



B.C.'s Back to School Plan

Students in B.C. will return to in-class learning September 2020. B.C.'s plan includes new health and safety measures, increased funding for protective equipment like masks and new learning groups to help keep everyone safe.

Last updated: **August 18, 2020**

What Parents Need to Know

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Our Plan

B.C.'s Back to School Plan is built on three core principles to keep everyone safe.

1. New health and safety measures

2. Increased funding to keep schools safe and clean

3. Learning groups to help reduce transmission

Health & Safety Measures



Special safety measures help create safe schools and reduce the spread of COVID-19. These extra layers of protection measures work well in schools because they're controlled environments that have:

- Consistent groups of people
- Robust illness policies for students and staff
- The ability to have most people follow effective personal practices like hand washing

Health Guidelines

Wearing a mask

Practicing physical distancing

Riding a school bus

Using shared items

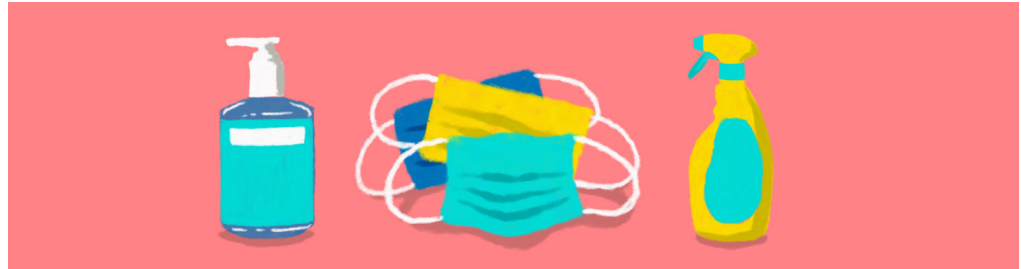
Practicing hand hygiene

Cleaning the school

Installing physical barriers

Controlling traffic flow

Increased Funding

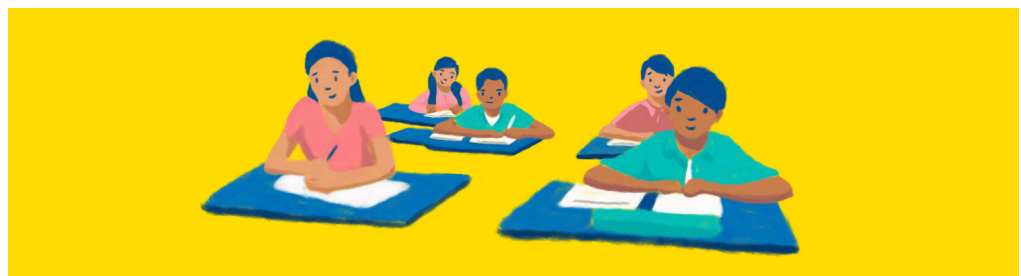


An additional \$45.6 million will help schools implement new health and safety measures.

The investment includes:

- \$23 million for more staff and staff time for cleaning schools
- \$9.2 million for hand hygiene
- \$5.1 million for cleaning supplies
- \$2.2 million for reusable face masks for students and staff
- \$3 million to support remote learning, including:
 - Technology loans
 - Software to support students with disabilities or complex needs
- \$3.1 million to independent schools

Learning Groups



A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year and who primarily interact with each other. Learning groups were recommended by the Provincial Health Officer to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

For example, a learning group could be made up of:

- A single class of students (20-30)

- Multiple classes that sometimes join together for activities like physical education (PE) or music
- A group of secondary school students with the same courses in the same quarter or semester

Learning groups can also include staff, like:

- Teachers
- Specialist support staff
- Education Assistants (EAs)

Learning groups provide a range of benefits for students including more in-class learning time, increased peer interaction and support, and decreased feelings of isolation.

Why Use Learning Groups?

Compared to other public settings, schools have a relatively consistent set of people accessing the building. Learning groups further reduce the number of interactions between students and staff.

