



Frequently Asked Questions - Back to School 2020

This is a living document that will be updated according to new information and questions.

Stage 2 – Return to Full-Time In-Class Instruction

Why are we returning to full-time in-class instruction?

Based on current public health direction and the health and safety plans we have in place, Dr. Bonnie Henry (Provincial Health Officer) and Hon. Rob Fleming (Minister of Education) stated that schools are safe to re-open in Stage 2 in September. This Provincial goal means that most students will have access to full in-class instruction and all its benefits to their overall health and wellbeing.

Will you offer an online, or remote learning option for students and families who feel that school from home is the best fit for their health circumstance during this pandemic time?

Families may register for Central Okanagan Public Schools eSchoolBC remote learning option or homeschooling. They should contact the principal at their school to explore and understand their options.

Can schools reserve a family's enrollment seat(s) in their current school if the family elects to either distance learn or home school due to extenuating circumstances within their family?

Many Central Okanagan Schools and programs have waitlists. In order to be consistent with the Board of Education's values including fairness and a District focus on equity families may not reserve seats unless they fit the following exceptions;

- Currently, a student's place in their school will be held when a student's documented medical condition prevents their attendance for an extended period.
- For a transitional period, until Nov. 13th, 2020, all students who enroll in Central Okanagan Public Schools eSchoolBC may maintain their place in their current school and program.
- If students choose to remain in eSchoolBC after Nov. 13th, 2020, they will be able to apply to their previous school or program with a new priority as per the [Board of Education Motion of Sept. 2nd, 2020](#).

Will the secondary school model resemble the model families experienced in June?

We are now in Stage 2 of the BC K-12 Restart Plan. The model for secondary schools is a quarterly system with two long blocks per day to ensure the smallest possible learning groups. All secondary students will attend class every morning, with half of students in class in the afternoon. New cleaning procedures, including the use of electrostatic sprayers will ensure that learning spaces, shared spaces, and surfaces are fully cleaned daily.

Can you offer half day kindergarten to reduce class sizes?

Provincial legislation requires full day Kindergarten be offered in all B.C. public schools. Reducing class size for Kindergarten is the direction from the Provincial Health Officer and Ministry of Education. Schools will organize Kindergarten into learning groups that are smaller than the Provincial threshold for learning groups of 60. Most Kindergarten classes will be at or under 20 students and learning groups will be well below the learning group threshold of 60.

If students in learning groups don't have to physically distance, why are there requirements for physical distance in the safety plan?

Students and staff from different learning groups may still see each other in common areas such as buses, hallways, or libraries. In such instances, staff and students are required to practice physical distancing and use appropriate personal protective equipment such as masks.

How did the district spend the money from the provincial government to make schools safer?

The BC government provided the district with \$1.747 million in the Safe Return to Schools grant to fund the following:

- \$92,053 to purchase approximately 32,000 reusable cloth masks for staff and students
- \$377,365 for more hand washing stations and hand sanitizer
- \$121,836 for more technology to support remote learning and assistive technology
- \$209,876 for additional cleaning supplies
- \$946,498 for additional custodial staffing

The District also purchased 90 portable and handheld electrostatic sprayers, which can sterilize a room in two minutes, to assist the custodial team in efficiently disinfecting classrooms and common areas.

How will the district spend new federal funding when the province allocates it?

The Ministry of Education outlined the many potential uses for the funding in [their news release](#). The Board of Education will provide direction and approve the allocation of these funds within these guidelines.

Health and Safety in Schools

If you have health and safety concerns, we highly recommend that you familiarize yourself with the [Staff and Student Safety Plan](#) to ensure you are aware of the strict guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control that our district has in place.

Will masks be required at school?

Masks and other PPE will be required where appropriate and viable, in accordance with the direction of the Provincial Health Officer. Schools will supply all required PPE and hygiene products necessary for staff and students to learn and interact safely.

Every middle and secondary student and staff member will receive two reusable masks. We also purchased one-time use masks for buses and schools in case students do not bring one. If an elementary student requests a mask, we will provide one.

Will schools do temperature checks on everyone entering school buildings?

The direction from the Provincial Health Officer is that all families do a daily health check to ensure they do not attend school when sick. Staff are also required to perform a daily self-check. Schools will have devices on hand to monitor temperature in the event someone shows symptoms.

What will the school do if a student or staff member shows symptoms while at school?

Schools have strict protocols in place to isolate and arrange for appropriate departure of anyone who shows symptoms at school. Schools will also follow the direction of the Provincial Health Officer if anyone is diagnosed with COVID-19.

How will the school district respond to possible exposure to COVID-19?

In the event of a possible COVID-19 exposure, schools will provide notification to staff or students' families if a staff member or student becomes ill with COVID-19 at home or at school **when directed to do so by public health.** http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf (p.5) School Districts do not have the authority to act in these circumstances without the direction of public health officials.

