.g. assigned seating, prompts, visual support, education using video modelling, social stories, etc.)

Schools districts and independent schools must ensure that learning groups are established in a manner that allows for **the implementation of students' IEP goals, respects** the principles of equity and inclusion and does not result in segregated learning environments.

Most students with disabilities/diverse abilities or medical complexity are not considered at greater risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. For guidelines specific to children with immune suppression (e.g. students who have had a recent organ transplant, who are receiving chemotherapy, those with an illness impacting their immune system), please refer to the [Students, Family Members and Staff with Immune Suppression](#) section.

Due to physical space limitations it may be necessary to reduce the number of individuals at any given time within secondary schools to ensure that physical distance can be maintained when required (this would mostly be the case in larger secondary schools). In this case, secondary schools should continue to prioritize the attendance of students who most benefit from in-person support and learners with diverse needs.

#### Examples of students who require additional support:

- some children and youth in care
- students not yet meeting literacy expectations
- students at risk of not graduating
- students requiring mental health or substance use supports
- students with serious medical conditions
- students who may be at risk due to the situation in their home environment
- a student with a disability who has been destabilizing due to changes in their routine

#### Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities where Physical Contact may be Required

Supporting students with disabilities/diverse abilities may require staff providing support services to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a student.

When staff are working with a student indoors, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, staff are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield). Additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used as part of the personal care routine normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g., gloves for toileting).

When working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, options include having the staff member wear a mask with a



transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth. More information on masks and face coverings is available on the [BCCDC website](#).

- Students in Grades 4 to 12 are also required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering when receiving services indoors and a barrier is not present.
- For students in Grades K to 3, the student or parent/caregiver should determine whether or not the student should also be wearing any PPE when receiving services in close physical proximity.

In addition to a non-medical mask, those providing health or education services that require being in close proximity to a student should follow their standard risk assessment methods to determine if additional PPE is required, in accordance with routine practices.

Schools will have non-medical masks and face shields available for staff.

For more information, including exceptions to mask requirements for staff and students, see the [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) section.

## SCHOOL GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

School gatherings should be kept to a minimum and where possible schools should seek virtual alternatives for larger gatherings and assemblies to continue to support these events in a different format<sup>4</sup>. When it is necessary to gather in larger groups, the following guidance should be followed:

- School gatherings should occur within a learning group.
  - Gatherings should not exceed the maximum learning group size in the setting (which includes students and staff who are part of the learning group), plus the minimum number of additional people required (e.g. additional **school staff, visitors, etc.**) to meet the gathering's purpose and intended outcome. Additional people should be minimized as much as is practical to do so, and they must maintain physical distance.
  - Adequate space should be made available to prevent crowding of those within the learning group.
- Staff meetings, in-service and professional development activities, and other staff-only gatherings should be held virtually wherever possible.
  - Staff should practice physical distancing (2m) for face-to-face interactions, whenever possible.
  - If barriers between participants are not present, participants are required to wear masks.
  - The number of participants gathered, and the length of the gathering should be minimized as much as possible.
- Examinations or assessments are not considered school gatherings, however they must still be delivered in accordance with the health and safety guidelines outlined in this document and should not include non-student and staff spectators (e.g. performance arts concert or play where families are invited to attend).
- In-person inter-school events (including competitions, tournaments and festivals) should not occur at this time. This will be re-evaluated throughout the school year.

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<sup>4</sup> The [School Regulation](#) requires principals to ensure school assemblies are held at least 3 times each school year, including the school day immediately preceding Remembrance Day.

- Gatherings or events at a school that are not educational activities or support services (e.g. meal programs), including social gatherings of students and/or staff, must adhere to the [PHO Order for Gatherings and Events](#).

## PERSONAL ITEMS

Staff and students can continue to bring personal items to school, but they should be encouraged to only bring items that are necessary (e.g. backpacks, clothing, school supplies, water bottles, reusable food containers).

Items brought regularly to and from school should be limited to those that can be easily cleaned (e.g. reusable food containers) and/or are considered to be low risk (e.g. clothing, paper, etc.).

Students can continue to use their lockers, as it is better for personal items to be stored in a locker than to be stored in classrooms or carried throughout the school. If possible, lockers should not be shared. If lockers have to be shared, schools must assign shared lockers to students in the same learning group. Schools should implement strategies to manage the flow of students around lockers to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.

Staff and students should not share personal items (including electronic devices, writing instruments, etc.)

Additional measures should be taken, including:

- **Personal items should be labelled with student's name to discourage accidental sharing.**

### Food and beverages:

- Schools should continue to emphasize that individual food and beverages are not to be shared.
- Schools should not allow homemade food items to be made available to other students at this time (e.g. birthday treats, bake sale items).

Please note that different guidelines apply to food that is prepared in schools (e.g. as part of a culinary program) or for school food services (e.g. cafeteria), which are outlined in the [Curriculum, Programs and Activities](#) section.

## Student Transportation on Buses

The following strategies are recommended for student transportation on buses:

- Buses used for transporting students should be cleaned and disinfected according to the guidance provided in [BCCDC's Guidelines on Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings](#) document. Additional guidance is available from [Transport Canada](#).
- Bus drivers should clean their hands often, including before and after completing trips. They are encouraged to regularly use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol during trips.
- Bus drivers are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) on school buses **except while driving**.
  - Schools will have non-medical masks and face shields available for staff.
  - See the [Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities](#) section for more information on safety measures when staff are required to be in physical contact with students.
- **Students in Grades 4 to 12** are required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings when they are on the bus. **Students in Grades K to 3 are encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering on**

school buses but are not required to do so - mask wearing remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for these students, and their choices must be respected.

- Non-medical masks or face coverings should be put on before loading.

For more information on exceptions to mask requirements for bus drivers and students, see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section.

- Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school (see the [Daily Health Check](#) section for more information). If a child is sick, they must not take the bus or go to school.
- Students should clean their hands before they leave home to take the bus, when they leave school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home.
- Where possible, bus line up areas should be set up to prevent crowding, and allow for physical distancing of 2m (e.g., tape markings on pavement, etc.) where required.
  - Schools should provide support for students who are not able to physically distance.
- Open windows when the weather permits.

To reduce the number of close in-person interactions on school buses, the following strategies are recommended:

- Use consistent or assigned seating arrangements.
  - Schools/school districts should keep up-to-date passenger and seating arrangement lists to share with public health should contact tracing need to occur.
  - The seating arrangement can be altered whenever necessary to support student health and safety (e.g. accommodating children with a physical disability, responding to behavioural issues, etc.)
- Consider the order students typically onload and offload to support buses being loaded from back to front and offloaded from front to back.
- Prioritize students sharing a seat with a member of their household or learning group. If space is available, students should each have their own seat (unless sharing with a member of their household).

Additional measures related to student transportation can be taken, including:

- Encouraging private vehicle use and active transportation (e.g. biking, walking, etc.) where possible to decrease transportation density.
- See the [Field Trips](#) section for more guidance about safety measures for field trips.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. Schools should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the [BCCDC's Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings document](#).

## DEFINITIONS

**Cleaning:** the physical removal of visible soiling (e.g. dust, soil, blood, mucus). Cleaning removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. It is done with water, detergents and steady friction from a cleaning cloth. All visibly soiled surfaces should be cleaned before being disinfected.

**Disinfection:** the killing of viruses and bacteria. A disinfectant is only applied to objects; never on the human body.

## PRODUCTS & PROCEDURES

For cleaning, use water and detergent (e.g. liquid dishwashing soap), or common, commercially available cleaning wipes, along with good physical cleaning practices (i.e. using strong action on surfaces). For hard-to-reach areas, use a brush and rinse thoroughly prior to disinfecting.

For disinfection, use common, commercially available disinfectants such as ready-to-use disinfecting wipes and pre-made solutions (no dilution needed). Refer to the [Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings Guidelines](#) for additional information.

Schools should use commercial disinfectant products listed on **Health Canada's** [hard-surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Follow the procedures outlined in the [BCCDC Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings document](#) when cleaning and disinfecting.

- Remove or limit the use of:
  - frequently touched items that are not easily cleaned (e.g., fabric or soft items, plush toys)
  - shared equipment, as much as is practical to do so (e.g., instead, try to assemble individualized/small group kits that can be assigned to students, if possible to do so)
- Always wash hands before and after handling shared objects.
- Items and surfaces that children have placed in their mouths or that have been in contact with bodily fluids should be cleaned as soon as possible and between uses by different children.
- Dishwasher-safe items can be cleaned and disinfected in a dishwasher with a hot rinse cycle.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING FREQUENCY

The following frequency guidelines must be adhered to when cleaning and disinfecting:

- General cleaning and disinfecting of the premises at least once in a 24-hour period. This includes items that only a single student uses, like an individual desk.
- In addition to the cleaning and disinfecting of the premises, cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces at least twice in 24 hours, including at least once during regular school hours. (See [Frequently Touched Surfaces](#) section below for examples of frequently touched surfaces.)
- Clean and disinfect any surface that is visibly dirty.
- Empty garbage containers daily.

No additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures are required when different learning groups use the same space or equipment, or when the composition of a learning group changes at the end of a school term, beyond the cleaning and disinfecting procedures that are normally implemented and the guidelines outlined above.

The recommended cleaning and disinfecting frequency for K-12 schools and other community settings outlined above was determined by infection prevention and control experts at the BC Ministry of Health, BC Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial Health Services Authority.

## FREQUENTLY TOUCHED SURFACES

Frequently touched surfaces include:

- Items used by multiple students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles, tables, desks, chairs, manipulatives, and toys.
  - Students and staff should be encouraged to bring an individual, filled water-bottle or other beverage container to school each day for their personal use to support hydration needs.
  - Re-filling water stations can be used to re-fill personal containers (these should not include washroom sinks or other water sources not typically used for drinking water).
  - Water fountains where a person drinks directly from the spout should be used minimally, and only if no other means of water access are available. Hand hygiene should be practiced before and after use.
  - Access to water and to washrooms should not be restricted.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for science labs, kitchen equipment for culinary programs, sewing machines and sewing equipment for home economic programs, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.)
- Appliances (staff and students can share the use of appliances and other objects, but treat items like microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers or laminators as frequently touched surfaces)
- Service counters (e.g., office service window, library circulation desk)

Limit frequently-touched items that are not easily cleaned to those that support learning, health and development.

- Some frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.). These items can continue to be used, if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products. Laminated or glossy paper-based products (e.g. children's books or magazines) and items with plastic covers (e.g. DVDs) can be contaminated if handled by a person with COVID-19; however, the risk is low. There is no need for these items to be cleaned and disinfected or quarantined for any period of time, or for hand hygiene to be practiced before or after use.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING BODILY FLUIDS

Follow these procedures, in conjunction with school/district policies, when cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine):

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedure and regularly used PPE (e.g., gloves, Kevlar sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g. toileting, spitting, biting).

## LAUNDRY

Follow these procedures when doing laundry (Home Economics, Physical and Health Education, Life Skills Programs, etc.):

- Laundry should be placed in a laundry basket with a plastic liner.
- Do not shake dirty items
- Wearing gloves is optional. If choosing to wear gloves, ensure hand hygiene is performed before and after use. No other PPE is required.
- Clean hands with soap and water immediately after removing gloves.
  - Wash with regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C).

## Visitor Access/Community Use

### STAGE 2

Visitor access during school hours should be prioritized to those supporting activities that benefit student learning and well-being (e.g. teacher candidates, public health nurses, meal program volunteers, etc.).

- Parents/caregivers and other visitors should maintain physical distance and avoid crowding while on school grounds, including outside.
- Schools must ensure that visitors are aware of health and safety protocols and requirements prior to entering the school (e.g., maintaining physical distance, requirement to wear a non-medical mask inside the school).
- Schools are responsible for ensuring that all visitors confirm they are not ill and are not required to self-isolate before entering.
  - Schools could include, as part of their visitor registration/sign-in process, for the visitor to confirm they are not ill and are not required to self-isolate.

Schools should keep a list of the date, names and contact information for all visitors and staff who are not typically onsite (e.g. TTOCs, itinerant teachers/specialists, maintenance or IT personnel, district/authority administrators) who entered the school over the past 30 days.

- All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside the school. See the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) section for more information, including exceptions to mask requirements for visitors.
- Adult volunteers can continue to support outdoor supervision/monitoring, provided that they follow required health and safety protocols (e.g. maintaining physical distance, wearing a mask when unable to maintain physical distance, etc.).

After hours community use of facilities is allowed in alignment with other health and safety measures:

- Must adhere to the [Gatherings and Events Order](#) of the Provincial Health Officer.
- Diligent hand hygiene
- Respiratory etiquette
- Physical distancing among older youth and adults
- Ensuring participants stay home if they are feeling ill
- Where possible, limiting building access to only those areas required for the purpose of the activity
- Spaces and equipment used by community members should be cleaned and disinfected prior to students and staff re-entering the space.
  - Cleaning for purposes of after school use cannot result in a reduction of cleaning for education purposes.
  - Schools can consider asking community members to bring their own equipment, where appropriate.

## STAGES 3 & 4

Limit visitor access during school hours. No non-essential community use of school facilities after hours (as determined by the Board of Education or Independent School Authority).

# Employee/Student Attendance

To maximize student attendance, repeated and consistent messaging/communication is crucial to allay parent and caregiver fears and to convey that schools are a safe place to be, based on the rigorous health and safety measures in place. For more information, see section on [Communications Materials](#).

Alternative methods of instructional delivery will be jointly determined by boards of education and First Nations for students from First Nations that remain closed and will not be sending students back to school at this time.

## STUDENTS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND STAFF WITH IMMUNE SUPPRESSION

According to the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control, most children who are immunocompromised can return to in-class instruction when safety measures are in place. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

School districts and schools should be aware of [BCCDC Guidelines for Children with Immune Suppression](#) and share this information with families of children with immune suppression.

The advice from the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control for parents/caregivers of children with complex medical conditions or underlying risk factors, or parents/caregivers who are immunocompromised themselves, is to consult with their medical health care provider to determine the level of **risk regarding their child's return to in-class instruction**. Parents/caregivers seeking an alternative to in-class instruction, and who do not wish to register their child in a distributed learning program or homeschooling, will **be required to obtain a doctor's note indicating the need for accommodations due to health-related risks**.

School districts and independent school authorities are expected to work with these families to ensure continuity of learning and supports.

- If attending in-class instruction is right for the child: schools and school districts should work with parents or caregivers to develop a plan that provides options for learning to ensure appropriate preventative measures are in place.
- If attending in-class instruction is not right for the child: schools and school districts should work with families to develop options **to continue their child's education** at the school or school district level.

School district questions regarding accommodations for immunocompromised staff can be directed to the [BC Public School Employers' Association](#).

## Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols

School districts and independent school authorities must develop local protocols for schools and adult-only worksites/offices that:

- Ensure staff and other adults (e.g. parents, caregivers, visitors) entering the school/worksite are aware of their responsibility to:
  - assess themselves daily for illness prior to entering the school/worksite (e.g. emails/letters to parents and staff, orientation video, signage on doors).
  - stay home and self-isolate if they are sick OR travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days OR were identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak by their local health authority (see the [Staying Home, Self-Isolation and Symptoms](#) section for more information).
- Clearly communicate with parents/caregivers their responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school, and keep them home from school if they are sick or if they have been directed to self-isolate by their local health authority.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work to be sent home as soon as possible.
  - Some students may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools should have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably that is separated from others and provide them with a **non-medical mask if they don't have one**.
    - Schools must provide supervision for younger children. Supervising staff should wear a non-medical mask and face shield if they are unable to maintain physical distance, avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Establish procedures that allow for students and staff to return to school/work in line with the guidance in the [Staying Home, Self-Isolation and Symptoms](#) section.
  - This is to ensure students and staff who are not sick are not kept out of school/away from work longer than necessary.

Schools and districts should not require a health-care provider note (i.e. a doctor's note) to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practices.



## DAILY HEALTH CHECK

A daily health check is a tool to reduce the likelihood of a person with COVID-19 coming to school when they are infectious.

- Parents and caregivers should assess their children daily for illness before sending them to school.
  - Parents/caregivers and students can utilize the provincial [K-12 Health Check app](#) for daily assessment of symptoms.
  - Schools are not required to verify that the student health check has occurred every day or require that parents/caregivers submit a daily health check form.
- Staff and other adults are required to complete an active daily health check, in line with the Provincial Health Officer's [Order on Workplace Safety](#), prior to entering the school.
  - School and district administrators are required to verify that staff and other adult health checks have been completed before they enter the school.
  - An entry check poster for worksites, and additional information on health checks for workers, is available on the [WorkSafeBC website](#).
- If a student, staff or other adult is sick, they must not enter the school.

## STAYING HOME, SELF-ISOLATION AND SYMPTOMS

### Stay Home When Required to Self-Isolate

The following students, staff or other adults must stay home and [self-isolate](#):

- A person confirmed by the health authority as testing positive for COVID-19; or
- A person confirmed by the health authority as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19; or
- A person who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days.

A person who has been tested for COVID-19 must stay home while they are waiting for the test result.

Information on self-isolation for international students, and homestay contingency plans for illness, is available in the [COVID-19 Operational Guidelines for K-12](#).

Additional information on self-isolation requirements and support is available from [BCCDC](#).

### Symptoms of Illness and Return to School

Students, staff or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of COVID-19 in schools. The following resources provide guidance regarding specific symptoms of illness:

- Parents/caregivers and students can use the [K-12 Health Check app](#).
- Staff and other adults can refer to BCCDC's "[When to get tested for COVID-19](#)".
- Staff, students and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#), call 8-1-1 or their health care provider.

When a staff, student or other adult can return to school depends on the type of symptoms they experienced (as indicated in the [K-12 Health Check app](#) and BCCDC "[When to get tested for COVID-19](#)" resource) and if a COVID-

19 test is recommended. See [Appendix B – COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School](#) for more information.

Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g. seasonal allergies) can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. They do not require re-assessment by a health-care provider and should not be required to provide a health-care provider note. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a health-care provider.

Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household develops new symptoms of illness, provided the student/staff has no symptoms themselves. If the household member tests positive for COVID-19, public health will advise the asymptomatic student/staff on self-isolation and when they may return to school. Most illness experienced in B.C. is not COVID-19, even if the symptoms are similar.

## PROTOCOLS FOR MANAGING ILLNESS AND CONFIRMED CASES AT SCHOOL

Refer to the [COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators](#) for more information.

# Trauma-Informed Practice and Socio-Emotional Learning

Trauma-informed practice is an informed way of approaching your practice through a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events.

Trauma-informed practice includes:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments.
- Understanding coping strategies.
- Supporting independence.
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual student needs.

Use of regular needs-based 'check-ins' can assist in gathering important information to inform the level of trauma response and recovery necessary to support the school community. To support educators to develop compassionate learning communities through trauma-informed practice, the Ministry has created [trauma-informed practice resources](#) that are available on the [erase website](#).

The Ministry of Education has developed a [webinar series](#) to support educators as they navigate through times of uncertainty and change. The first webinar, *Building Compassionate Communities in a New Normal*, provides educators with information, ideas and strategies that they can use to create compassionate spaces for students, especially during times when the classroom environment is ever-changing.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) offers a wide range of social emotional learning resources, including [Reunite, Renew, Thrive: A Social Emotional Learning Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#), that outlines a roadmap of action steps to implement SEL practices throughout the school year, for both educators and administrators.

The North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response has released a resource to assist the education sector in supporting the transition back to school called [Guidelines for Re-Entry into the School Setting During the Pandemic: Managing the Social-Emotional and Traumatic Impact](#).

School district and school staff should practice awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many Indigenous communities.

## Hand Hygiene

Rigorous hand-washing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness (antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Follow these guidelines to ensure effective hand hygiene in schools:

- Practice diligent hand hygiene by washing hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds (temperature does not change the effectiveness of washing hands with plain soap and water).
- Facilitate regular opportunities for staff and students to practice hand hygiene:
  - Use portable hand-washing sites and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers containing at least 60% alcohol, where sinks are not available.
    - Schools should use [commercial hand sanitizer products that have met Health Canada’s requirements and are authorized for sale in Canada](#).
  - Hand-washing should be encouraged upon school entry and before/after breaks and eating, using washroom and using gym/playground equipment.
- Promote the importance of diligent hand hygiene to staff and students regularly. For example, display BCCDC’s [hand hygiene poster](#) at handwashing sites.
- Remind staff and students to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Ensure hand-washing supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Staff should assist younger students with hand hygiene as needed.
- Students may bring their own sanitizer or plain soap if they are on the list authorized by Health Canada or have a medical condition that requires specialized soaps. (See the [List of Hand Sanitizers Authorized by Health Canada](#) for products that have met Health Canada’s requirements and are authorized for sale in Canada.)
- If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand rub may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by alcohol-based hand rub.

When Student Should Perform Hand Hygiene:	When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When they arrive at school.</li> <li>▪ Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch).</li> <li>▪ Before and after eating and drinking (excluding drinks kept at a student’s desk or locker).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When they arrive at school.</li> <li>▪ Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch).</li> <li>▪ Before and after eating and drinking.</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Before and after using an indoor learning space used by multiple cohorts (e.g. the gym, music room, science lab, etc.).</li> <li>▪ After using the toilet.</li> <li>▪ After sneezing or coughing into hands.</li> <li>▪ Whenever hands are visibly dirty.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.</li> <li>▪ Before and after giving medication to a student or self.</li> <li>▪ After using the toilet.</li> <li>▪ After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).</li> <li>▪ After cleaning tasks.</li> <li>▪ After removing gloves.</li> <li>▪ After handling garbage.</li> <li>▪ Whenever hands are visibly dirty.</li> </ul> |
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## Respiratory Etiquette

Students and staff should:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve, or a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Although personal protective equipment (including masks) is the lowest level on the [hierarchy of Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures](#), it can provide an additional layer of protection when more effective measures are not feasible. Non-medical masks and face coverings (**hereafter referred to collectively as “masks”**) have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They provide some protection to the wearer and to those around them.

Those wearing masks must still maintain physical distancing whenever possible. There must be no crowding or congregating of people, even if masks are worn.

Masks should not be used in place of the other safety measures detailed in this document. For example, masks are not a replacement for the need for physical distancing for in-class instruction delivered to students from more than one learning group (refer to the *Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease* graphic on page 6).

### K-12 STAFF:

All K-12 staff are required to wear a mask or a face shield (in which case a mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) **indoors** in schools **and on school buses** - both within and outside of their learning group.

Supporting students with complex behaviours, medical complexities or receiving delegated care may require staff providing health services or other health care providers to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a medically complex or immune suppressed student.

- People providing these services in schools **must** wear a mask (medical or non-medical) when providing services **and the service cannot be provided from behind a physical barrier**. Additional PPE over and above that needed for routine practices and the use of a medical or non-medical mask is not necessary.

- Those providing health services in schools may be receiving different guidance related to PPE from their regulatory college or employer. Health service providers are encouraged to work with their employer to confirm what PPE is recommended for the services they provide in school settings.
- Parents and caregivers of children who are considered at higher risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 **are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine their child’s level of risk.**

For information on PPE when working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, see the [Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities where Physical Contact may be Required](#) section.

#### **K-12 STUDENTS:**

All **students in Grades 4 to 12** are required to wear a mask or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) **indoors** in schools **and on school buses** - both within and outside of their learning group.

**Students in Grades K to 3 are encouraged to wear a mask indoors in schools and on school buses, but are not required to do so - mask wearing remains a personal or family/caregiver choice for these students, and their choices must be respected.**

Additional guidance for **student** mask use during specific activities **in schools** is detailed in the [Music Programs](#), [Physical and Health Education \(PHE\)/Outdoor Programs](#), [School Sports](#) and [Theatre, Film and Dance Programs](#) sections of this document

Staff should utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in the use of masks, and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature. See the [Supportive School Environments section](#) for more information.

The use of masks should not reduce or replace other more effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in schools, such as:

- Ensuring students and staff stay home when they are sick or required to self-isolate, including ensuring everyone entering the school performs a daily health check;
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection;
- Placing students and staff into consistent groupings of people (learning groups);
- Adapting learning environments to maximize the use of space;
- Ensuring physical distance can be maintained between learning groups; and
- Frequent hand hygiene

These measures provide multiple layers of protection that reduce the risk of transmission.

Schools and school districts will have non-medical masks available for staff and students, including anyone who becomes sick while at school.

#### VISITORS:

All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside the school.

## EXCEPTIONS FOR STAFF, STUDENTS AND VISITORS:

The guidance outlined above regarding mask requirements does not apply to staff, students and visitors in the following circumstances:

- to a person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons;
- to a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- if the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- if the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument, engaging in high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- if a person is eating or drinking;
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements is important.

Schools must not require a health-care provider note (i.e. a doctor's note) to confirm if staff, students or visitors cannot wear a mask.

No student should be prevented from attending or fully participating at school if they do not wear a mask. See the [Supportive School Environments section](#) for more information.

Students and staff should be supported to know how to properly put on, wear, take off and store non-medical masks and other face coverings. Related information is available on the [BCCDC website](#) and the [Government of Canada website](#).

Medical-grade masks are not required within school settings for general use.

Face shields are a form of eye protection for the person wearing it. They may not prevent the spread of droplets from the wearer. Face shields should not be worn in place of non-medical masks.

## General Ventilation and Air Circulation

**At this time, there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of the virus.** Good indoor air ventilation alone cannot protect people from exposure to COVID-19; however, it may reduce risk when used in addition to other preventive measures.

School districts and independent school authorities are required to ensure that heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained as per standards and specifications for ongoing comfort for workers ([Part 4 of the OHS Regulation](#)).

School districts and independent school authorities should regularly maintain HVAC systems for proper operation and ensure that:

- schools with recycled/recirculated air systems upgrade their current filters to a minimum MERV 13 filter or higher if possible; and

- schools with fresh air intake systems increase their average air exchanges as detailed on the [ASHRAE website](#) and the [Rocky Point Engineering Ltd website](#).

In order to enhance school ventilation, schools should consider:

- moving activities outdoors when possible (for example, lunch, classes, physical activity) and consider moving classrooms outside when space and weather permit
- ensuring that the ventilation system operates properly
  - School district and site-based safety plans should include provisions for when a **school/worksite’s ventilation system is temporarily compromised (e.g. partial power outage, ventilation break down)**.
- increasing air exchanges by adjusting the HVAC system
- where possible, opening windows if weather permits and HVAC system function will not be negatively impacted.

See the [WorkSafeBC website](#) for more information.

