



As we return to school in September, our priority remains fulfilling our purpose and mission of enabling all learners to succeed and contribute to their full potential to the future while at the same time ensuring a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and employees. With that in mind, we have implemented a comprehensive suite of safety measures to help protect students and staff from the risk of COVID-19.

Stage 2: Frequently Asked Questions

Why are schools returning to in-class instruction in September?

The plan for September has been developed based on the advice and recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer to ensure health and safety measures are in place to protect students and staff.

There are a number of reasons to return to in-class instruction:

- In-class instruction provides students with peer engagement, supports social and emotional development and decreases feelings of isolation.
- School also provides many students access to programs and services they can't get at home and is integral to their overall health.

Is it safe for children to return to school?

*According to current worldwide data, COVID-19 has a very low infection rate in people 19 years old and under, and especially low in children under the age of 10. Serological tests have confirmed that in B.C., less than 1% of all children tested have been COVID-19 positive.

Studies show that most COVID-19 cases in children originate from symptomatic adult family members, not from peers. Even in family bubbles, adults appear to be the primary spreaders of the virus. Children who do test positive for COVID-19 usually have milder symptoms, such as a low-grade fever, dry cough, and gastrointestinal issues. *Source: [B.C. Ministry of Education](#)*

The school district is required to implement strict public health measures set by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. In addition, the Ministry of Education will continue to follow the direction of the Provincial Health Officer to ensure the safety of students and staff remains paramount. The school district will have plans in

place to move quickly between stages of the Five Stage Framework for K-12 Education as required.

If I register my child for distributed learning or home schooling, will they lose their place at their current school?

Both Home Quest and homeschooling are full-year commitments. If parents choose either of these options, the earliest that students would be able to return to their home school is September 2021.

If a student who is currently attending a Delta school registers for Home Quest or homeschooling for the upcoming school year (2020/21), Delta School District is committed to holding a student's place at their home school for the following school year (2021/22). *Please note: If a student who is currently attending a Delta school registers for a distributed learning option outside of the Delta School District, students will need to re-register in our normal spring process in late January/early February.*

When do I have to decide about whether to choose in-class instruction, distributed learning or home schooling for my child?

In order for us to create our learning groups, we will need you to let us know which option you choose for your child's learning at some point in the week beginning August 31. However, we understand that you will need some time to review the information we are sharing with you today. Please look out for an email next week.

We understand some parents may not be ready to send their children back right away and so we will work with them to help their children transition back to full-time schooling.

Do children need to be physically distanced in their classroom?

In September, we expect schools to resume under Stage 2 of the Five Stage Framework for K-12 Education, which calls for full attendance in classrooms. Under Stage 2, the only time students and staff must regularly practice physical distancing of 2 metres is when they are outside of their learning group. If students are with their learning group, minimized physical contact is required, but physical distancing does not need to be maintained at all times.

In elementary schools, students can socialize with their peers in different learning groups if they are outdoors and can minimize physical contact, or if they are indoors and can maintain physical distance. Elementary-aged students are less able to consistently maintain physical distance. Outdoors is a lower-risk environment than indoors.

In secondary schools, students can socialize with peers in different learning groups if they can maintain physical distance. Secondary school students are expected to be capable of consistently maintaining physical distance when it is required.

The Five Stage Framework for K-12 Education allows for in-class instruction to be increased or decreased depending on the risk of COVID-19 transmission. If we move into Stage 3 or 4, cohorting into learning groups would still apply. In addition, class density limits of 50% and 25% respectively would take effect.

What are learning groups?

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.

Within Delta's schools, a student's class will be their primary learning group. Classroom layouts will be organized to maximize physical distancing and consistent seating arrangements will be encouraged within learning groups. Please note: No changes between learning groups will be permitted once in-class instruction begins. In elementary schools, children will remain in the same learning group for the school year. In secondary schools, students will remain in the same learning group for the quarter. This helps to limit students' interactions with others.

Learning groups are smaller in elementary schools due to the recognition 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.

How does the learning group limit of 60 work if children are in different groups but attend the same daycare for before and after school care?

Students from different learning groups may be required to be together to receive beneficial programs or services, like before and after school care. Before and after school care providers will be implementing other measures that provide layers of protection from COVID-19 transmission, including adapting the space to reduce physical contact, requiring regular hand hygiene and taking students outside more often.

Why are safety measures in K-12 schools regarding physical distancing and masks different from what is being recommended to the public?

Compared to some other community settings, schools have a comprehensive set of safety measures in place, including enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols, frequent hand washing and/or sanitizing, and policies that require students and staff to stay home if they are ill.

