



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

Updated August 17, 2020



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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 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.

In preparation for the 2020/2021 school year, the Ministry of Education has provided an investment of \$45.6 million to support the implementation of enhanced health and safety measures in public and independent schools. This investment aims at ensuring the increased cleaning of high-contact surfaces, increased number of hand-hygiene stations and the availability and use of masks, among other safety 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 School Settings](#) 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 develop a Restart Plan before the 2020/21 school year begins to outline their approach for September. This Restart Plan must include a health and safety plan to 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.
- 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.

## 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. has announced a return to in-class instruction under Stage 2 for September 2020, 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
<b>Learning Group Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary: N/A</li> <li>▪ Middle: N/A</li> <li>▪ Secondary: N/A</li> </ul>	<b>Learning Group Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary: <b>60</b></li> <li>▪ Middle: <b>60</b></li> <li>▪ Secondary: <b>120</b></li> </ul>	<b>Learning Group Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary: <b>30</b></li> <li>▪ Middle: <b>30</b></li> <li>▪ Secondary: <b>60</b></li> </ul>	<b>Learning Group Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary: <b>30</b></li> <li>▪ Middle: <b>30</b></li> <li>▪ Secondary: <b>30</b></li> </ul>	<b>Learning Group Size</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Elementary: <b>0</b></li> <li>▪ Middle: <b>0</b></li> <li>▪ Secondary: <b>0</b></li> </ul>
<b>DENSITY TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not applicable</li> </ul>	<b>DENSITY TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not applicable</li> </ul>	<b>DENSITY TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 50% for all schools</li> </ul>	<b>DENSITY TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 25% for all schools</li> </ul>	<b>DENSITY TARGETS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 0% for all schools</li> </ul>
<b>IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION:</b> Full-time all students, all grades	<b>IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION:</b> Full-time instruction for all students for the maximum instructional time possible within cohort limits.  Self-directed learning supplements in-class instruction, if required.	<b>IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION:</b> Full-time instruction for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ children of essential service workers</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.	<b>IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION:</b> Full-time instruction for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ children of essential service workers</li> <li>▪ students with disabilities/diverse abilities</li> <li>▪ students who require additional supports</li> </ul> Remote learning for all other students	<b>IN-CLASS INSTRUCTION:</b> 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.*

# Learning Groups and Physical Distancing

Reducing the number of close, in-person 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>1</sup>

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.

### 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.

<sup>1</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.

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 will be smaller for elementary students recognizing that it’s more challenging for younger children to maintain physical distance from each other, while older students are better able to minimize physical contact, practice hand hygiene and recognize if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Allowing larger learning groups in secondary schools also enables more flexibility in meeting students’ diverse learning needs.

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 and school-based staff prior to submitting the request.**

## 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.

Those outside of a learning group must practice physical distancing 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 should maintain physical distance from students and other staff as much as possible. In an elementary or secondary school, two classes from different learning groups can be in the same learning space at the same time if a two-metre distance can be maintained between people from different learning groups. See section on [Itinerant Staff](#) for additional guidelines.

During break times (e.g. recess and lunch), students may want to socialize with peers in 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 peers 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.

## 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, where possible, assign staff to a specific learning group 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 outside of 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.

When staff are interacting with people outside of their learning group; physical distance cannot be consistently maintained; and none of the strategies outlined above are viable options, 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). Schools will have non-medical masks and face shields available for staff. See [the Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts](#) section for more information.

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

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 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 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:
  - Consider different classroom and learning environment configurations to allow distance between students and adults (e.g., different desk and table formations).
  - Consider arranging desks/tables so students are not facing each other and using consistent or assigned seating arrangements.
  - Consider storing excess equipment (e.g. equipment that might not be of use during the pandemic) in order to open more space in schools.
- Consider strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times.
- 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 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 physical 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.

## 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.

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 [Students with Immune Suppression](#) in the Employee/Student Attendance 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 in close physical proximity with a student within their learning group, personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves, 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).

Non-medical masks are required in situations where a person cannot maintain physical distance and is in close proximity to a person outside of their learning group. As such, 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) when outside of their learning groups, and when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

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

Wearing 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 outside of the circumstances outlined above is a personal choice and will be respected.

