

WELCOMING OUR STUDENTS BACK

Restoring Safe Schools

June 25, 2020

Manitoba's framework to resume in-class learning will allow K-12 students and staff to return to the classroom following the suspension of in-school learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework provides guidance for provincial consistency, while allowing for some local flexibility, based on preparedness, the extent of transmission, and safety. It aligns with the province's Restoring Safe Services: [Manitoba's Pandemic and Economic Roadmap for Recovery](#) and puts student and staff safety first.

Throughout Manitoba, school buildings were closed from March 23 to May 31, with all students learning remotely. The [Limited Use of School Facilities](#) started on June 1, 2020 with Restoring Safe Services: Phase 2. Guidelines for this scenario are already developed. Teachers and some students were back in schools, for specific programming, planning and student assessment purposes, while practicing physical distancing. Summer programming will also follow these guidelines.

Manitoba is planning the return to in-class learning in September for all students while continuing to follow public health advice throughout the school year and for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. This means the K-12 system must be ready to adapt to changing public health conditions at any time. Uncertainty around COVID-19 may have some families reluctant to send their children back to in-class learning. Building confidence and mitigating risk will be key to full participation. Ultimately, decisions about the extent to which in-class learning resumes throughout the 2020-21 school year will be guided by public health advice and the extent of COVID-19 transmission in Manitoba's communities at any given time.

Guidelines for K-12 schools are under development to support the transition back to in-class learning.

The 2020-21 School Year

Schools will reopen for teachers and staff on September 2, 2020 with students returning on September 8, 2020. While Manitoba is targeting a return to in-class learning for all in the fall, school divisions and independent schools are asked to prepare a re-opening plan for different public health scenarios as follows:

1. In-class learning resumes for all, with near normal conditions.
2. In-class learning resumes with additional public health measures.
3. Remote learning from home, with limited use of school facilities.

School divisions will submit division-level plans to Manitoba Education and will ensure all schools within their division have school-level plans that are accessible to the school community. Funded independent schools will also be asked to submit their plans to the department and post for their respective school.

Planning Considerations for All Scenarios

Plan for All Scenarios – Safety and preparedness are paramount. While the goal for Fall 2020 is that all students resume in-class learning, school divisions and schools will need to be ready to implement any scenario of re-opening, from near normal re-opening to remote learning, based on public health advice and changing public health conditions. **The province will confirm which scenario will be followed in the fall on or before Aug. 1, taking into account the public health situation at the time.** Schools will also need to be prepared to roll-back in-class learning based on public health advice. This may vary across the province depending on different rates of transmission and/or outbreaks in particular areas.

Public Health Orders and Guidance – Current evidence indicates that staff and students can return to school while protecting individual health and minimizing risks from a public health perspective. Schools will need to follow up-to-date public health orders and guidance. Guidelines will be adjusted as necessary to reflect the latest public health information. Staff and students must stay home if sick or displaying symptoms. Self-assessment tools should be made available to ensure awareness of symptoms and for daily symptom screening and monitoring. Increased frequency of cleaning and sanitation, particularly high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, will be required.

Physical Distancing Measures – Resuming in-class learning still requires physical distancing. Schools will need to consider strategies for how to manage foot traffic flow in entrances and hallways to avoid congregation. Schools must limit nonessential visitors and stagger drop-offs, pick-ups, class times and breaks to the greatest extent possible. Schools should also refrain from scheduling assemblies and gatherings that exceed public health advice.

Cohorts – In classrooms, on buses and during activities when physical distancing may not be possible, emphasis is put on other public health measures and limiting interaction between groups. It is important to limit potential exposures by keeping groups of students (e.g. classes) together and avoiding interactions with other groups. In the event that there is a case in a class, this practice can drastically reduce the potential number of exposed staff and students.

Priorities for In-class Learning – Schools are critical to the mental health and well-being of children. Planning should focus on returning as many students to in-class learning as possible while following public health advice and subject to available physical space and resources. Full-time in-class learning is a priority for early years students and students with special needs, both of whom benefit from face-to-face interaction with educators and who may have difficulties navigating remote learning independently. Their return to school also provides parents and caregivers with a greater ability to return to work.