## Emergency and Evacuation Drills

Schools should continue to practice emergency (e.g. fire, earthquake, lockdown) and evacuation drills, including the six required annual fire drills as per [BC Fire Code 2.8.3.2](#), and modify current drill procedures to adhere to health and safety guidelines (e.g., providing additional muster spots to prevent crowding/congregating).

- **Staff should be notified in advance of emergency/evacuation drills (i.e. no “surprise” drills).**
- The BC Fire Code requires schools to **conduct “total evacuation fire drills” involving all occupants in the building.** Partial evacuations involving smaller groups of students would not comply with the fire drill requirements of the Fire Code.
- Schools must continue to update their fire safety plans on an annual basis, as per the BC Fire Code, to **“ensure it takes account of the changes in use and other characteristics of the building” (such as current pandemic protocols).** School fire safety plans, including fire drill procedures, should be developed in cooperation with the local fire department and other regulatory authorities.
  - Schools may also need to consult with their local medical health officer for guidance on physical distancing and PPE, based on their site specific conditions and evacuation procedures.
- In the event of an actual emergency, emergency procedures must take precedence over COVID-19 preventive measures.

## Communication and Training/Orientation

School districts and schools must clearly and consistently communicate guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and resources available for information on COVID-19 as needed. Ensure communication of infection prevention and exposure control measures is relayed in multiple formats for ease of understanding (e.g., visual representation, videos using sign language, etc.).

As well, school districts and schools should consider providing early and ongoing health and safety orientation for staff (including newly hired staff and staff who change worksites), parents/caregivers, students and other

adults in the school (e.g. teacher candidates in practicums, volunteers) to ensure all members of the school community are well informed of their responsibilities and resources available. Examples include online information, distribution of orientation and training materials that are clear, concise and easily understood, interactive sessions with Q&A's, material in multiple languages to meet community needs, etc. See the [Health & Safety Orientation Checklist](#) for considerations to support school districts and independent school authorities in planning their health & safety orientation for staff and students

WorkSafeBC recommends that schools and school districts:

- Train their workers on:
  - The risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
  - Safe work procedures or instruction to be followed, including hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.
  - Changes they have made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep records of that training.
  - Document COVID-19-related meetings and post minutes at a central location.
- Keep records of instruction and training provided to workers regarding COVID-19.

As per WorkSafeBC guidance, employers need to involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace. School districts and independent school authorities should ensure they have active Site Committees and Joint Health and Safety Committees that meet regularly, including prior to any transitions between stages, and are included in school district/school planning efforts.

Schools/districts can refer to the [BCCDC website](#), [B.C.'s Back to School Plan website](#), [WorkSafeBC's website](#) and [Queen's Printer COVID-19 Signage Catalogue](#) for signage and posters.

## Curriculum, Programs and Activities

All curriculum, programs and activities should operate in alignment with provincial K-12 health and safety guidelines, including school-led activities held off campus<sup>5</sup> (e.g. sports academies, community-based programs/courses). Electives (e.g. Fine Arts education, etc.) are important to student health and well-being and staff in these programs should be:

- reassured these programs will continue throughout each stage; and
- be supported in finding creative ways to redesign/deliver courses, if needed

School district and school communications should include evidence-based information, provided by the Provincial Health Officer and BC Centre for Disease Control, to build awareness that the risk of contracting COVID-19 from students is minimal and to help address inaccurate information that might be circulating in the school community.

Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected as per [Cleaning and Disinfecting guidelines](#) outlined in this document, and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in music classes and music equipment use.

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<sup>5</sup> Students and staff are also required to follow the safety protocols required by the off-campus facility. Where there is a conflict, the safety protocols required by the off-campus facility should be followed.



For guidelines specific to visitor access during school hours (e.g. guest speakers), see the [Visitor Access/Community Use section](#) in this document. As visitors are not part of learning groups, they would need to adhere to the physical distancing requirements outlined in the [Physical Distancing section](#) of this document.

In-person inter-school events including competitions, tournaments and festivals, should not occur at this time. Where possible, schools should seek virtual alternatives to continue to support these events in a different format.

For information on mask requirements for K-12 staff and students, see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section. Additional guidance for mask use during specific activities in middle and secondary schools is detailed in the [Music Programs](#), [Physical and Health Education \(PHE\)/Outdoor Programs](#), [School Sports](#) and [Theatre, Film and Dance Programs](#) sections below.

## ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education programs operated by K-12 schools should follow the guidance outlined in this document, particularly the guidance provided for adults in a school environment. This includes respecting environmental and administrative measures, such as maintaining physical distance (2m). Note that learning groups cannot be applied to adult-only settings (an “all adult” learning group is not an acceptable public health measure).

## ARTS EDUCATION

- Practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - at the beginning and at the end of the class;
  - before and after handling shared equipment; and
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Have personal spaces and equipment set up for students, as best as possible.
  - Avoid sharing equipment by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies, if possible.
  - Clean and disinfect shared equipment as per guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.
  - When entering classroom spaces, encourage students to use designated areas for leaving personal items, such as in designated desk areas or a marked side of the room.
- Demonstrations and instruction: ensure appropriate space is available to allow for all students to view and understand demonstrations.
  - If needed, break class into smaller groups to allow appropriate spacing.

## DUAL CREDIT

Students may earn [“dual credit” towards graduation by enrolling in and successfully completing courses at specific post-secondary institutions.](#)

- For students taking dual credit courses taken in secondary schools, the health and safety guidelines outlined in this document apply.
- For students taking dual credit courses in post-secondary institutions, schools must ensure students are aware of and adhere to the health and safety guidelines set out by post-secondary institutions.

Information on health and safety guidelines for post-secondary institutions can be found on the [B.C. Government website](#) and in individual institutions.

## EXTENDED DAY CLASSES

- Extended day classes should occur when:
  - Under Stages 2 to 4, physical distance can be maintained between members of different learning groups; and
  - Under Stage 2, minimized physical contact is practiced by those within the same learning group.

## FIELD TRIPS

### Stage 2

When planning field trips, staff should follow existing policies and procedures as well as the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. Additional measures specific to field trips should be taken, including:

- Field trip locations must provide supervisors with their COVID-19 operating plan and ensure it does not **conflict with the school's plan**. The field trip supervisor should then share the plan with parents and school administration.
- For transportation, see guidance in the [transportation section](#) in this document.
- Use of parent volunteers for driving groups of students is not permitted during stages 2 to 4.
- Schools must ensure that volunteers providing supervision are trained in and strictly adhere to physical distancing and other health and safety guidelines, including wearing masks. Refer to the [Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts](#) section for guidance on health and safety measures.
- Alignment with PHO guidance and Orders.
- Field trips to outdoor locations are preferable.
- Conduct a risk assessment considering the field trip location - science exploration vs. exploring at the beach.
  - Schools/districts should consider developing a risk assessment specific to field trips under Stage 2, in accordance with their school/district policies and the guidelines outlined in this document.
- If using public transportation for field trips (e.g., SkyTrain, public buses), schools should adhere to local transit authorities guidance (e.g., mandatory mask use for [Translink](#) and [BC Transit](#), as well as practicing hand hygiene before and after use).
- No overnight or international field trips at this time.

### Stage 3 & 4

No field trips should occur under Stages 3 and 4.

## FOOD / CULINARY PROGRAMS

Schools can continue to include food preparation as part of learning programs for students. The following guidelines should be applied:

## Food Safety

- In the case of food and culinary programs, where food is prepared as part of learning and is consumed by the students who prepared it, the following health and safety measures should apply:
  - Continue to follow normal food safety measures and requirements
  - Implement the cleaning and disinfecting measures outlined in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of this document
- [FOODSAFE](#) Level 1 covers important food safety and worker safety information including foodborne illness, receiving and storing food, preparing food, serving food, and cleaning and sanitizing. It is a helpful resource for those seeking education and training on food safety practices

## Hand Hygiene and Cleaning Protocols

- Practice diligent hand hygiene by washing hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19.) Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - at the beginning and at the end of the class
  - before and after handling food
  - before and after eating and drinking
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty
- Refer to the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section for cleaning/disinfecting protocols.
- For laundry, follow the instructions provided in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of these guidelines.

## Learning Groups

- As students tend to prepare food together in culinary programs, use of learning groups is encouraged.

## FOOD SERVICES

Schools can continue to provide food services, including for sale.

Some schools offer food services that are regulated under the [Food Premises Regulation](#). These are typically cafeterias, though may include some meal programs.

- If food service is provided in schools that is regulated under the Food Premises Regulation, no additional measures beyond those articulated in this document and regular requirements as outlined in the regulation need to be implemented (e.g. a FOODSAFE trained staff member, a food safety plan, etc.).
  - Additional considerations that may be relevant when providing food services in schools are detailed in the [WorkSafeBC Restaurants, cafes, pubs, and nightclubs: Protocols for returning to operation](#)
  - The September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Order of the Provincial Health Officer Food and Liquor Serving Premises does not apply to schools. As such, the restriction of six patrons at a table does not apply. However, requirements related to learning groups and physical distancing outlined in these guidelines continue to apply.
  - Schools/school districts should reach out to their local health authority if they are unsure if their food services are regulated.