What will happen if there is an outbreak or increase in cases in the community?

The five stage [BC K-12 Education Restart Plan](#) allows for the transition between stages according to the status of the pandemic in BC, and we are currently directed by the Province to plan for Stage 2. We will adjust instruction according to direction from the Provincial Health Officer, and our current plans provide for the transition to other stages in the Restart Plan.

How can schools make sure that small children can observe rules such as physical distance?

Schools have done and will continue to do excellent work in educating children about the pandemic. Safety plans and protocols such as learning groups ensure that students will limit social interaction to groups well below the provincial thresholds for safe gatherings. As was done during Stage 3, use of common areas such as gyms and playgrounds will limit the number of students using equipment at any given time and incorporate orderly entry exit routines that include hand hygiene and physical distance.

How does the Safety Plan address ventilation?

Our Restart Plan includes increasing filtration and increasing the amount of fresh air exchange, as well adjusting filter changes due to the increased run time of ventilation equipment. Staff reviewed and evaluated all school ventilation systems and they are operating as designed. We considered the option of High Efficiency Particulate Arrestance (HEPA) filters, but they are not feasible because they would require excessive upgrades and modifications to our existing mechanical systems. We operate under an approved plan that has been reviewed and approved by the Interior Health Authority, the Provincial Health Officer, and the Ministry of Education.

In addition to physical distancing and adjusting traffic flows through markings and scheduling, we direct staff to take students outside more often. Our cleaning protocol updates also include new cleaning procedures such as the use of electrostatic sprayers throughout the district that will ensure efficient daily cleaning of all learning spaces.

I've heard that the novel coronavirus is airborne – does your safety plan address this?

Our safety procedures reflect the most current, evidence-based information from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministry of Health, which indicates that droplet and contact transmission are the primary transmission routes for COVID-19. All safety protocols to mitigate the spread of viral infection for the novel coronavirus are in place.

If one person in the family gets sick, is the entire family required to isolate for two weeks? How will my student stay on track if they must stay home due to illness?

Isolation will be required according to diagnoses and direction from doctors and the Provincial Health Officer. As with the requirement to stay home for any contagious illness, students will receive appropriate work and accommodation for their medical situation on a case by case basis. We are hiring extra staff to support absences of a week or more.

Can you really make sure that students can physically distance?

At the direction of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control, plans for learning groups in BC schools ensure appropriate and viable safety measures for students of all ages, including staggered times in common areas, appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and reducing the number of students in close proximity to each other. In our district, most learning groups will be well below the Provincial thresholds and students will remain with their own class.

How will you know if a student has COVID-19, influenza, allergies, or common colds?

Safety protocols include responsibilities for staff and families to self-assess and consult with medical professionals to ensure that they do not attend school when sick. When in doubt, staying home is the best option. School staff are not responsible to differentiate or diagnose and will follow safety protocols to isolate and send home any person who develops or shows symptoms consistent with viral illness while at school. The school district is responsible for safe, clean spaces and strict safety protocols in schools, but it is the responsibility of individuals to consult medical professionals for a diagnosis and take appropriate steps to protect those around them.

General Questions

What happens on the first day of school? Where do I drop-off my child?

Your school principal will be in touch with you to make sure you understand drop-off times, entry points, and pick-up times for your student(s). You will also receive information to help you understand the basic protocols for processes like riding the bus and arriving at school. Students will spend their first days at school learning about new safety practices and habits so that they are ready to learn.

What if I sign up for eSchoolBC (Distributed Learning Program) or homeschooling and then change my mind? What if I decide during the school year to switch to another option?

As the Provincial Health Office has stated that it is safe to return to classrooms under the Stage 2 model, we recommend that students who are able join their classmates for all the benefits of in-class instruction.

For the 2020-21 school year, students with approved medical conditions and their siblings in the same household that attend the Central Okanagan Public School eSchoolBC remote learning may resume in person instruction at their school at any point in the year. For the 2020-21 school year, students that enroll in the Central Okanagan Public School eSchoolBC remote learning at their school will retain their enrolment at their school if they resume in-person instruction at their school prior to November 13, 2020. After this date, students continue for the remainder of the year in the District's remote learning program.

As with any school year, families may elect to withdraw from their current school and register for homeschooling at any time, although there are very few families within our district who choose to do so.

Can parents pick up kids for lunch or otherwise visit the school?

For everyone's health and safety, we limit visitors to any school. Those who do visit must have an appointment or invitation from school administrators and adhere to hygiene protocols. Students should come to school with all the lunch, snacks, and supplies they will need for the day, and remember not to share these items.

What will happen with school sports?

Currently, inter-school sports remain suspended. We expect further updates from BC School Sports once the school year is underway.