For more information, 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. 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

- Staff meetings involving staff from different learning groups should preferably occur through virtual means. Where a virtual alternative is not possible, staff meetings can happen in person if participants maintain physical distance.
- 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.

## 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).

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 possible. If lockers have to be shared, schools should try to 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.

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 of books or paper-based educational resources to students because of COVID-19.

# 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) when they cannot maintain physical distance or be behind a physical barrier in the course of their duties.
  - 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.
- 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. **If a child has any symptoms, 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.
- Middle and secondary students are required to wear non-medical masks when they are on the bus. Exceptions will be made for students who cannot wear masks for medical reasons. For more information, see the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) section.
- Non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school 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 (requiring increased close personal contact from school staff).

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 onboard and offload to support buses being loaded from back to front and offloaded from front to back.
- If space is available, students should each have their own seat (unless sharing with a member of their household) and sit separated side to side and front to back.

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

- Consider installing a physical barrier made of transparent materials between the driver and students. For additional information with respect to safety considerations when deciding to install a physical barrier, read the [Joint Guidance Document from Transport Canada and CSA D250 School Bus Technical Committee](#).
- 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.

For specific brands and disinfectant products, see Health Canada's list of [hard-surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Follow these procedures 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)
- If shared equipment/items have to be used, they should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the [BCCDC's Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings document](#).
- 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 should 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.

The same cleaning and disinfecting frequency guidelines outlined above apply when different learning groups use the same space (e.g., classroom, gym, arts room, home economics or science lab, etc.), or when the composition of a learning group changes at the end of a school term.

## FREQUENTLY TOUCHED SURFACES

Frequently touched surfaces include:

- Doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, faucet handles, toilet handles, tables, desks and chairs used by multiple students, water fountains.
  - Water fountains can continue to be used, as access to water should not be restricted. Students and staff should be encouraged to use personal water bottles. If using water fountains, students and staff should practice hand hygiene before and after use, and should not place their mouth on the fountain. Water fountains should be cleaned as a frequently touched item.
- Shared learning items and manipulatives
- 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, 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)

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTING BODILY FLUIDS

Follow these procedures 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.).

Schools should ensure that visitors are aware of health and safety protocols and requirements prior to entering the school.

- Schools are responsible for ensuring that all visitors confirm they have completed the requirements of a daily health check before entering.
- Schools should keep a list of the date, names and contact information for any visitors who entered the school.
  - Schools could include, as part of their visitor registration form, a checkbox for the visitor to confirm they have completed their daily health check.

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

- Maximum 50 person gatherings, in alignment with the [Gatherings and Events Order](#) of the Provincial Health Officer. Additional information is available from the BC Centre for Disease Control for [gatherings and events](#) in community settings.
- 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

School districts and schools should work with their local medical health officer to ensure policies and procedures are in place regarding reporting elevated staff and student absenteeism due to influenza-like illness to public health/the local medical health officer. Schools and school districts should notify their local medical health officer if staff and/or student absenteeism exceeds 10 percent of regular attendance. This reporting is helpful in early identification of clusters and outbreaks.

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](#).

School districts and independent school authorities should understand that some Indigenous families and communities may be taking increased safety measures during the pandemic, which may mean that some students will not be able to attend in-person instruction even as schools return to normal operations.

## STUDENTS 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 [BCCDC Guidance for Families of Immunocompromised Children in School and Group Gatherings](#) and share these documents 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.

# Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols

School districts and schools must develop local protocols that:

- Ensure school staff and other adults entering the school are aware of their responsibility to assess themselves daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or other infectious respiratory disease prior to entering the school (e.g. emails/letters to parents and staff, orientation video, signage on doors).
- Clearly communicate with parents and caregivers their responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school.
  - Consider having parents and caregivers provide a copy of a completed daily health check form that confirms they understand how to complete the daily health check and that it must be completed daily.
  - Alternatively, conduct daily checks for respiratory illness at drop-off by asking parents and caregivers to confirm the child does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school to be sent home as soon as possible.
  - Some students may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, consider having 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.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Daily assessment of children for symptoms by parents/caregivers, and staff self-assessment.
  - Schools could recommend using [BCCDC's Daily Health Check Example](#) (on page 16).
- If a student, staff or other adult has any symptoms, they must not enter the school.