- [Food Safety Legislation](#) and the [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools](#) continue to apply as relevant.

For food contact surfaces, schools should ensure any sanitizers or disinfectants used are approved for use in a food service application and are appropriate for use against COVID-19. These may be different than the products noted in this document for general cleaning and disinfection. Additional information is available on the [BCCDC website](#).

Schools can continue to accept food donations to support learning and the delivery of meal programs, breakfast clubs and other food access initiatives.

Schools should not allow homemade food items to be made available to other students at this time (e.g., birthday treats, bake sale items).

Schools should continue to emphasize that food and beverages should not be shared.

Refer to Appendix D – Supplementary Guidance for School Meal Programs in the [BCCDC Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#) for guidance on the delivery of school programs, breakfast clubs and other food access initiatives that are not regulated under the *Food Premises Regulation*.

## FUNDRAISERS

Schools can continue to offer fundraisers that can be implemented in line with the health and safety guidelines outlined in this document. If the fundraisers involve the sale of food items, they should also align with the [Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools](#).

## TEXTILES PROGRAMS

- Practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - at the beginning and at the end of the class;
  - before and after handling shared tools or equipment; and
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Have personal spaces and tools set up for students, as best as possible.
  - Avoid sharing hand tools by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies, if possible.
  - Clean and disinfect shared equipment as per guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.
  - When entering classroom spaces, encourage students to use designated areas for leaving personal items, such as in designated desk areas or a marked side of the room.
- Safety demonstrations and instruction: ensure appropriate space is available to allow for all students to view and understand demonstrations.
  - If needed, break class into smaller groups to allow appropriate spacing.
- For laundry, follow the instructions provided in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.

## KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM AND ENTRY

Students transitioning into Kindergarten will need additional time to adjust to the new school environment and develop relationships with educators and peers in the context of COVID-19.

- Consider implementing pre-transition strategies to familiarize students with the people, spaces, and expectations as they start school.
  - send home a social story from the perspective of the student that describes what a day may look like, how they may feel, and what their choices are;
  - share a video of the school that outlines the health and safety measures used including signage, washing hands, and class environment;
  - provide an introduction to and a warm welcome from the educators in the building;
  - organize video calls to families from the classroom so children and families can see the space and ask questions.
- Provide clear, simple communications to parents about having to limit the number of adults in the building and the classroom, and the need for adults to maintain physical distance from each other and from children not their own.
- Implement gradual entry of students, commencing no earlier than when all students are welcomed into schools, and may include:
  - Scheduling fewer caregivers into the classroom at a time to account for physical distancing of adults;
  - Outdoor learning or transition activities with a caregiver in attendance.
- Students themselves will be part of a learning group. Ensure enough space for parents/caregivers to maintain physical distance.
- As students transition to full-time, consider frequent communication with families with photos and/or information about classroom activities.
- Provide research to parents, caregivers and staff that demonstrates low transmission rates in young children.
- Kindergarten students are expected to minimize physical contact. Consider how the room is configured and rearrange furniture to encourage small group and individual play.
- Provide clear communication to students about expectations for the classroom materials, play, and physical contact. Gently remind students of the expectations throughout the day and encourage students to kindly support one another.
- Teachers should continue to provide comfort and reassurance in a way that feels comfortable for the teacher and the student. Students can be comforted through different means, including:
  - stories
  - comfort objects
  - drink of water
  - songs
  - soothing words

- Kindergarten classrooms should maintain a focus on play-based learning, while limiting the use of shared materials and following the cleaning and disinfecting protocols outlined in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.

## MUSIC PROGRAMS

- All classes, programs and activities (e.g. Band, Choir) can continue to occur where:
  - K-12 staff and students **in Grades 4 to 12** must wear masks when indoors. **Masks can be temporarily removed while engaging in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument), but must be worn while singing.**
  - Under Stage 2:
    - physical contact is minimized for those within the same learning group, and students and staff are spaced as far apart as possible;
    - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for K-12 staff and for middle and secondary school students when interacting outside of their learning groups;
    - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for elementary students when interacting outside of their learning groups when indoors; and
  - Under Stages 3 to 4:
    - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for K-12 staff, middle and secondary school students at all times
- Schools could consider installing a barrier made of transparent material in places where physical distance cannot be regularly maintained (e.g., between an itinerant teacher and a learning group). See [guidance from WorkSafeBC on designing effective barriers](#) for more information.
- No in-person inter-school competitions/performances/events should occur at this time. Where possible, schools should seek virtual alternatives to continue to support these events in a different format.
- Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected as per [Cleaning and Disinfecting guidelines](#) and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in music classes and music equipment use.
- Music education should be delivered in line with the [Guidance for Music Classes in BC During COVID-19 developed by the B.C. Music Educators' Association and the Coalition for Music Education in B.C.](#)

## SHARED OFFICE SPACE FOR STAFF

- [WorkSafeBC guidance for offices](#) lists measures that should be considered and implemented as applicable to the workplace for staff in office environments (**both inside and outside of “bricks and mortar schools”, including** Distributed Learning office, school/school district offices). Note that learning groups cannot be applied to **adult-only settings (an “all adult” learning group is not an acceptable public health measure).**

## PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PHE)/OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

- Create space between students and staff, and encourage outdoor activities and programs, as much as possible.

- K-12 teachers should plan physical activities that:
  - Do not involve prolonged physical contact (i.e. physical contact beyond a brief moment) or crowding. For example, activities such as tag and touch football are low-risk, whereas activities like wrestling or partner dancing should be avoided. Teachers are encouraged to adapt activities wherever possible to reduce physical contact, including within learning groups.
  - Support physical distancing (2m) outside of learning groups.
- K-12 staff are required to wear masks during PHE/outdoor program classes when they are indoors and a barrier is not present.
- Shared equipment can be used, provided it is cleaned and disinfected as per the guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting section](#) of this document.
  - Students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.
  - Disinfect teaching aids (e.g., clipboards, white boards, pens, plastic bins for transporting materials etc.)
- Refer to Physical and Health Education ([PHE](#)) [Canada guidelines](#):
  - Include more individual pursuits than traditional team activities such as dance, alternative environment and land-based activities, exercises without equipment, fitness, mindfulness, gymnastics, and target games.
  - Explore local parks and green spaces to promote outdoor learning and activity.
- [For students in Grades K to 3](#), PHE and outdoor programs can proceed in alignment with the guidance above.
- [For students in Grades 4 to 12](#), PHE and outdoor programs can proceed in alignment with the guidance above and the following additional requirements:

#### HIGH INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES<sup>6</sup>

- For high intensity stationary physical activities (e.g. exercise bike, weightlifting), people and equipment need to be spaced 2 metres apart if indoors, including for those within the same learning group. If 2 metre spacing is not available, and the activity cannot be moved outdoors, then the activity must not take place and a different activity should be selected.
  - Masks cannot replace the need for 2 metres between students and/or fitness equipment during high intensity stationary activities indoors.
- For high intensity physical activities that involve movement (e.g. basketball, soccer), indoors or outdoors:
  - Students within the same learning group are not required to maintain physical distancing, but the activity must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
  - Students from different learning groups are required to maintain physical distancing (2M).

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<sup>6</sup> As a general rule, high intensity physical activities involve sustained heavier breathing and elevated heart rates - most people engaged in these activities cannot say more than a few words without having to catch their breath. In contrast, most people engaged in low intensity physical activities can carry on a conversation without having to catch their breath.

- Wearing masks during high-intensity physical activity (stationary or with movement, indoor or outdoors) is left to students' personal choice.

#### LOW INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES<sup>7</sup>

- For low intensity activities (e.g. yoga, walking), students are required to wear masks when they are indoors and a barrier is not present.

#### Why are masks not required during high intensity physical activity?

During high intensity physical activity, respiration rates are increased (resulting in a wet mask) and the wearer is more likely to touch their face and adjust the mask frequently. These factors lessen the protective value a mask may offer. In addition, a wet mask is more difficult to breathe through; those wearing masks during high intensity activities should change them as soon as they become wet.

## PLAYGROUNDS

There is no current evidence of COVID-19 transmission in playground environments. Playgrounds are a safe environment. The following measures should be taken when using playgrounds:

- Ensure appropriate hand hygiene practices before and after outdoor play
- Attempt to minimize direct contact between students
- Sand and water can be used for play if children wash their hands before and after play. COVID-19 does not survive well on surfaces, other than hard surfaces. There is no evidence showing that the virus survives on sand, in water or on playdough.
- More information on playgrounds is available on the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#).

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES / LEARNING COMMONS

- School libraries / learning commons facilities should be open and book exchange can continue to occur during stages 1 to 4.

At this time, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products. As such, there is no need to limit the distribution or sharing/return of books or paper-based educational resources to students because of COVID-19.

- Students and staff should practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds (antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - before and after handling shared equipment/resources;
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Laminated or glossy paper-based products (e.g. books, magazines, worksheets, etc.) and items with plastic covers (e.g. DVDs) are low risk items. Regular book browsing and circulation processes can occur as normal. There is no need to clean, disinfect or quarantine these items for any period of time.
- For information on cleaning, including technological devices, see the guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.