- This helps with contact tracing and limits interruptions to learning if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed in a learning group

Learning group sizes

Learning groups are smallest in elementary and middle schools because it is more challenging for younger students to maintain physical distance.

Students in secondary school are better able to minimize physical contact, practice hand hygiene and recognize if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

- **Elementary:** 60
- **Middle:** 60
- **Secondary:** 120

The [PHO order on mass gatherings](#) does not apply to schools, as events are defined in the order as an irregular gathering, like a party or celebration.

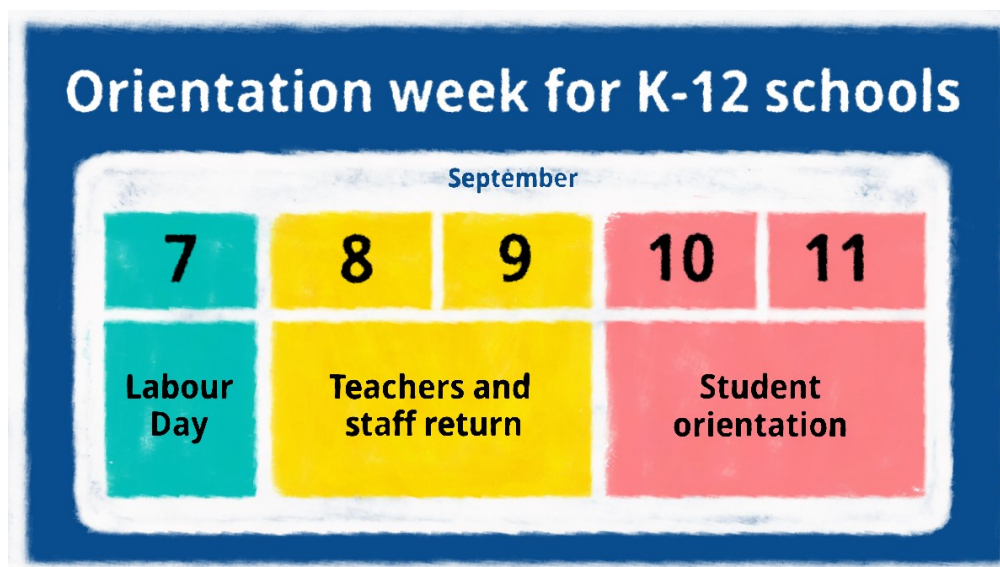
Learning group examples

The following examples are for illustrative purposes only. Actual configurations of learning groups will be designed by school districts and independent schools to meet local needs and other considerations in alignment with health and safety measures to protect students and school staff.

Elementary schools

Middle schools**Secondary schools****Orientation Week**

Schools will be in touch with parents with further details about the return to school. To ensure all schools are ready to welcome students into classrooms for the week of September 8-11, 2020, there will be a gradual restart. This gives students and staff extra time to learn about the new health and safety measures in their school and classroom.

**September 7**

Labour Day, schools are closed.

September 8 and 9

Starting September 8, all staff will meet with their school's joint health and safety committee to receive instruction on how the updated BCCDC guidelines will work in their school. This time allows teachers and staff to:

- Adjust to their new routines
- Finalize plans for learning groups
- Review health and safety protocols
- Confirm lesson plans that align with the new normal in schools

September 10 and 11

Students will return to school by September 10 for orientation. Check with your school district to confirm details.

Students can get familiar with classrooms that will look different than they did before the pandemic. During orientation, students will:

- Get assigned to their class or classes
- Find out who is in their learning group
- Practice their new routines
- Familiarize themselves with how to safely move from the class to outdoor and common areas of the school

COVID-19 Science & Children

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.

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.

