



Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools

Updated: August 20, 2020

We look forward to welcoming our students back into schools September 8th, 2020. The safety, health and well-being for all students, staff and families has been a guiding principle in our planning as we prepare for changes in the school environment for the 2020-21 school year due to COVID-19. The [Restoring Safe Schools](#) documents from the Manitoba Government outlines the guidelines and protocols for welcoming students back to school. **As the COVID-19 situation is evolving, our division and school plans will be responsive to the most current public health guidelines and protocols.** The initial school start-up in September will reflect an abundance of precaution. As a result, some school programming will be paused for September. Once routines for public health protocols are established in our schools and with the support of our school community, we are hopeful that our full complement of school programming will resume in the near future.

We are committed to excellence in teaching and learning while ensuring safe and healthy environments for all students and staff. Staff will return to schools on September 2nd for an orientation to public health requirements and educational priorities as well as for professional development related to recovery learning.

Parents/caregivers play an essential role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. **Screening tests are to be completed at home by parents/caregivers prior to leaving home each day.** Ensure that this link and related [COVID- 19 resources](#) are available for daily reference:
<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

Communication

Each school will have specific information to share with students and families related to entry, drop-off/pick-up, lunch and school schedules. Information will be communicated starting **August 24th** via school messenger, school webpages and school social media accounts. Please phone the school at any time if you need to update your email address, require more information or have additional questions. Stay connected to the SJASD webpage (<https://www.sjasd.ca/>) and social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) for SJASD updates and current [Manitoba Education](#) information.

[Return to School](#)

Students will need an opportunity to adjust to new school routines and expectations. Each student had a unique experience with remote learning. In September, as a part of our **SJASD learning plan**, educators will be creative in addressing the learning needs of each student through responsive planning. **Literacy and numeracy will continue to be a focus in all classrooms.** Regular check-ins and assessment will play an important role in supporting students' well-being and in helping students learn to the greatest extent possible.

[Mental Health and Well-Being](#)

Each school will prioritize mental health literacy through the focused use of effective mental health strategies in the school environment to help create the conditions for student success and well-being.

Students in grades K-12 will have staff supporting the implementation of programs such as Project 11, Sources of Strength and the Mind Up Curriculum. This will be a collaborative school approach involving classroom teachers and student services staff. [Project 11](#) is an engaging cross-curricular proactive program focusing on Manitoba's English Language Arts and Health Education outcomes. Weekly lessons and daily activities have been designed to help support students and teachers in bringing mental health awareness, along with positive coping skills into their lives.

[Recovery Learning](#)

Recovery learning will be a responsive process that includes adaptations and differentiation to be applied over the coming months/year(s). Recovery learning is the focus for all Professional Development throughout the 2020/21 school year. Teachers will identify learning needs in a coordinated, collaborative, and intentional way so that accelerated learning can occur. Staff will assess each student's unique starting points and plan responsively. School teams will work collaboratively to analyse and respond to student learning data. Instructional planning and strategies will be based on the unique academic strengths and next steps of each student.

The following **Questions and Answers** will provide you with important information related to the implementation of public health orders in our SJASD schools. Division staff will ensure preventative practices are implemented in our schools, including environmental cleaning, proper hygiene instruction and practice, routine self-screening, and appropriate physical distancing.

We understand that students and families may have many questions regarding COVID-19 and the return to school. See links at the end of this document to access the most up-to-date information and resources related to COVID-19. Should you have any further questions, contact your school administrator or inquiries@siasd.ca.



Questions and Answers

Is student attendance at school mandatory?

- School attendance is mandatory for children aged 7 to 18 in Manitoba. All students are expected to participate fully in learning, even when remote learning is required.
- Division level remote learning will be in place for students who have been **medically advised** not to return to in-class learning due to COVID-related risk factors.

Will my child be at school 5 days a week?