- When visiting the library / learning commons, students and staff should remain in their learning group as much as possible and maintain physical distance from members outside of their learning group.
- Students should bring their personal school supplies for classes held within the space. For makerspace and STEM activities, see the [STEM Programs](#) section.
- Schools should install a barrier made of transparent material at the library check out desk if physical distance cannot be regularly maintained. See [guidance from WorkSafeBC on designing effective barriers](#) for more information.
- The BC Teacher Librarians Association has developed [Recommendations for Access to Library Learning Commons Resources to Meet COVID-19 Requirements](#).

## SCHOOL SPORTS

- Programs, activities (e.g. intramurals, sports team practices, games) and sports academies can occur if:
  - Activities do not involve prolonged physical contact (i.e. physical contact beyond a brief moment). For example, activities such as soccer and touch football are low-risk, whereas activities like wrestling should be avoided;
    - Schools are encouraged to adapt activities/sports as needed to reduce physical contact.
  - No spectators are in attendance – aside from participants, only the minimum number of individuals required to run the activity should be present.
  - Masks are worn by K-12 staff and other adults **when they are indoors and a barrier is not present.**
  - **For students in Grades K to 3:**
    - Students within the same learning group are not required to maintain physical distancing, but activities must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
    - Students from different learning groups are required to maintain physical distancing (2M) when indoors. When outdoors, activities must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
  - **For students in Grades 4 to 12:**

### HIGH INTENSITY SPORT ACTIVITIES<sup>7</sup>:

- For high intensity stationary activities, students and fitness equipment (e.g. stationary bikes, treadmills, weigh training equipment) need to be spaced 2 metres apart if indoors, including for those within the same learning group. If 2 metre spacing is not available, and the activity cannot be moved outdoors, then the activity must not take place and a different activity should be selected.
  - Masks cannot replace the need for 2 metres between students and/or fitness equipment during high intensity stationary activities indoors.
- For high intensity activities that involve movement (e.g. basketball, soccer), indoors or outdoors:

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<sup>7</sup> As a general rule, high intensity sport activities involve sustained heavier breathing and elevated heart rates - most people engaged in these activities cannot say more than a few words without having to catch their breath. In contrast, most people engaged in low intensity sport activities can carry on a conversation without having to catch their breath.

- Students within the same learning group are not required to maintain physical distancing, but the activity must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
- Students from different learning groups are required to maintain physical distancing (2M).
- Wearing masks during high-intensity sport activities (stationary or with movement, indoor or outdoors) is left to personal choice.<sup>8</sup>

LOW INTENSITY SPORT ACTIVITIES<sup>8</sup>:

- For low intensity activities (e.g. stretching, golf), students are required to wear masks when they are indoors, unable to maintain physical distancing (2m), and a barrier is not present.
- Shared equipment can be used, provided it is cleaned and disinfected as per the guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting section](#) of this document.
  - Students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in sport activities and equipment use.
  - Disinfect teaching aids (e.g., clipboards, white boards, pens, plastic bins for transporting materials etc.)
- Sport activities should be held outside whenever possible.
- No in-person inter-school competitions/events should occur at this time.
- See the [Return to School Sports Plan from BC School Sports](#) for additional information. In the case of any discrepancy in guidance, schools and school districts are expected to follow the Ministry of Education guidelines outlined in this document.

## STEM PROGRAMS

- Practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - before and after handling shared tools or equipment;
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Have personal spaces and tools set up for students, as best as possible
  - Avoid sharing hand tools by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies, if possible.
  - When entering classroom spaces, encourage students to use designated areas for leaving personal items, such as in designated desk areas or a marked side of the room.
  - Clean and disinfect shared equipment as per guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.
- Safety demonstrations and instruction: ensure appropriate space is available to allow for all students to view and understand demonstrations.
  - If needed, break class into smaller groups to allow appropriate spacing.

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<sup>8</sup> See [Why are masks not required during high intensity activities in middle & secondary schools?](#) for more information.

## SCIENCE LABS

- Practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19.) Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - before and after handling shared tools or equipment;
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Have personal spaces and tools set up for students, as best as possible
  - Avoid sharing hand tools by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies, if possible.
  - Clean and disinfect shared equipment as per guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section.
- Safety demonstrations and instruction: ensure appropriate space is available to allow for all students to view and understand demonstrations.
  - If needed, break class into smaller groups to allow appropriate spacing.

## TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION (SHOP CLASSES & TRADES IN TRAINING PROGRAMS)

- Practice diligent hand hygiene: wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19.) Students and staff should wash their hands:
  - before and after handling shared tools or equipment;
  - whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- Have personal spaces and tools set up for students, as best as possible
  - Avoid sharing hand tools by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies, if possible.
  - Clean and disinfect shared equipment as per guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of these guidelines.
  - When entering classroom spaces, encourage students to use designated areas for leaving personal items, such as in designated desk areas or a marked side of the room.
- Safety demonstrations and instruction: ensure appropriate space is available to allow for all students to view and understand demonstrations.
  - If needed, break class into smaller groups to allow appropriate spacing.
- Ongoing collaboration and communication with post-secondary institutions for Trades in Training or other pre-trades apprenticeship programs is crucial.
  - Ensure that staff and students in the K-12 school and the post-secondary institution are aware of health and safety measures in place.
  - Diligent student self-assessment of health when transitioning between the secondary school and post-secondary institution.
- Given the unique structure of Trades Training Programs and oversight by the Industry Training Authority (ITA), new information on assessments and programming for these courses is available online.
  - Information for workers is available on the [WorkSafeBC COVID-19 web page](#), including:
    - [What workers should do](#)

- [Staying safe at work](#)
- [Information specific to various industries](#)

## THEATRE, FILM, AND DANCE PROGRAMS

- No in-person inter-school festivals/events should occur. This will be re-evaluated throughout the school year. Where possible, schools should seek virtual alternatives to continue to support these events in a different format.
- Dance and drama classes should minimize contact by reorganizing warmups, exercises and performance work into smaller groups allowing for physical distancing to occur as per individual space limitations.
  - This could mean that portions of the class act as an audience and audit work.
  - This could mean that portions of the class work in alternate areas on their own small group or individual exercises.
- Blocking of scenes and dance numbers should be choreographed in ways that limit physical touch and face-to-face interactions, and instead seek creative solutions to dynamic storytelling and expressive movement.
- K-12 staff are required to wear masks during these programs when they are indoors, and a barrier is not present.
- Students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear masks during these programs when they are indoors, except during high-intensity physical activity.
- Shared equipment such as set pieces, props, cameras etc. should be cleaned and disinfected as per [cleaning and disinfecting guidelines](#) in this document and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in drama, film or dance classes.
- Costume items should be limited in their shared use at this time. For laundry, follow the instructions provided in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of these guidelines.
- Where possible, make use of outdoor and site-specific performance spaces that allow for physical distancing for drama, film and dance, especially if working in theatres, green rooms and studios that have no windows.
- Consider alternatives for audience engagement such as online streaming, in class or family-oriented presentations.
- The Association of BC Drama Educators (ABCDE) is currently developing additional guidelines for teaching drama during COVID-19. Staff should refer to the [ABCDE website](#) for more information.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

The work environment has changed due to the impacts of COVID-19 and employers will need to follow current guidelines from the [Provincial Health Officer](#) and [WorkSafeBC](#). Students can still engage in work placements in accordance with the following guidance:

- Schools and school districts must ensure students are covered with the required, valid workplace insurance for placements at standard worksites and follow WorkSafeBC guidelines.
  - Information for workers is available on the [WorkSafeBC COVID-19 web page](#), including:
    - [What workers should do](#)

- [Staying safe at work](#)
- [Information specific to various industries](#)
- For current and any new placements, standards in the ministry [Work Experience Program Guide](#) must be followed. (*Note: As part of setup and monitoring, worksite visits can now be conducted virtually if needed.*)
- Schools and school districts will assess and determine if it is safe for their students to continue with existing work placements or to begin new placements, considering [Provincial Health Officer](#) and [WorkSafeBC](#) guidance regarding COVID-19. To ensure awareness and support for placements under these conditions, it is recommended that school districts and schools obtain parent/guardian sign-off for all new and continuing placements during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Students and support workers who accompany special needs students to work sites, life skills course and locations, etc., will adhere to the health and safety guidelines of the workplace including wearing PPE if required.

## Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities and special interest clubs should occur if:

- Under Stages 2 to 4, physical distance can be maintained between members of different learning groups; and
- Under Stage 2, reduced physical contact is practiced by those within the same learning group, and adequate space is provided to avoid crowding.

Non-educational activities such as student dances, performances, and in-person celebrations are considered to be events and must adhere to the requirements of the PHO [Gathering and Events Order](#).

In-person inter-school events including competitions, tournaments and festivals, should not occur at this time. Where possible, schools should seek virtual alternatives to continue to support these events in a different format.