Schools also have a relatively consistent set of people accessing the building, and the majority of those people are children, who are at a lower risk of COVID-19 infection. In addition, the use of learning groups in schools allows for a significant reduction in the number of individual interactions and makes contact tracing easier and faster should it be required.

Other public settings do not have these safety measures in place, and contact tracing is far more difficult. As a result, there are stricter physical distancing and mask requirements for the general public.

Are you providing child care before and after school for children of Essential Services Workers?

No, under Stage 2 of the Education Framework, school districts are not required to provide extended hours of care for children of Essential Services Workers. However, your school may be able to support you in finding local child care options for before and after school care.

How can you guarantee that children will remain physically distanced during unstructured time at school?

Schools are working on this. It is likely that schools will be divided into areas and children will be expected to take their breaks with their learning group in a designated area.

Are there sufficient hand washing stations at schools?

Yes, additional hand washing stations are being installed throughout the district and will be supplied with adequate soap and hand towels to enable children to frequently wash their hands. In addition, hand washing stations are being installed at entrances from elementary school playgrounds where possible. We have installed extra hand sanitizer dispensers at entrances, exits and main office and common areas, plus hand sanitizer and disinfectant will be available in all classrooms.

How will there be enough time for all children to keep washing their hands?

Teachers will work out the specific details for their classes before children return to school in September. This may involve students washing their hands in shifts.

What is the frequency and protocol for classroom cleaning?

General cleaning of the premises will take place at least once every 24 hours. This includes items that only a single student uses, like an individual desk or locker. Cleaning and disinfecting of frequently-touched surfaces will take place at least twice every 24 hours. This includes door knobs, light switches, toilet handles, tables, desks and chairs used by multiple students, keyboards and toys. Also, any visibly dirty surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected, and garbage containers will be emptied daily. The district has hired additional custodial staff to ensure we can maintain the required cleaning protocols.

Will playgrounds be sanitized between the different learning groups using them?

There is no current evidence of COVID-19 transmission in playgrounds. Playgrounds are a safe environment. However, students using playgrounds will be encouraged to minimize direct contact between one another, and to practice hand hygiene before and after outdoor play.

How are you ensuring that the air quality in schools is good?

Maintenance teams have checked all ventilation systems and confirmed that our air filtration systems meet the provincial standards required. Our maintenance teams will ensure that these systems will provide as much air exchange as possible.

Will parents need to supply masks and sanitizing supplies?

On the advice of Dr. Bonnie Henry, non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask.

All secondary students will be supplied with two reusable masks for use in high traffic areas such as buses and hallways, or anytime outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Where students should be wearing a mask as per the PHO guidelines, but are unable to do so for various reasons, the specific circumstances associated with the student's difficulty with wearing a mask will be reviewed and supported.

The decision for anyone to wear a mask in the classroom is a personal one that will be respected. All classrooms will be supplied with sanitizer and disinfectant.

Will children keep their school supplies at school, or will they be expected to bring in their items daily?

Students can continue to bring personal items to school, but they should be encouraged only to bring items that are necessary (e.g. backpacks, clothing, school supplies, water bottle). Please ensure your child's supplies are labelled to discourage accidental sharing.

At secondary school, will children have access to their lockers?

No, students will not be able to use their lockers. As students will have only two courses a quarter, we do not anticipate this causing any issues.

Is there an online learning option available like in the spring?

The remote learning model used earlier this year was a temporary measure that was introduced by the B.C. Ministry of Education following the suspension of all in-class instruction as a result of the pandemic.

The Ministry recognizes the importance of having students in the classroom to minimize learning gaps and to provide the academic, social and emotional supports which are essential for every learner. As a result, maximizing in-class instruction for all students within current health and safety guidelines is a crucial part of the B.C. Restart Plan.

If more online learning is needed at some point, what support is there for families that require access to technology?

As in the spring, the school district will do its best to sign out equipment to students as needed.

What options are available for students in French Immersion?

Please reach out to your school principal for further information about your options. Should a child enrolled in French Immersion be unable to return to school and opt for a home education program, they will not be held back or removed from the program. They will be able to return to French Immersion in their home school.

What supports will be in place for students with disabilities and diverse abilities?

The school district will continue to ensure that all students with disabilities or those who need extra support in school will continue to receive it. Please contact your school principal for more information.

How will teachers keep children in secondary school engaged if they are learning on a two subject, quad system?

With the quarter system, the pace of learning for courses will be fast. Teachers recognize this and will be helping students to adjust.

Will it be possible to synchronize schedules for families with multiple children in school(s)?

We encourage you to talk to the principals at the schools where you children attend.