## SELF-ISOLATION AND SYMPTOMS

- Any student, staff or other person within the school who has symptoms of COVID-19 **OR** travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days **OR** was identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak must stay home and [self-isolate](#), including children of essential service workers.
  - For a list of symptoms of COVID-19, see the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#).
- Any student, staff, or other person within the school who has cold, influenza, or COVID-19-like symptoms should seek assessment by a health-care provider and self-isolate while they await the results.
- Those unsure if they or a student should self-isolate or be tested for COVID-19 should be directed to use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool.
  - If concerned, they can be advised to contact 8-1-1 or the local public health unit to seek further input.
  - They can also be advised to contact a family physician or nurse practitioner to be assessed for COVID-19 and other infectious respiratory diseases.

- Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household has cold, influenza, or COVID19-like symptoms, provided the student/staff is asymptomatic. It is expected the symptomatic household member is seeking assessment by a health-care provider.
- Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies or other COVID-19-like symptoms, which are related to an existing condition can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any change in symptoms, they should seek assessment by a health-care provider.

If a student or staff is confirmed to have COVID-19, public health will do an investigation to confirm if any staff or students have been in close contact with that person and need to self-isolate. Public health will inform the school and superintendent if there are close contacts of a confirmed case within a learning group or school.

## Trauma-Informed Practice and Socio-Emotional Lens

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.

A [needs assessment](#) for students and educators is crucial as part of a trauma-informed transition back into classrooms. Use of needs-based assessments and regular 'check-ins' can assist in gathering important information to inform the level of trauma response and recovery necessary to support the school community.

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](#). 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](#).

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 rub dispensers, especially where sinks are not available.
  - 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 soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand rubs can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If alcohol-based hand rub 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> <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>▪ When they arrive at school.</li> <li>▪ Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch). Before and after eating and drinking.</li> <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>

# 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)

Non-medical masks are required to be used in situations where a person cannot maintain physical distance and is in close proximity to a person outside of their learning group or household.

Students in Middle and Secondary school are required to wear non-medical masks in high traffic areas such as buses and in common areas such as hallways, or anytime outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Exceptions will be made for students who cannot wear masks for medical reasons.

Non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school 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 (requiring increased close personal contact from school staff).

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 high traffic areas such as buses and in common areas such as hallways, or anytime outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g., itinerant teachers/specialists interacting with multiple learning groups). Staff can also wear a mask, a face covering or a face shield within their classroom or learning group if that is their personal preference. Refer to the [Prioritizing Health and Safety – Flow Charts](#) section for more information.

Schools and school districts will have non-medical masks available for staff and students, including anyone who becomes ill while at school. Schools and school districts should consider distributing masks at the beginning of the school year on an opt-out basis, rather than at the request of students/staff.

Wearing a non-medical mask, face covering, or face shield in schools outside of the circumstances outlined above is a personal choice for students and adults. It is important to treat people wearing masks with respect.

Those that choose to wear non-medical masks, face coverings or face shields must still seek to maintain physical distance from people outside of their learning group. There must be no crowding, gathering or congregating of people from different learning groups, even if non-medical masks are worn.

- More information about COVID-19 related mask use, including how to clean and store reusable masks, is available on the [BCCDC website](#) and the [Government of Canada website](#).

- More information on cleaning and disinfecting instructions for face shields is available on the [BCCDC website](#).

**Wearing non-medical masks at all times in schools is not recommended** as there are multiple, more effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in place, 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.

Managing 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.

- In [community-based clinical settings](#) where there is low incidence and prevalence of COVID-19, additional personal protective equipment over and above that required for normal practices is not required. The same guidance is applicable to staff providing health services and other health care providers who are providing health services in schools. However, if a person providing health services assesses the need for personal protective equipment beyond routine practices following a point of care risk assessment, it should be worn.
- Staff providing health care services and other health care providers are required to wear a mask when working in close proximity with students.
- 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.