# Appendix A: Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts

There is a suite of measures that can be implemented in school settings to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. These flow charts have been developed to assist school districts and independent school authorities in navigating the layered approach of environmental and administrative measures available to schools (e.g. organizing students/staff in learning groups, maintaining physical distance, enhancing cleaning and disinfecting protocols, using outdoor space for learning activities, implementing staggered schedules, reinforcing effective personal practices such as diligent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, implementing robust illness policies for students and staff).

School districts and independent school authorities must ensure that all options for the highest level of measures have been explored before moving to the next level. All decisions should be made to prioritize health and safety and in consideration of the best interest of students.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR STAFF (INCLUDING ITINERANT STAFF)

Schools should minimize the number of staff who interact with learning groups they are not a part of as much as possible while continuing to support learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment. The following flow chart outlines the considerations to assign staff to a learning group and the steps to take when a staff cannot be assigned to a learning group (e.g. specialist teacher or EA working with multiple learning groups, TTOC).

Level 1: Can the staff member be assigned to a learning group?  
Consider learning group size limits, nature of staff's role and responsibilities, and student needs.

Level 2: If no, can the staff member fulfill their duties while maintaining physical distancing?  
Consider reconfiguring rooms or securing an alternate space.

Level 3: If no, can environmental measures be implemented?  
Consider installing a physical barrier made of transparent materials, or having the staff member provide remote/virtual services.

Level 4: If none of the measures outlined above can be implemented, the staff member should maintain as much physical distance as possible. Also, see the Personal Protective Equipment section for information on mask requirements for all K-12 staff.

## INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Schools and school districts are required to deliver the full breadth of provincial curriculum as outlined in the [Expectations for Each Stage](#). The following flow chart outlines considerations for schools and school districts when planning instructional delivery to students in secondary schools.

1. Organize students and staff into learning groups, considering the following:

a. Can “natural learning groups” be identified through analysis of student enrolment data (students taking the same core subjects and/or electives)?

b. Which courses or programs could be delivered using physical distancing (based on the required learning environment and available space relative to number of students enrolled), and can therefore be excluded from learning group considerations<sup>1</sup>?

2. Create timetables including “in-learning group” and “cross-learning group” classes

a. “In-learning group” class = all students are from the same learning group; students must minimize physical contact.

b. “Cross-learning group” class = students are from different learning groups; students must maintain physical distance (2m)

*Note: See the Personal Protective Equipment section for additional information on mask requirements for middle and secondary students.*

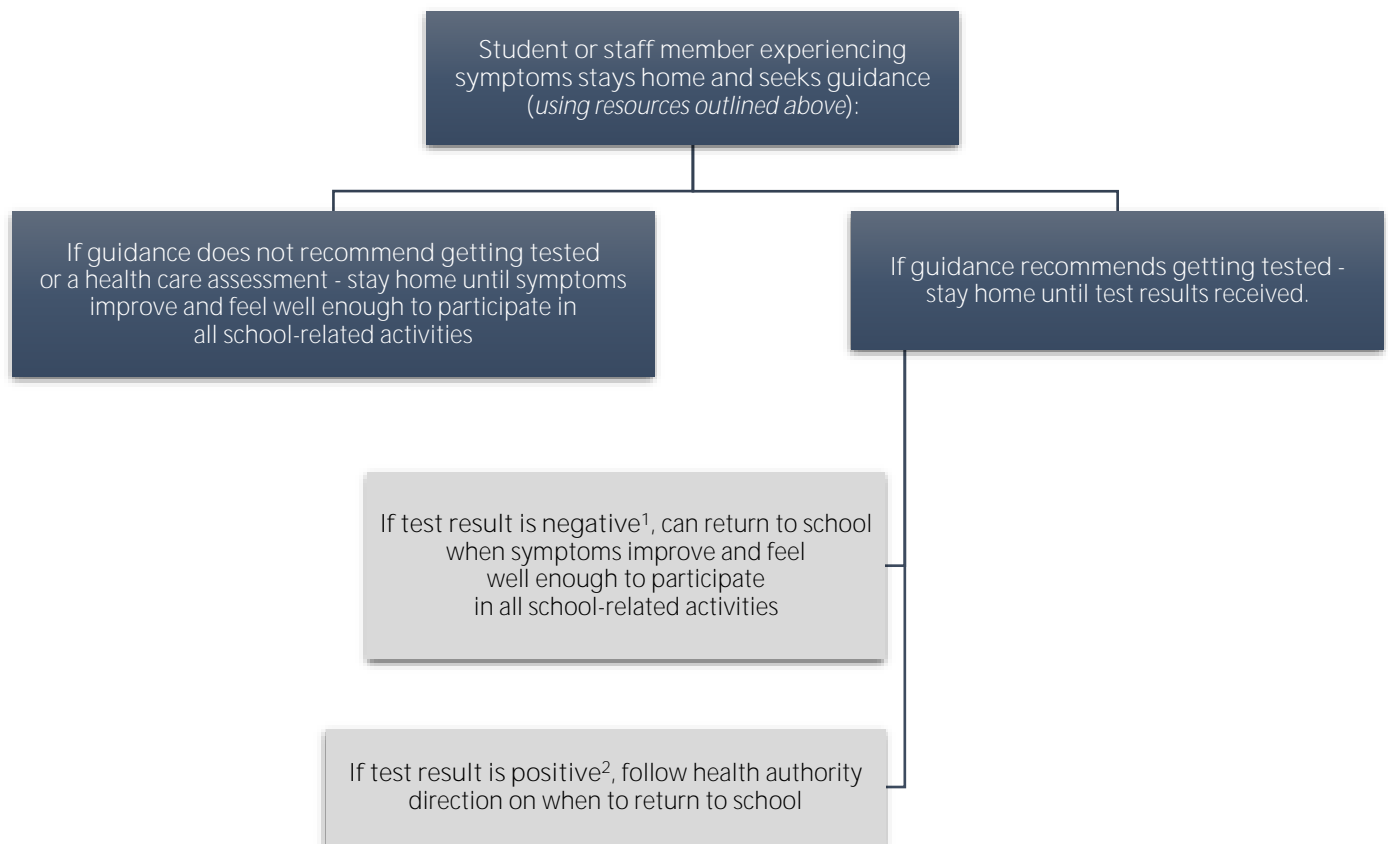
3. Supplement in-class instruction with self-directed or remote learning for those courses/programs that cannot be accommodated via learning group or physical distancing approaches.

Requiring students to wear masks during class is not an acceptable alternative to the use of learning groups or physical distancing.

<sup>1</sup> Within learning groups, minimizing physical contact is the rule. Consider focusing application of learning groups on subject areas that cannot be delivered using physical distancing strategies.

## Appendix B: COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School

When a student, staff or other adult can return to school depends on the type of symptoms they experienced and if a COVID-19 test is recommended. See the [K-12 Health Check app](#) and BCCDC "[When to get tested for COVID-19](#)" resource for specific guidance. Staff, students and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#), or call 8-1-1 or their health care provider.



1. Symptoms of common respiratory illnesses can persist for a week or more. Re-testing is not needed unless the person develops a new illness. [BCCDC](#) has information on receiving negative test results.
2. Public health will contact everyone with a positive test. Visit the BCCDC website for more information on [positive test results](#).



# Appendix C: Health & Safety Orientation Checklist

This checklist is intended to support school districts and independent school authorities in planning ongoing health & safety orientation for staff (including newly hired staff and staff who changed worksites), other adults (including volunteers and teacher candidates in practicums) and students. Orientation sessions should provide a comprehensive overview of the key principles and guidelines outlined in the resources listed below, as well as information on how these principles and guidelines will be implemented at the school level:

- [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)
- [BCCDC's COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#)
- [WorkSafeBC's Education \(K-12\): Protocols for returning to operation](#)
- School/district COVID-19 safety plan

Schools and school districts should ensure their Joint Health and Safety Committee is established prior to the orientation session. At the beginning of the school year, schools/school districts are encouraged to hold Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings more frequently to help identify and address any health and safety concerns in a timely manner.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Adopt a trauma-informed approach:

- where possible, have an employee trained in trauma-informed practice deliver some of the orientation
- conduct needs-based assessments and regular 'check-ins' after the orientation session, and provide contact information to students/staff for requesting additional supports
- provide information on how to access counselling services during school start up
- for staff: consider sharing the [Building Compassionate Communities in a New Normal](#) webinar link. This free webinar developed by the Ministry of Education is intended to provide teachers, education assistants, and administrators with information, ideas and strategies that they can use to create compassionate spaces for students.

Highlight the process used to develop the school/district plan (e.g., alignment with provincial direction, engagement at the local level) and the provincial health and safety guidelines:

- Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., the latest research, guidance from the Provincial Health Officer, and evidence that children are at a lower risk of developing and transmitting COVID-19, K- 12 students can return to full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools.
- The Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings have been developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Indigenous rightsholders and education partners, including district/school leaders, teachers, support staff, and parents.
- These guidelines are based on the public health guidance developed by the Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Discuss the importance of implementing health and safety measures that promote equity and inclusion, and outline how these principles are reflected in the school/district plan

Review the health and safety guidelines and school/district plan, and describe what a school day will look like with the new guidelines (interactions between peers and staff, traffic flow throughout the school, transition time, recess/lunch, school schedule, etc.)