Speciality Programming – Technology education programming can continue, provided public health measures such as daily symptom monitoring, physical distancing and/or cohorts can be maintained. For extracurricular activities, schools will need to assess their ability to continue. Schools must ensure that they follow Manitoba's Restoring Safe Services [Sports Guidelines](#) and [Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists](#).

School Transportation – Physical distancing and/or cohorts are also required on school transportation. For more information refer to the [guidelines for transportation](#) to schools. For the short term, parents should be encouraged to transport their own children if at all possible.

Blended Learning – Teacher-directed remote learning will be an essential component of K-12 education throughout the pandemic. Asynchronous (working independently on their own) and synchronous (working with a teacher in real time) options can be considered. Remote and blended in-class and remote learning plans may need to be implemented on short notice. Remote learning plans will also need to be developed for students with underlying health conditions that prohibit them from returning to in-class learning (before broad access to a vaccine) and students in 14-day quarantine or isolation. Some students will require support to obtain access to devices and Internet for participating in remote learning. Mechanisms to maintain ongoing contact with students who are participating in remote learning are critical to keeping students engaged. There will also need to be planning for other factors that affect learning and the well-being of students, staff, and families.

Personal Risk Factors – Arrangements will be needed for students, teachers, administrators and school staff who may be at higher risk of COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions or other risk factors.

Recovery Learning – Some students have had lower participation in remote learning than others and educators will need to be creative to address the achievement/learning gap that may exist. Student assessment and transition planning should emphasize and respond to [recovery learning](#) needs identified in June 2020 report cards. Mental health and wellbeing is critical to re-opening plans. Professional learning opportunities for administrators, educators and staff should be emphasized, as well as collaborative planning and supports.

If public health results deteriorate or guidelines are not sufficient, new measures may be paused and previous measures may be re-introduced.



Re-opening Scenarios

1. *In-class learning resumes for all; near normal with public health measures.*

- In-class learning resumes for all K-12 students.

Public health advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This re-opening scenario will be initiated based on public health advice when the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very low, and when physical distancing requirements can be removed or modified for in-school learning.
Physical distancing measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical distancing requirements can be removed or modified for in-school learning.• All other public health measures remain in place.• Group size is increased to allow full in-class learning.• Option for remote learning remains for students who cannot attend in-class.
Areas of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize core curriculum and required courses.• Electives may be limited where feasible, if they are not affecting educational requirements.



2. In-class learning resumes with additional public health measures.

- In-class learning resumes, five days per week, for students in K-8, students with special needs (all grades) and students who require additional supports.
- Schools may increase in-class learning for Grades 9-12 to five days per week if they can maintain physical distancing and limit interaction between different groups of students. If not, Grades 9-12 will participate in blended in-class and remote learning, with a minimum of two days in class per week.

<p>Public health advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This re-opening scenario will be initiated based on public health advice when the risk of COVID-19 is low to moderate.
<p>Physical distancing measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing is required. • Create more space for children in the classroom with desks spaced two metres apart (minimum one metre). This may require smaller class groupings. • In classrooms, on buses and during activities when a full two metres physical distancing may not be possible, extra emphasis is put on other public health measures, with an emphasis on limiting interaction between groups. • Single classes should stay together to avoid interactions with other groups/classes. Where smaller groups/classes are not feasible due to a range of electives, physical distancing is required. • Keep larger groups (e.g. several classes or grades) together to reduce the amount of interaction between students. Locations of classrooms (e.g. same wing of school), movement of teachers instead of students, use of additional space (e.g. gyms, libraries, multipurpose spaces), and alternate day attendance can all be considered to reduce mixing. • Timetable in-class students by cohorts to avoid mixing of groups. • Field trips must be cancelled if physical distancing cannot be accommodated. Outdoor venues are lower risk of transmission of COVID-19 and crowded venues and exposure to other groups should be avoided. Out-of-province and international travel will remain subject to ongoing guidance from public health.
<p>Areas of focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit gatherings in common areas, such as lobbies and lunchrooms. • Prioritize core curriculum and required courses. • Electives may be limited where feasible, if they are not affecting educational requirements. Consideration may be given to offering some electives remotely/via distance.



