



**COVID-19 INFORMATION MEMO**  
**04 September 2020**  
**Public Health Official Updates: Returning to School**

In-class learning will resume in September 2020. The Ministry of Health plans for a gradual return to school in the week after the Labor Day long weekend. Here are some important things you should know about the school re-opening:

1. To keep everyone safe, the schools will implement new health and safety measures, receive increased funding to keep schools safe and clean, and use learning groups to help reduce transmission.
2. A gradual restart in the week of September 8-11 will give students and staff time to learn about the new health and safety measures in the classroom and school.
3. There are strict COVID-19 protocols in school to monitor the students' health. Parents also have a responsibility to do daily health checks on their children at home.
4. To arrange for alternative options to in-class learning, parents should contact the school district as soon as possible. These may include online and distributed learning, homeschooling, or homebound education.
5. As students are returning to school, some might be taking public transit. This is a reminder that masks or face coverings are mandatory on public transit.

**Visit your school district's website to learn more about specific plans. If you have questions about the guidelines or need help getting in touch with your school, please contact your Cross-Cultural Health Broker for assistance.**

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### **More Detailed Information**

#### **1. Keeping everyone safe**

- The school districts have received increased funding to implement new health and safety measures. These include:
  - **Wearing a mask.** Two masks are given to students and staff when they return to school. Masks are mandatory in middle and secondary schools in high traffic areas. Elementary students are not required to wear masks.

- **Physical distancing.** People in the same learning group don't need to stay 2 metres apart, but must limit physical contact. Outside of a learning group, students must keep the recommended distance. Physical barriers will be in place to maintain distance.
- **Cleaning.** School spaces, buses, high-touch places, and shared items will be cleaned regularly and frequently.
- **Hygiene.** Students will be reminded to practice good hygiene habits, such as hand-washing, cough and sneeze etiquette, and no sharing food or drinks.
- **Learning groups.** A learning group is a group of students and staff who will remain together throughout the school quarter or term. They will primarily interact with each other. Learning groups allow for peer interaction and support while limiting contact with too many people.

## 2. Gradual restart & orientation week

Schools will be welcoming students into classrooms in the week of September 8-11, after the Labor Day long weekend.

- September 8 and 9 will be time for staff to prepare for the new school term.
- Students will return to school by **September 10** or orientation. Students will get familiar with classrooms, get assigned to classes, find out their learning group, practice new routines, and learn to safely move in school spaces.

## 3. COVID-19 protocols

- **Stay home when sick.** If a student, staff member, or any other adult has symptoms of a cold, flu, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory diseases, they must NOT enter school.
- **Self-isolate** if students, staff, or any other adult have COVID-19 symptoms, traveled outside Canada in the last 14 days, or identified as a close contact of a confirmed case.
- **Daily Health Checks.** Parents and caregivers have the responsibility to perform daily health checks on their children. Ask these questions:
  - Does your child have symptoms of a common cold, flu, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory diseases?
  - Has your child been outside Canada in the last 14 days?
  - Has your child been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case?
  - If the answer is yes to any of these questions, you must keep your child at home, self-isolate, and seek care from a healthcare professional.
- **Testing for COVID-19.** At this time, it is recommended that only people with symptoms or identified by a health professional should be tested.
- **Students may still attend school** if a member of their household has symptoms of illness, but they are not sick themselves.

- If a student or staff **develops symptoms at school**, they will be isolated. They will be sent home immediately and assessed by a healthcare professional. They cannot return to school until a negative test and symptoms have improved.
- Parents will be **notified by public health** officials if their child has been in contact with a COVID-positive person. If that happens, the child is required to self-isolate.

#### **4. Alternative learning options**

- While there is no substitute for in-class instruction, parents have options for their children's education. These include online distributed learning, homeschooling, and homebound education. Parents must contact their school to make inquiries and arrangements for these options.
- Parents of students who are immune-compromised or have underlying medical conditions should talk with their healthcare provider to assess the risk of returning to school. If the student cannot attend school, the school district will work with the family to review alternative learning options.
- Students with disabilities and diverse abilities will receive the same support and services as they had prior to the pandemic.

#### **5. Masks are mandatory on public transit**

As students are returning to school, some might be taking public transit to commute. Masks and face-coverings are mandatory on public transit. Exemptions are only for those who have medical conditions and unable to wear a mask.

As our province reopen schools, students, parents, and school staff will experience a transition period when everyone adjusts to this new routine. It is important that we remain calm and follow the guidelines to protect the health of our children and community members.

Find BC's Back to School Plan here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school>

If you have any questions about the plan, or you need help getting in contact with your school, please reach out to your Cross-Cultural Health Broker for assistance.