- Kindergarten to Grade 8, and students with special needs will be in-class full days, 5 days per week while we are in Level 1.
 - See *In-class learning response level* (see *Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools* at https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/covid/k-12-reopeningplan-stage-2.pdf)
- **Grade 9 to 12 students will begin attending in-class learning on alternate days for the first 3 weeks of September.** On September 28th, where two metre physical distancing is possible, students may return to in-class learning every day. This will be decided on a class-by-class basis. During the in-class learning day, students will receive instruction and be assigned tasks to complete for the following day of at-home learning. The goal is for students to return for up to five days per week of in-class instruction, if high schools can effectively timetable and implement physical distancing and the use of cohorts to reduce the risk of transmission and support any needed contact tracing. Priority is placed on ensuring as much in-class learning as possible.

If students stay home because they feel unwell, how will they receive their assignments?

- Classroom teachers will support the development and provision of at-home learning packages for students who are isolating or quarantined.

How will students keep learning if they must remain at home for an extended period and they do not have access to a computer?

- When remote learning is required, students will have access to learning resources, including technology and connectivity. A needs assessment will be conducted by each school to ensure these students are supported.
- A guiding principle of our planning is that every student will have consistent, reliable, and appropriate connection to school learning and a sense of belonging, regardless of location, barriers, exceptional needs or challenges. Students, parents, and caregivers will also have access to resources and supports.



If parents are uncomfortable with the risk of having their children resume classroom learning, do they have the option of asking for virtual learning opportunities or extra learning resources?

- Virtual learning is not an option. Ensuring the safety, health and well-being of all students, staff and families has been a guiding principle in our planning, and public health has determined that it is safe to resume in-class learning while following public health guidance. This includes daily at-home screening for [COVID-19 symptoms](#), enhanced hand hygiene, physical distancing, the use of cohorts and outbreak management, which are paramount in keeping as many students as possible in schools this fall and throughout the pandemic.
- Division-level remote learning will be in place for students **who are medically advised** not to return to in-class learning due to COVID related risk factors.
- School staff and administrators will continue to support students in their return to in-class learning. Mental health and well-being are critical to returning to in-class learning plans. Regular check-ins and informal assessments will play an important role in supporting transitions.

How will students get to school?

- **For the month of September 2020, SJASD will transport the eligible bus students from the Headingley and Brooklands areas. Students with exceptional needs will also be bused.**
- **All school bus passengers in Grade 4 and over, as well as the driver, are required to wear a non-medical mask.** These should be put on before getting on the bus and taken off after exiting the bus if removal is appropriate for the setting. Students in lower grades may also wear non-medical masks. (Guidelines on how to wear a mask can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/prepareandprevent/index.html.)
For additional transportation information see <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/transportation.pdf>
- Mask exemptions will be considered for medical issues or required accommodations that prevent the student from wearing a mask. School Administrators will submit these exemption requests to SJASD Senior Administration for approval.
- If a student forgets a facemask, a limited supply of disposable facemasks will be available on the bus. Please ensure your child has their personal mask each day.
- For the short term, parents are encouraged to transport their own children.
- **To plan for our busing capacity increase in October 2020, a short electronic survey will be sent to all SJASD families and child care centers that have eligible bus students.** The survey is to confirm if you wish your child to be transported on the bus.
- Schools will be implementing protocols to ensure that entry and exit from the school are managed to avoid congestion.



How far apart will students be sitting from one another on the bus?

- When possible, one student per seat is recommended. However, children from the same household and students in the same in-school cohorts may also sit together on the bus.
- Students will have assigned seats on the bus and must stay in those seats while on the bus.

Will students, teachers and staff be required to wear a mask at school?

- **Students in grades 4-12 are required to wear a facemask when physical distancing is not possible in the school setting** (unless there are medical issues or required accommodations that prevent the student from wearing a mask).
<https://manitoba.ca/covid19/updates/prepareandprevent.html>
- All SJASD students in grades 4-12 will be provided with 2 reusable facemasks at no cost.
- Schools will communicate a plan for the distribution of facemasks prior to the start of school during the week of August 26- September 1, 2020. This is to accommodate families who wish to pick-up facemasks before school starts and for students who will ride the bus on the first day of school.
- In scenarios where classrooms are multi-grade (e.g.: grades 3/4, grades 3/4/5), masks will be provided for the whole class.
- Students in other grades are recommended to wear non-medical face masks when physical distancing is not possible or in common areas in the school setting.
- It is required that all SJASD staff wear a mask or face shield when two metre physical distancing is not possible or when in common areas in the school setting.
- As the public health situation evolves, this may change. Please see <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/video/covid-19-wear-non-medical-mask-face-covering-properly.html> for mask wearing information.

