



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.

Please note: The [Fraser Health website](#) contains a wealth of resources for parents and teachers.

Frequently Asked Questions (updated December 9, 2020)

IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION

Why did schools return to in-class instruction in September?

The return to school plan was 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 the government wanted to maximise the number of students returning 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.

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](#)*

Are there plans to reduce class sizes?

No, class sizes are unlikely to be reduced unless the provincial government decides to move schools into a different stage of the [Back to School Five Stage Framework](#).

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

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 has implemented the 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 continues 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.

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.

Under the provincial health guidelines, masks are required for all staff and students in secondary schools when they are in high traffic or common areas, such as in hallways and on buses. In schools across our district, mask compliance in common areas is extremely high, with many students voluntarily choosing to wear masks at all times.

Are there sufficient hand washing stations at schools?

Yes, additional hand washing stations have been installed throughout the district and are supplied with adequate soap and hand towels to enable children to frequently wash their hands. In addition, hand washing stations have been 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 are available in all classrooms.

Students are in the habit of washing their hands several times a day and have proven very successful at following the various health and safety measures implemented in our schools.

What is the frequency and protocol for classroom cleaning?

General cleaning of the premises takes 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 takes 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 are 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 are 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 ensure that these systems 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 have access to 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 are supplied with sanitizer and disinfectant.

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](#)

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Do children need to be physically distanced in their classroom?

In September, schools resumed 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.

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

Children are expected to take their breaks with their learning group in a designated area.

Is there something the schools can do to encourage students and parents to stop gathering before and after school, and to practice social distancing?

We know that school drop-off and pick-up are very busy at schools and it can be challenging for students and their families to maintain two metres distance from others. We also recognize that school drop-off and pick-up provide an opportunity for parents to connect with each other.

We continue to ask families for their support in ensuring that they do not interact with others outside of their household. To help avoid these social interactions, we encourage students and parents to leave the school grounds promptly before and after school.

LEARNING GROUPS

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 is their primary learning group. Classroom layouts have been organized to maximize physical distancing and consistent seating arrangements are 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 each 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 have implemented 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.

EXPOSURES AND ILLNESS

Why was the daily health check updated?

The daily health check was updated by public health experts as they gathered more information on COVID-19 and the symptoms that most often present in school-aged children. The district requires parents and guardians to conduct health checks every day prior to sending their child to school, and to keep their child at home if they have any symptoms.

What happens if a person starts to feel ill after they get to 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

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

Our December 8 [letter to parents](#) explained the change in the way Fraser Health issues exposure notices. [Click here](#) to see a flowchart of this process.

When Fraser Health informs us of an exposure, we notify staff and parents at the school as quickly as possible, and usually within a couple of hours. Staff and families will receive one of these letters:

- **Early notification letter - exposed:** Will be sent to classes where a positive case was in attendance during their infectious period.
- **Early notification letter - not exposed:** Will be sent to all other classes not exposed at the school.
- Where a case is not attached to a specific class, for example teacher-librarian, administrator or janitor, Fraser Health will send an **Early notification - general letter**.

All of these letters from Fraser Health contain the following guidance for families:

This letter does not mean Public Health will be contacting you. Public Health will only contact you if you or your child was directly exposed to COVID-19.

We ask you to:

- *Please continue to send your child to school.*
- *Continue to monitor your child for signs of COVID-19 each day using the Daily Health Check supplied by your school.*

It is important to note that these letters are shared while contact tracing is underway. If any further follow up is required, Fraser Health will be in touch. This may include self-monitoring letters or additional direction from public health for specific individuals, for example, to self-isolate or get a COVID test.

Once contact tracing is complete, Fraser Health will issue a **School Bulletin** which informs the entire school community that all contact tracing linked to the positive case is complete.

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. Please seek a COVID test as soon as possible after mild symptoms occur. 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.

Why does it take so long to notify parents about a COVID exposure in a school?

Below is an example to help explain why this process takes time:

- Day 1 A student attends school as they are feeling well.
- Day 2 The student starts to feel unwell and so stays home from school.
- Days 3 - 4 A day or two later, the student has enough symptoms that their family takes them for a COVID test.
- Days 5 - 7 The student self-isolates while waiting for their test result (generally 1 - 3 days).
- Days 6+ If the student tests positive and Fraser Health believes they were potentially infectious while at school, Fraser Health will contact the student's close contacts (those who could have been exposed to the student's respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing or speaking) and ask them to self-isolate. Fraser Health will contact the school district to ask us to send an early notification letter out to staff and families at the school.