What happens if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the school?

If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school, protocols are in place.

- If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school, they may be given a non-medical mask and will be separated from their classmates or colleagues
- The individual's parent or guardian will be contacted to discuss next steps
- Custodial staff will clean and disinfect the areas the person used
- Schools will immediately inform public health of a potential case
- Public health will then:
 - Reach out and identify any potential cases
 - Get in touch with close contacts
 - Recommend 14-day isolation if necessary
 - Provide follow-up recommendations if necessary
- Schools will provide learning support to students required to self-isolate
- Together, schools and public health officials will determine if suspending in-class learning is necessary

You will be notified if your child has been in contact with a COVID-positive person. If that happens, your child is required to self-isolate.

Students and staff with cold, influenza or COVID-19 like symptoms should stay home, self-isolate and be assessed by a health-care provider. Testing is recommended for anyone with these symptoms, even mild ones.

There is no role for screening students or staff for symptoms, checking temperatures, or COVID-19 testing in schools. Such activities are reserved for health-care professionals.

What if people who are interacting with learning groups (staff who work at multiple sites or who are on call or itinerant such as substitute teachers) and across learning groups (counsellors, learning assistants, education assistants and teacher-librarians) are diagnosed with COVID-19? Do all the kids in each school now have to quarantine and get tested?

Our plan is to assign school staff to a specific learning group and to minimize the movement of staff between sites to the greatest extent possible. This will help to reduce the number of different interactions within schools and support better contact tracing if there is a confirmed case in a school community.

Where it is not possible to keep individuals in one learning group, for example, principals and teacher librarians that interact with students and staff from all learning groups will need to practice physical distancing. If desired, they may wear masks. Where possible, barriers will be installed in areas such as the library check-out desk. All individuals will be required to adhere to the careful washing and sanitizing of hands.

Where individuals may need to work at more than one school site, for example, substitute teachers, we will assign them to a family of schools in order to minimize movement and reduce contact across the district. They will be expected to physically distance from others not in their learning group.

You will be notified if your child has been in contact with a COVID-positive person. If that happens, your child is required to self-isolate.

How are Educational Assistants being supported? Often, they work at a much closer proximity to the student than the teacher.

If an educational assistant is working one-to-one with a student, they will make use of personal protection equipment such as masks or physical barriers.

What is this stress going to do to our teachers? How does it affect their health and well-being? How does it affect their ability to teach? How does it affect the quality of education they are able to provide?

The school district and each of our schools will continue to consider the well-being of adults in the school system and ensure that supports are in place for all employees. We recognize that this is a unique time for everyone, and the positive mental health of adults will have a direct impact on students.

What is this stress going to do to our kids?

Supporting the health and safety of students, families and staff is a top priority. In addition to taking measures to protect physical health, we will also be attending to social and emotional well-being. Educators and support staff will be actively looking for changes in student behaviour to identify and respond to the needs of students who have experienced trauma.

In addition, educators will be incorporating social and emotional learning to help build resilience and to enhance healthy, supportive communication. Schools recognize that students may need additional supports as they transition into new or different routines. Our learning environments are designed to ensure that students feel safe, respected, valued and engaged, and this will help to support their social and emotional well-being.

The government's [erase \(Expect Respect and A Safe Education\) website](#) and the [Keeping Healthy section of the Keep Learning website](#) both offer a range of mental health and well-being resources for students and families.

What has B.C. learned from the reopening of schools in other places?

Due to widespread, worldwide school closures, there are few studies on the effects of COVID-19 transmission in school settings.

In places that have resumed in-class instruction, children do not appear to be the primary spreaders of COVID-19. In schools where there were confirmed cases, there was typically minimal spreading beyond the initial case.

Studies have shown that closing schools and child care facilities has significant negative mental health and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable children.

Source: [B.C. Ministry of Education](#)

What about immunocompromised students and parents/caregivers?

According to the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), 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.

The advice from the PHO and BCCDC 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. The school district will work with these families to ensure continuity of learning and supports.

For more information, see [BCCDC's Guidance for Families of Immunocompromised Children in School and Group Gatherings](#), and their [Frequently Asked Questions regarding COVID-19 and Children with Immune Suppression](#).

Source: [B.C. Ministry of Education Operational Guidelines for School Districts](#))

Will international students have to self-isolate when they arrive in B.C. before attending school?

The school district has been working with our international students and homestay providers to ensure their safety, and the safety of our wider communities. In line with Government of Canada regulations for any individuals arriving from abroad, they will go through various health screening protocols before they travel and must self-isolate for 14 days upon their arrival in Canada.