Will there be screening for students before they enter the school?

- Students and staff will need to self-screen at home, before going to school. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their own child's self-screening.
<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>
- School staff may conduct screening at school. Parents will be contacted if a student develops [symptoms of COVID-19](#). Students will be isolated and parents/caregivers are to pick their child up promptly. Make sure the school has your current contact information and a back up to call if you can not be reached.



Are visitors and volunteers allowed to be in schools?

- Schools will minimize visitors and volunteers at school facilities. When their presence is necessary, visitors and volunteers must first self-screen and adhere to physical distancing and hygiene practices in place for students and staff.
- **All visitors (e.g. parents/caregivers) are required to wear a mask upon entry into the school.** Schools are required to keep a log of all visitors including location in school, entry and exit time.
- Community use of schools will be suspended, with the exception of child care centers operating in schools.
- Schools will postpone any in-school meetings of Parent Councils/Advisory groups (e.g.: AGM) until after September 30, or until further notice.
- Any other meetings (e.g.: Parents/caregivers with school staff) are to be scheduled using online communication, video, telephone where possible, rather than in person.

Will smaller class sizes be implemented to allow for physical distancing, and, if so, will extra space be converted to classrooms (e.g. gyms)?

- Schools will ensure physical distancing among students to the best extent possible, including using alternative spaces like multi-purpose rooms if needed.

How far apart will students be sitting from one another at school?

- Public health recommends two metres of physical distancing. When this is not possible, students will remain within cohorts to reduce exposure to others. Cohorts will distance themselves from other groups to limit exposure. In these instances, there must be at least 1 metre between students as they sit at their desks.

Will students be sharing a locker with one another?

- Students are encouraged to keep personal belongings with them when they return to school. Depending on the school, locker use may be limited. There will be no sharing of lockers.

Will the library be open?

- Individual schools will make this determination, as this space may be needed as an instructional space to accommodate physical distancing of students.

Will there be sharing of books in the library?

- Schools may be able to operate libraries. Schools will undertake increased frequency of cleaning and sanitization throughout the building, particularly where there are high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas.



Will students eat lunch at school? Will there be cafeteria service?

- Lunch and recess breaks will be staggered throughout the day, and whenever possible children will be kept together with their class or cohort during these breaks.
- Schools will encourage non-bused children to go home for lunch if possible.
- Not all schools offer cafeteria service, for those who do, all are closed for September 2020. It will be a division decision if cafeteria service will re-open in October 2020.
- Schools can continue to offer breakfast, snack, and lunch programs with necessary adjustments to ensure health guidelines are in place. Schools will have no-sharing policies in place.
- Water fountains are closed. Students are to bring personal water bottles to school. Water refilling stations will be accessible at each school.

Will in-school child care facilities require that masks be worn/or will they operate at a reduced capacity to allow for physical distancing?

- Public health advice in *COVID-19 Early Learning and Child Care Practice Guidance* (June 2020) indicates that the use of non-medical facemasks (cloth or homemade masks) within child care settings is not recommended. However, some staff and children may choose to bring and wear a non-medical mask while in the centre. Masks are not recommended for children under two years of age. In discussion with school site child care centers, **SJASD is recommending that child care center staff wear face masks when transitioning into the common school areas.**
https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/famcirculars/Covid-19_Practice_Guide_ELCC_April92020.pdf
- Also, as of June 1, 2020, licensed child care centres, including facilities in schools, can continue to provide care for up to 24 children. Larger centres with separate rooms and external entrances can accommodate up to 24 children per room. Home-based child care providers can also continue to operate with the number of children for which they are licensed.
- Schools will be asked to work cooperatively with school site child care centres.

Will hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies be provided or should staff and students bring their own?

- Hand sanitizer, hand soap and necessary cleaning supplies will be provided at the school. Hand sanitizing stations will also be set up at school entrances.