If the student tests positive and Fraser Health believes they weren't potentially infectious while at school, we won't hear from Fraser Health. This is why the local community may sometimes hear that a student has tested positive, yet no letter is sent out.

What is the process when an individual informs the school they have tested positive for COVID-19?

When a staff member or parent informs the school principal that they or their child has tested positive for COVID-19, the following occurs:

- The school principal notifies the school district, which in turn notifies the Ministry of Education.
- The school district will also reach out to Fraser Health to ensure the information is received by the COVID School Team so that it can act as quickly as possible to decide on next steps.

Again, it is important to remember that if Fraser Health believes the individual wasn't infectious while at school, the district will not be asked to send a letter out to staff and families. This is why the local community may sometimes hear that a student or staff member has tested positive, yet no letter is sent out.

What happened at Jarvis Traditional Elementary? Why was the school closed?

In mid-November, a number of individuals at Jarvis Traditional Elementary tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, all students and staff at Jarvis moved to remote learning for a period of

14 days. In addition, the students and staff of specific divisions affected by the COVID cluster were asked to self-isolate for 14 days from the date they were last at the school.

The school district made the decision, in close collaboration with Fraser Health officials, to transition Jarvis to remote learning as it felt it would support better continuity of learning for all students, rather than having some students at school while others were at home. While the school was functionally closed for instruction, there were a few members of staff on site to assist families and students as needed.

When there is an exposure in a school, does the school change any of its practices?

Out of an abundance of caution, we send in the Clorox sprayer to all sites where there has been an exposure, even though there is no requirement from Fraser Health for the school district to do this.

Why aren't schools closed after an exposure?

It is not necessary to close schools after an exposure. We have strict cleaning and disinfecting protocols that are implemented on a daily basis already.

If a student is self-isolating or staying home because of illness, how will you ensure they don't fall behind with their class work?

Similar to when a child missed school due to illness in the past, we provide work so that they don't fall behind.

Why are siblings of confirmed COVID cases often still in school? Shouldn't they be self-isolating?

Information from Fraser Health is that when there is a confirmed COVID case, the members of that household are asked to self-isolate. If an individual is not a confirmed case but has been asked to self-isolate, public health may not ask other household members to self-isolate.

From the exposure notices that have been sent out, it looks like some individuals are in school for multiple days while they are infectious. How can this be prevented?

Some people have very mild symptoms and so it might be difficult to discern whether their symptoms are COVID-related. However, the best way we can prevent COVID-19 from entering our schools is for people to stay home when they feel ill, however mild their symptoms. We continue to ask parents to conduct the daily health check with their children and to keep them home if they feel ill. Also, it is important to seek a COVID test as soon as possible after mild symptoms occur.

Why can't more information around exposures be shared?

It is important to protect an individual's privacy and personal health information. If privacy is not maintained, it could prevent people from going for a COVID test or from staying away from school if they are ill.

Why don't you share school exposures on social media or your website?

The district's focus is on notifying staff and school communities that are directly impacted about the exposure. Parents can find a listing of all current exposures on the [Fraser Health website](#).

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?

We have assigned school staff to a specific learning group and tried to minimize the movement of staff between sites to the greatest extent possible. This helps to reduce the number of different interactions within schools and supports 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, they are expected to practice physical distancing. If desired, they may wear masks. Where possible, barriers have been installed in areas such as the library check-out desk. All individuals are 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 have assigned them to a family of schools in order to minimize movement and reduce contact across the district. They are expected to physically distance from others not in their learning group.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

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.

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 is doing its best to sign out equipment to students as needed.

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

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

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 use 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 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 are also attending to social and emotional well-being. Educators and support staff are actively looking for changes in student behaviour to identify and respond to the needs of students who have experienced trauma.

In addition, educators are 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.

MISCELLEANEOUS

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 are not able to use their lockers. As students have only two courses a quarter, this is not 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.

How are teachers keeping children in secondary school engaged in learning in the two subject, quarter system?

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

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.

Will there be field trips this year?

No, due to the challenges presented by the pandemic, there will not be any field trips during this school year.

Will there be any extra-curricular activities for students?

This is an area where there have been discrepancies between what is permitted in the community for sports versus what is permitted in schools. We are advocating strongly for consistency on those protocols, but with current public health orders and health and safety protocols relating to social gatherings and cohorts, this will remain a challenge.

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

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.