COVID-19 Protocols

Stay Home When Sick

The BCCDC guidelines for schools are firm. If a student, staff member or any other adult has any symptoms of a cold, influenza, COVID-19, or any other infectious respiratory disease, **they must not enter the school.**

Students, staff members and any other adult must stay home and self-isolate if they have:

- Symptoms of COVID-19
- Travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days
- Identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak

This includes the children of essential service workers.

Daily Health Screening

Parent & caregiver responsibilities

Daily screenings start at home. Ask these questions:

- Does your child have the symptoms of a common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease?
- Has your child been outside Canada in the last 14 days?
- Has your child been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak?

If the answer is **yes** to any of these questions, you must keep your child at home, self-isolate, and seek care from a health-care provider.

School administration responsibilities

Ensure staff and other adults know they are responsible for assessing themselves daily for symptoms prior to entering the school.

Clearly communicate with parents and caregivers that they are responsible for assessing their children daily before sending them to school.

Testing Students Before a Return to School

At this time, it is recommended that only people with symptoms or people otherwise identified by a health professional should be tested for COVID-19. This includes children.

Testing can also result in false positive and false negatives for the following groups:

- Asymptomatic people
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- Those who are very early on in the illness
- Those who may be incubating the disease

What if someone in my household or bubble has COVID-19 symptoms?

- Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household has cold, influenza, or COVID-19-like symptoms, provided the student/staff is not sick
- It is expected the symptomatic household member is seeking assessment by a health-care provider

What if my child has allergies?

- Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies, or other COVID-19-like symptom that are related to an existing condition, can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal
- If you notice a sudden change in the severity or type of symptoms your child normally experiences, you may want to keep your child at home and seek advice from a health-care provider

Confirmed Case of COVID-19 in a Learning Group or at 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.

Attendance Requirements

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.

Like every year, students who are registered in "bricks and mortar" schools are expected to attend school in-person, unless they are sick.

- Schools and teachers at the elementary and middle school grades will not be providing daily online options for students
- Students in secondary school courses may be required to complete some learning online, only if in-person instruction is not possible given learning group sizes

Alternative Options

Like every September, parents have options for their child's education.

Before selecting an alternative to in-class instruction, parents should talk to their school district about their options if they later want to return and enrol at their desired school.

We recommend making a decision as soon as possible.

Online and distributed learning

Both public and independent distributed learning schools offer classes. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 7 must take a full course load at one school, while students in Grades 8 to 12 may enrol in courses from a number of different distributed learning schools at one time.

There are 48 school districts with 56 public schools offering distributed learning courses. Sixteen independent schools are currently offering distributed learning courses.

[Register for distributed learning](#)

Homeschooling

Homeschooling is an alternative method of teaching offered outside the B.C. educational system. Typically, a family member delivers the entire education program to children at home.

Note: Homeschoolers are not eligible to receive a [British Columbia Dogwood Graduation Certificate](#).

[Register for homeschooling](#)

Supporting Additional Needs

Students with Complex Medical Conditions

Parents of children with complex medical conditions that place them at heightened risk for COVID-19 should consult their primary health-care provider to consider the health risks and make a decision about returning to school.

- Contact your child's school to discuss alternative education options and support

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities have faced many challenges during the pandemic, including physical vulnerability to the virus, social isolation and accessing the basics of daily life.

The Ministry of Education is committed to treating students with disabilities and their families ethically, fairly, and respectfully.

International Students

We continue to support international students coming to B.C. to study.

All students who have travelled outside of Canada are required to self-isolate for 14 days under both provincial and federal orders. This includes students who are attending school from abroad.

Students will return to the classroom by September 10, 2020. International students should arrive in B.C. no later than August 26, 2020 to complete their 14-day self-isolation. This can be done with a host family or with the help of federal government officials.

Indigenous Students



The Ministry fully respects the jurisdiction of First Nations and their right to make their own decisions on re-opening First Nations schools. Visit the [First Nations Schools Association website](#) for the latest updates.