Outline how comprehensive prevention and exposure control measures are being implemented in schools to ensure student and **staff safety** (see the "Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures" section and the

Prioritizing Health and Safety Flowcharts in the [Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) for more information)

- Discuss measures for extracurricular activities, as well as school-wide activities and events; provide opportunities for staff and students to put forward alternatives to continue to support events in a different format if needed (e.g., virtual events)
- Review school emergency and evacuation procedures (e.g., fire drill) considering the new health and safety guidelines (e.g. establishing additional muster points to reduce gathering size)
- Outline individual responsibilities (e.g., daily health check, stay home if sick, etc.) and remind everyone to do their part (e.g., practice diligent hand hygiene on a regular basis, only bring personal items if they are necessary, specific guidelines for visitors, etc.)
- Outline measures in place to support students and staff who are immunocompromised
- Implement strategies to ensure staff and students who cannot attend orientation are made aware of health and safety protocols (e.g., provide a booklet/a video on COVID-19 safety plans)
- Provide enough time and space for staff, students and families to review the school/district safety plan, ask questions, and provide input; provide contact information for any future questions that may arise
- Describe the process to address concerns and suggestions regarding the COVID-19 safety plan (e.g., suggestions to support continuous improvement)
- Outline the process in place to assess and revise the school/district safety plan on an ongoing basis as well as how staff, students and families will be made aware of any changes in the plan
- Communicate proactively and on an ongoing basis about the changes made to policies, practices, and procedures to ensure staff, students and families are informed in a timely manner
- Provide a list of resources and links for more information (e.g., [BCCDC resources](#) – including a [poster on how to wear a mask](#), [resources from the Government of Canada](#) on how to put on, remove, store and clean a non-medical mask/face covering, guidelines developed by provincial associations, [Ministry-developed trauma-informed practice resources](#) or other resources such as [videos from the BC Health Emergency Services](#))

## CONSIDERATIONS SPECIFIC TO STAFF

- Walk staff (administrators, teachers, teachers teaching on call, support staff, itinerant staff, etc.) through what the first days of school will look like to welcome students back
  - If appropriate, consider involving school staff representatives in the delivery of information pertaining to specific area of expertise
- Ensure orientation includes specific health and safety protocols for itinerant staff and specialists (e.g., teachers teaching on call, counsellors, education assistants, teacher candidates) including protocols pertaining to site-based scheduling and access to building
- Include itinerant staff as well as on call and auxiliary staff in orientation sessions
- Implement strategies to ensure staff who work at multiple sites are made aware of health and safety protocols in each of the sites (e.g., provide a booklet/a video on COVID-19 safety plans for different schools)
- Share procedures and contact information in case of emergencies
- Introduce members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee or any other safety representative (along with **their contact information**) and **outline the committee/representative's role in helping maintain a healthy and safe workplace**

Outline the process to request and conduct a needs assessment pertaining to health and safety (e.g., implementing additional control measures in a specific setting such as a transparent barrier, signage in the school, etc.)

## Appendix D: Selected Annotated Bibliography

Alberta Government. (2020, August 20). COVID-19 information: Guidance for school re-entry—Scenario 1—Open Government. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-guidance-school-re-entry-scenario-1>

The Alberta 2020-21 School Re-entry Plan is based on three scenarios: 1. Near-normal conditions (with health measures) 2. Partial in-class learning resumes (with additional health measures) 3. In-school classes suspended/cancelled. This document provides guidance to the Alberta school system for scenario 1. The document includes guidance on health and safety measures, how to support student learning growth, planning for elementary, middle and secondary schools, students with special needs, extracurricular activities and transportation.

CDC. (2020, April 30). Communities, schools, workplaces, & events. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/clean-disinfect-hygiene.html>

Reducing the risk of exposure to coronavirus (or SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19) by cleaning and disinfection is an integral part of reopening schools that will require careful planning.

This guidance is intended to aid school administrators as they consider how to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of students, teachers, other school staff, families, and communities and prepare for educating students this fall.

CDC. (2020, August 28). How to clean and disinfect schools to help slow the spread of flu. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in schools. To help slow the spread of influenza (flu), the first line of defense is getting vaccinated. Other measures include staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often. This webpage provides tips on how to slow the spread of flu specifically through cleaning and disinfecting.

CDC. (2020, August 21). Schools and childcare programs. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

The CDC website provides information on measures schools, childcare programs, and families can take to mitigate risk of COVID-19.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Disinfection of environments in healthcare and nonhealthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2. ECDC: Stockholm; 2020. [https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS\\_CoV\\_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26\\_0.pdf](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS_CoV_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26_0.pdf)

This document provides guidance to EU/EEA Member States on environmental cleaning in healthcare and nonhealthcare settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Harvard Global Health Institute. (2020, July 20). Path to zero & schools: Achieving pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces. <https://globalhealth.harvard.edu/path-to-zero-schools-achieving-pandemic-resilient-teaching-and-learning-spaces/>

This document **provides guidance on when it's okay to reopen and how to do it safely in a U.S. context.** The briefing explains how risk incidence levels, the creative adaptation of infection control guidelines for healthy buildings, and national investment in pandemic resilient schools can optimize operations, keep people safe, and restore schools as trusted sites of learning during the pandemic.

Johns Hopkins University. (n.d.). Eschool+ initiative—Ensuring ethics and equity in the pandemic response: Tools and resources for K-12 Schools. Retrieved September 1, 2020, from <https://equityschoolplus.jhu.edu/>

**John Hopkins' Eschool+ initiative provides a selection of resources to help school reopen safely during the pandemic** including a tracker for state and national schools re-opening plans, a whitepaper on the ethics of K-12 school re-opening, a Covid-19 school re-opening checklist, and samples of equity-oriented reopening policies.

Jones, E., Young, A., Clevenger, K., Salimifard, P., Wu, E., Lahaie, Luna M., Lahvis, M., Lang, J., Bliss, M., Azimi, P., Cedeno-Laurent, J., Wilson, C., Allen, J. Healthy Schools: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Healthy Buildings program. June, 2020.  
<https://schools.forhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2020/06/Harvard-Healthy-Buildings-Program-Schools-For-Health-Reopening-Covid19-June2020.pdf>

**Recognizing there is no “zero risk” option, only risk mitigation strategies based on the best available evidence,** and that closing schools comes at an immense social and societal cost, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health has compiled a list of best practices for school systems to consider when re-opening during the pandemic divided into five categories: Healthy classrooms, healthy buildings, healthy policies, healthy schedules and healthy activities.

National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools. (2020). Rapid Evidence Review: What is the specific role of daycares and schools in COVID-19 transmission? <https://www.nccmt.ca/knowledge-repositories/covid-19-rapid-evidence-service>.

**This rapid review was produced to support public health decision makers' response to the COVID-19 pandemic.** It seeks to identify, appraise and summarize emerging research evidence to support evidence-informed decision making. This rapid review is based on the most recent research evidence available at the time of release. A previous version was completed on June 26, 2020. This updated version includes evidence available up to July 20, 2020. Key points are that based on evidence to date, young children are not a major source of transmission of Covid-19 and that adults were more likely to transmit the virus to children rather than vice versa.

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020, August 12). COVID-19 guidance for schools Kindergarten to Grade 12. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

Directed to administrators of schools from kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) and local public health authorities (PHAs), this guidance provides information for both public and private institutions providing K-12 education programs in the classroom setting. It takes into consideration the diverse needs of population groups based on

vulnerability, ethnicity/culture, disability, developmental status, and other socioeconomic and demographic factors. The guidance is not prescriptive in nature, rather, it supports administrators and PHA's to consider potential risks and mitigation strategies associated with the resumption of in-school classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Hospital for Sick Children. (2020, July 29). COVID-19: Guidance for School Reopening. <http://www.sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-School-Reopening-SickKids.pdf>

This living document is meant to provide information to policy-makers by highlighting paediatric-specific considerations based on our collective experience with children and their families/caregivers. The authors agree bringing children and youth back to school for in-person, full-time learning, with appropriate risk-mitigation **strategies to ensure everyone's safety, is the ultimate goal. This updated document provides additional** considerations for a spectrum of stakeholders as they prepare to return to school. It highlights the need to consider the epidemiology of COVID-19 in decision making and provides recommended health and safety measures, with age and developmental considerations, to support schools in keeping students, staff and their families safe.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2020, May 10). Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/considerations-for-school-related-public-health-measures-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

WHO has issued guidance on adjusting public health and safety measures while managing the risk of resurgence of cases. A series of annexes has been developed to help guide countries through adjusting various public health measures in different contexts. This annex provides considerations for decision-makers and educators on how or when to reopen or close schools in the context of COVID-19. These decisions have important implications for children, parents or caregivers, teachers and other staff, communities, and society at large. This document was drafted based a review of available literature, discussion with experts, regional partners and country examples. See also the [Q&A: Schools and Covid-19](#)