3. Limited Use of Schools (Implemented June 1, 2020)

- In-class learning is suspended. Teacher led remote learning for all K-12 students.

Public health advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the event of moderate to widespread transmission, in-class learning will be suspended, but school facilities may be used for specific programming, following the guidelines for the limited use of school facilities. School divisions and schools will make decisions around the use of school facilities based on local needs.• In the event of widespread transmission, schools may be closed and limited use of schools will be suspended for all K-12 students.
Physical distancing measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two metres of physical distancing is required.• Multiple groups of students can operate within a school setting at the same time provided groups can be kept apart.
Areas of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key focus on literacy, numeracy and other curricular areas as time and resources permit.• Facilitate contact with students to keep them engaged in remote learning.• Ensure access to learning resources for all, including technology and addressing connectivity issues.• Schedule student appointments and small groups for assessment, planning and special programming as needed.



Preparing for the Return to In-Class Learning

Schools and school divisions will need to meet conditions for preparation related to operations, learning and classrooms, staff, students and families before resuming in-class learning. Re-opening plans will need to address these four conditions of preparedness.

Institutional (Operations)	Prepare school facilities to accommodate physical distancing, including increased sanitation, hand hygiene and other public health provisions. Follow the guidelines for re-opening school facilities. These will be updated regularly to reflect new public health orders and guidance.
	Post information about physical distancing, cleaning and other public health measures to help schools prepare for in-class learning.
	Plan for adjustments to transportation routes and schedules for all stages of re-opening, including asking parents to transport their own children where possible.
Learning	Plan for recovery learning. Develop action plans to address students' recovery learning needs identified in the June 2020 report card. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Recovery Learning Guidelines to inform this planning.
	Adapt schedules to facilitate levels of physical distancing (outdoor classrooms, frequent and staggered hand-washing breaks, staggered recesses and lunch breaks, physical distancing measures in place in classrooms and bathrooms).
	Plan for blended in-class and remote learning models. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support planning, refer to the list of learning resources for educators provided on the Manitoba Education website.



<p>School staff</p>	<p>Orient staff to new public health protocols that must be followed in the school, <u>before</u> resuming in-class learning. Include all staff in orientation, including bus drivers, custodial staff, etc. If volunteers are on site in a limited way, ensure they receive orientation when they begin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The online COVID-19 screening tool can be used to inform staff orientation and include information on self monitoring, managing a suspected case of COVID-19, managing shared spaces, etc.
	<p>Identify staff who may need to work at home due to underlying health concerns that make them more vulnerable to exposure to COVID-19, and make any necessary adjustments.</p>
	<p>Plan for health and safety training that may be required, and also ensure that professional learning focuses on COVID-19 pandemic priority areas, including recovery learning, collaborative planning, mental health and well-being and remote learning strategies.</p>
<p>Students and families</p>	<p>Identify students with disabilities and those who are vulnerable to disengage from school, develop and implement strategies to re-engage them and prioritize these students for five days a week in-class learning, where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to Resources Supporting Students with Special Needs for principles and practical resources to assist with planning.
	<p>Communicate expectations for in-class attendance and participation in remote learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are expected to attend in-class learning. If remote learning is included as part of their learning plan, students will be expected to participate. • Students who are unable to return to school due to personal or family health risks factors related to COVID-19 will be supported in remote learning.
	<p>Develop comprehensive strategies for regular communication with families to raise awareness of the health and safety measures implemented at the school, and ensure the understanding that students may not attend school when sick or exhibiting symptoms of illness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the online COVID-19 screening tool to develop materials. • Signal that in-class learning may be increased or suspended on short notice in response to changing public health advice

Information and Resources

More information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including resources, planning documents, and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found at Latest [COVID-19 Education News](#).

[My Learning at Home](#) is a resource to assist families to support their children in remote learning from home.

Current information about COVID-19 in Manitoba can be found at [Province of Manitoba | COVID-19](#)

The government of Manitoba COVID-19 support document [workplace guidance for business owners](#) may also be useful.