For those Indigenous students that attend public schools, school districts will engage with First Nations and Indigenous peoples as a part of their planning process.

In the Classroom Instruction & Supports

- A focus on mental health and well-being supports for students returning to school
 - Full-time instruction for students with disabilities/diverse abilities and students requiring additional support
 - Options for students with underlying complex medical needs
 - Alternative methods of delivery, jointly determined by boards of education and First Nations, for students from First Nations that remain closed and will not be sending students back in September
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Curriculum, Assessment & Report Cards

The return to full in-class instruction in September will include the following:

- [Provincial curriculum](#) for all students at all grade levels
 - Regular report cards
 - Regular [assessments](#) at the classroom and provincial level
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Outside the Classroom

Recess, Lunch & Break Times

Students will remain in their learning group during recess, lunch and break times.

Students can socialize with a friend in a different learning group if they follow these rules.

Elementary schools

- Outdoors, minimizing physical contact
 - Indoors, maintain physical distance
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Middle and secondary schools

- Consistently maintain physical distance in all environments
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Sports, Clubs & Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities including sports, arts and special interest clubs can only occur if:

- Physical distance can be maintained between members of different learning groups
 - Reduced physical contact is practiced by those within the same learning group
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Assemblies, Concerts & Gatherings

Small gatherings can only occur within a learning group.

- A gathering can include the full learning group (60 or 120) and the minimum number of people needed to meet the gathering's purpose
- For example, a parent-teacher conference would require one parent per student and a teacher

Assemblies, concerts and other large gatherings like a guest speaker should happen virtually.

Tournaments, competitions & festivals

All inter-school events including competitions, tournaments and festivals should not occur at this time.

Work Placements & Apprenticeships

School districts and independent school authorities will assess and determine if it is safe for students to remain on work placements and apprenticeships.

- For work placements that cannot continue in person, districts and schools will determine if alternate methods to continue learning or accumulate volunteer hours for work placements are possible
 - Students are encouraged to talk to their teachers about work placements and apprenticeships
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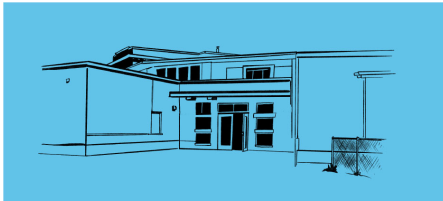
School Meal Programs

School districts with existing meal programs will continue to work with community partners to provide meal support to families in need, in alignment with current public health guidelines.

Five Stages Framework

Info for School Districts

Contact Your School



The Five Stage Framework outlines expectations for B.C. elementary, middle and secondary schools for learning during COVID-19

School districts and independent school associations are required to submit a Restart Plan before the 2020/21 school year begins

Have questions? Your school or district is the best place to get help

Translated Information

ਆਮ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਪੁੱਛੇ ਜਾਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨ (ਦੁਆਬਸ): ਸਕੂਲ ਵਾਪਸੀ, ਸਤੰਬਰ 2020, PDF, 237KB (Punjabi)

2020年九月重返学校常见问题, PDF, 518KB (Simplified Chinese)

2020年九月重返學校常見問題, PDF, 607KB (Traditional Chinese)

Retour à l'école en septembre 2020, PDF, 270KB (French)

자주 묻는 질문 (FAQ): 2020 년도 9 월 학교로 복귀하기, PDF, 809KB (Korean)

Preguntas frecuentes: Regreso a la escuela, septiembre de 2020, PDF, 248KB (Spanish)

FAQ: Return to School September 2020, PDF, 826KB (Urdu)

Mga Tanong na Madalas Itanong (FAQs): Pagbabalik sa Paaralan, Setyembre 2020, PDF, 266KB (Tagalog)

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[\(331KB Arabic\)](#)

[سوالات متداول \(FAQ\): بازگشت به مدرسه، سپتامبر 2020 \(PDF,\)](#)

[\(338KB Farsi\)](#)