## General Ventilation and Air Circulation

At this time, there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, is contributing to the spread of the virus.

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](#)).

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
- increasing air exchanges by adjusting the HVAC system
- opening windows when possible and if weather permits

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

## 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, parents/caregivers and students to ensure employees, families and 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.

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.
  - How to report an exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19.
  - 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 well as reports of exposure and first aid records.

As per WorkSafeBC guidelines, employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace. School districts and schools 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.

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.

## Curriculum, Programs and Activities

All curriculum, programs and activities should operate in alignment with provincial K-12 health and safety guidelines. 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.

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.

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. 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.

### 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).

### 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.
- Ensure field trip numbers align with the PHO guidance on mass gatherings (i.e. 50 people).
- Field trips to outdoor locations are preferable.
- Conduct a risk assessment considering the field trip location - science exploration vs. exploring at the beach.
- No overnight field trips should occur.
- International Field Trips - cancelled until further notice.

### 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

### 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

If food is prepared within or outside a school for consumption by people other than those that prepared it (e.g., meal program, cafeteria), it is expected that the [WorkSafe BC Restaurants, cafes, pubs, and nightclubs: Protocols for returning to operation](#) are implemented as appropriate and as relevant to the school setting, in addition to normally implemented food safety measures and requirements (e.g. FOODSAFE trained staff, a food safety plan, etc.). Some of the guidance within may not be relevant to a school's food services. For example, the July 23, 2020 Order of the Provincial Health Officer [Restaurants, Coffee Shops, Cafes, Cafeterias and Licensed Premises, Including Pubs, Bars, Lounges, Nightclubs and Tasting Rooms](#) does not apply to schools. As such, the restriction of six patrons at a table does not apply.

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

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

## 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 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:
  - Under Stage 2:
    - physical contact is minimized for those within the same learning group;
    - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for 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.
  - Under Stages 3 to 4:
    - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for 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/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.
- 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.
- Staff should refer to 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. for additional information.

## PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION/OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

- Encourage outdoor programs as much as possible.
- Teachers should plan physical activities that limit the use of shared equipment and:
  - Minimize physical contact inside learning groups (under Stage 2); or
  - Support physical distancing outside of learning groups.

- Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected as per the guidelines in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of this document, and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.
- 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.
  - Focus on activities that do not use equipment.
  - If equipment must be used:
    - Avoid sharing equipment by numbering and assigning each student their own supplies
    - Assemble individualized PE kits that can be assigned to students
    - Have students create their own PE kits to use at home or school and set aside budget for additional kits to be purchased
    - Anticipate equipment hygiene compromises and keep extra equipment on hand so that instructional time is not lost to re-cleaning equipment
    - Disinfect teaching aids (e.g., clipboards, white boards, pens, plastic bins for transporting materials etc.)
    - Encourage students to come to school in clothing that is appropriate for PE and the weather conditions to eliminate the use of change rooms
    - When transitioning to/from outside remind students to use designated areas for changing into jackets and winter clothing if moving outdoors, such as in designated desk area or a marked side of the hallway

## 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](#).

## SPORTS

- Programs, activities and sports academies can occur if:
  - Under Stage 2:
    - physical contact is minimized for those within the same learning group;

- physical distance (2m) can be maintained for 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.
- Under Stages 3 to 4:
  - physical distance (2m) can be maintained for staff, middle and secondary school students at all time.
- No in-person inter-school competitions/events. This will be re-evaluated throughout the school year.
- See the [Memorandum from BC School Sports](#) for addition information.

## 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.

## 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.
- 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 when:

- 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.

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. Where possible, schools should seek virtual alternatives to continue to support these events in a different format.

## Appendix: 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 should ensure that all options for the highest level of measures have been exhausted 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

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.

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.

2. If no, can the staff member fulfill their duties while maintaining physical distancing (2m)?

Consider reconfiguring rooms or securing an alternate space.

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.

**4. If none of the measures outlined above can be implemented,** the staff member is required to wear PPE (e.g. non-medical mask, face covering, or face shield + mask).

This could include a specialist teacher or an EA who must work in close physical proximity to students in multiple learning groups, or a TTOC.

## 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)

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.