

# School Re-Entry Plans

Dear NP Parents,

Yesterday afternoon Minister LaGrange released guidance documents for 2020-21 School Re-Entry. The approach taken in the creation of these documents continues to emphasize the following four principles:

- The safety of children, students and staff comes first.
- Children and student learning will continue.
- Provincial funding is still flowing to schools.
- School authorities have flexibility to do what is best for their community.

It is also important to note that the plan comes with a clear provision, stated at the front of the re-entry plan document:

***Implementation of this School Re-Entry Plan is subject to change and direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. It is based on the best available information and conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan will evolve and be adjusted when information becomes available as the status of the COVID-19 pandemic changes. Alberta Education will continue to engage with our education partners as part of this important process.***

We know that things can change very quickly and are planning for multiple scenarios. We will share those plans in greater detail once we have received definitive direction on August 1<sup>st</sup>.

I appreciate the collaborative approach that both the Minister's office and Alberta Education have taken in the development of these guidance documents. This consultation has included opportunities for me to connect with the Deputy Minister and the Chief of Staff via zoom, and for me to submit input on previous draft re-entry plans.

Many of you likely watched the education minister's press conference yesterday or have now heard about some details regarding the re-entry options. There are 3 options. Option 3 of course is a continuation of the online at home learning program. Nobody wants that to continue and we are hopeful that we will see either option 1 or 2 take place in the fall. We are well-positioned as a small school to deliver on either option 1 or 2, which in essence would see all of us back to school and in the classroom. We will also be ready should we have to quickly resort back to option 3, but will ensure we enhance the programming we have already put in place.

The government press release provides the following helpful summary of options 1 & 2 (as mentioned above, we will provide detailed guidelines and expectations in August, once plans have been solidified):

**Public health guidance for schools**

Return to in-school class learning may vary across the province and is dependent on the number of COVID-19 cases in the local area. School boards should develop their own COVID-19 plans under the applicable scenario and health guidelines prior to reopening.

**Measures to reduce the risk – scenario 1 (in school classes resume - near normal operations with health measures)**

**Cleaning**

- enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, including daily cleaning for all areas of the school, washrooms and high-touch surface cleaned several times a day or more as needed
- regularly scheduled deep cleaning when students are not present

**Student/staff hygiene and illness**

- routine screening for all staff and students
- strict stay-at-home policy for any students or staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- hand hygiene expectations when entering and exiting the school and classrooms, before and after eating
- continual reminders of the importance of respiratory etiquette (e.g. cover coughs and sneezes, avoid touching the face and disposal of used tissues promptly, followed by hand hygiene)
- students who develop symptoms at school may be asked to wear a mask and isolate in a separate room until a parent arrives for pickup. If a separate room is not available, the student must be kept at least two metres away from other individuals

**Physical distancing and grouping**

- when possible, practice some physical distancing as a good precaution to prevent the spread of disease
- in classrooms, buses and during activities when physical distancing may not be possible, extra emphasis is put on other hygiene practices
- reorganization of rooms to allow for more physical space
- cohorting of students by class where possible
- guiding foot traffic flow through entrances and halls by using markers on the floor or pylons/barriers
- avoiding large gatherings such as assemblies

**Masks**

- staff and students will not be mandated to wear masks
- masks may be considered in circumstances where there is prolonged close contact (greater than 15 minutes) and distance of two metres cannot be maintained
- masking is generally not recommended for younger students

**Shared items**

- a no sharing policy - all students should have their own supplies
- where sharing of equipment is required, the equipment should be cleaned between uses

**Cases of COVID-19 in a school**

- *the zone medical officer of health will work with school authorities on the rapid identification of cases through easily accessible testing, rapid close contact identification, and isolation measures when needed*
- *the zone medical officer of health will also work with school authorities to provide follow-up recommendations and messaging for staff, parents and students*
- *Alberta Health Services may request the school to close in-person classes to allow the public health investigation to take place*
- *each school authority will support students and staff to learn or work at home if they are required to self-isolate*

**Measures to reduce the risk – scenario 2 (In-school classes partially resume with additional health measures)**

*The same considerations as scenario 1, with the following differences:*

- *stricter health measures, which includes physical distancing of 2 metres and a recommended maximum of 15 people in a classroom*
- *students will attend school less regularly as school authorities will need to adjust their class schedule and configuration to meet the physical distancing requirement*

**Non-COVID operational highlights**

- *any summer programming will follow scenario 2 of the re-entry plan and the associated public health measures*
- *August diploma exams will proceed for students taking diploma courses this summer*
- *for the 2020-21 school year, diploma exams will be held if the first or second scenarios are in place. In scenario 3, exams may be cancelled.*
- *provincial achievement tests (PATs) for grades 6 and 9 can be held in the first and second scenarios, but will be optional for school authorities to participate*
- *if scenario 3 is in place at the beginning of the school year, the January PATs will be cancelled, May/June PATs may be cancelled based on the duration of at home learning*
- *school authorities can, as deemed appropriate at the local level, reduce time spent teaching non-core subjects to allow for additional instruction time on core subjects*
- *school authorities must enable the full participation and inclusion of students with disabilities under each scenario and address any learning gaps from the 2019/20 school year*
- *mental health supports should be in place for students and staff*

If you have any questions at all, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,  
Brent