Will there be special breaks for hand washing and desk cleaning?

- Staff and students will clean their hands frequently at the following times:
 - at the start of the day and before going home
 - after going to the washroom



- before preparing food
- before and after eating
- after getting hands dirty
- after wiping noses or handling dirty tissues
- after coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose
- before and after putting on and taking off a mask
- after cleaning tasks (staff)

Will there be additional cleaning and sanitization?

- Increased frequency of cleaning and sanitization, particularly high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, will be required.
- Commonly touched surfaces will be disinfected frequently, at least twice daily.
- Ample hand cleaning supplies will be available at all sinks in washroom and kitchen areas.

Who is going to clean the desks after each day?

- Custodial staff will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting at the school.
- Cleaning logs will be maintained at all division buildings.

Will there be recess?

- Yes. Lunch and recess breaks will be staggered.

Can students use playground equipment?

- Yes, outdoor activities are encouraged, and outdoor spaces and playground structures can be used.
- Public health advises that playgrounds and play structures are low risk for transmission.
- Separate containers of equipment will be maintained for each class or cohort and equipment will be cleaned between recess periods.
- Zones will be marked to manage group sizes and avoid contact among groups.
- Contact sports and games, or the use of shared equipment is strongly discouraged.

Will there be gym class?

- Physical education will continue with necessary modifications for physical distancing. When possible, it is likely that this will occur outside.

Will students continue to play in group sports?

- SJASD schools will pause school sports for September 2020 (or until further notice).
- SJASD will revisit the resumption of individual school sports teams at the end of September. For the resumption of league play to occur, the governing sports



organizations must have received return to play approval from public health. See Manitoba's Restoring Safe Services Sports Guidelines.

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/sports-guidelines.html>

Will there be music and choir?

- **Early Years:** Music instruction will be paused for the month of September. During this allocated instructional time, students will receive additional numeracy, literacy support and mental health programming. Alternative Arts programming may also be offered.
- **Middle Years:** Band and Choral programs will be paused for the month of September. During this allocated instructional time, students will receive additional numeracy, literacy support, and mental health programming. Alternative Arts programming may also be offered.
- **Senior Years:** Schools must ensure that they follow Manitoba's *Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists*.
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/music-guidelines.html>
- Due to cohort guidelines, SJASD will pause divisional musical arts programming. At this time, we are limiting the mixing of students from multiple schools to maintain best practices for cohorts. In consultation with public health and when safe to do so, SJASD divisional programs may resume.

Will there be as many electives offered in middle and high school?

- Core curriculum and required courses will be prioritized for the return to in-class learning. Electives may be limited in some schools to accommodate physical distancing and scheduling.
- **Middle Years:** The Practical Arts programs will be paused for the month of September (e.g.: Home Economics). Alternative programming will be offered during this instructional time. Schools will communicate specific plans after August 24th.
- **Senior Years:** Culinary Arts and Human Ecology programming will be paused for the month of September. Alternative programming (e.g.: course theory) will be offered during this instructional time. Vocational programming will continue providing physical distancing and public health protocols can be followed. Schools will communicate specific plans after August 24th.

Will there be provincial tests?

- A decision about Grade 12 provincial tests will be made and communicated by the end of September. This will depend on the public health situation and the extent to which students are able to access in-class learning.



Will my school shut down if there is a positive case identified in the school?

- Decisions about school closures will be made on a case-by-case basis with public health leading the response and providing guidance, including ensuring appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response.
- Public health will advise staff and students if they have been in close contact. Public health will advise if they need to self-isolate or self monitor and when they can return to school.

What happens if a student in a class tests positive? Will parents be notified?

- In the event of confirmation of a case of COVID-19 connected with a class, public health will lead the response and provide guidance, including ensuring appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19 in a class or cohort, would other students who have been in close contact not be allowed back to school for 14 days?

- There is no single answer to this question. Public health will take the circumstances of the individual situation into consideration and provide direction on a case-by-case basis. Public health will assess the amount of contact and risk of transmission to inform these decisions.

Additional Information and Resources:

For the most up to date Manitoba COVID-19 information, see <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html>

Latest COVID-19 Education News, see <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html>

