

WELCOME BACK

A GUIDE FOR PEC AND STAFF

SEPT 2021



Back to School 2021

- ▶ K-12 students can safely participate in full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools.
- ▶ Children continue to be at low risk for serious outcomes from COVID-19, including variants of concern detected in BC. (BCCDC)



Important Considerations

- ▶ Goal - Maintain safe and loving Christ-centred learning environment
- ▶ Communicable disease plan focussing on reducing the risk of school transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases
- ▶ Positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventative practices and will utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning activities

Vaccines

- ▶ Most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities.
- ▶ Children under 12 who are not currently eligible to be vaccinated continue to be less likely to get and spread COVID-19 and have a low risk of serious outcomes if they do get COVID-19.
- ▶ Schools are expected to share evidence-based information.
- ▶ With the increasing proportion of people 12 and over being fully vaccinated and effective communicable disease measures continuing to be in place, exposures are unlikely to lead to further transmission.

Physical Distancing

Effort will focus on helping create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach.

- ▶ Students and staff will be reminded to respect others personal space.
- ▶ Available space to spread people out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, will be used where possible.

Physical Distancing Strategies

- ▶ Procedures that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times;
- ▶ Focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather or crowd;
- ▶ 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;
- ▶ Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.

Space Arrangement

Schools are permitted to return to classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

All available space will be used.

In indoor spaces, people should have enough room to carry out the intended activity without involuntarily physical contact with another person.

School Gatherings and Events

- ▶ School gatherings and events can occur in line with local and provincial health orders and recommendations.
- ▶ Space will be used to spread people out as much as possible.
- ▶ There will be a gradual transition to larger gatherings.



Visitor Access



- ▶ Visitors will be encouraged to make appointments.
- ▶ Visitor access may be restricted by local or provincial public health orders or recommendations.
- ▶ Information on communicable disease protocols and requirements for visitors will be posted
- ▶ A sign in/sign out process is in place for all visitors.
- ▶ All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside.
- ▶ Visitor access is limited to those areas required for the purpose of the visit and parents/caregivers should be encouraged to drop-off/pick-up students outside of the school.
- ▶ Everyone should respect others' personal space while on school grounds, including outside.

Visitor Access – After School Hours

Community use of facilities is allowed.

- ▶ Use must occur in line with those activities permitted as per public health recommendations and Orders including:
 - ▶ Diligent hand hygiene;
 - ▶ Respiratory etiquette;
 - ▶ Ensuring participants stay home if they are feeling ill.
- ▶ Building access is limited to only those areas required for the purpose of the activity.
- ▶ Community users are responsible for collecting names and contact information of participants.

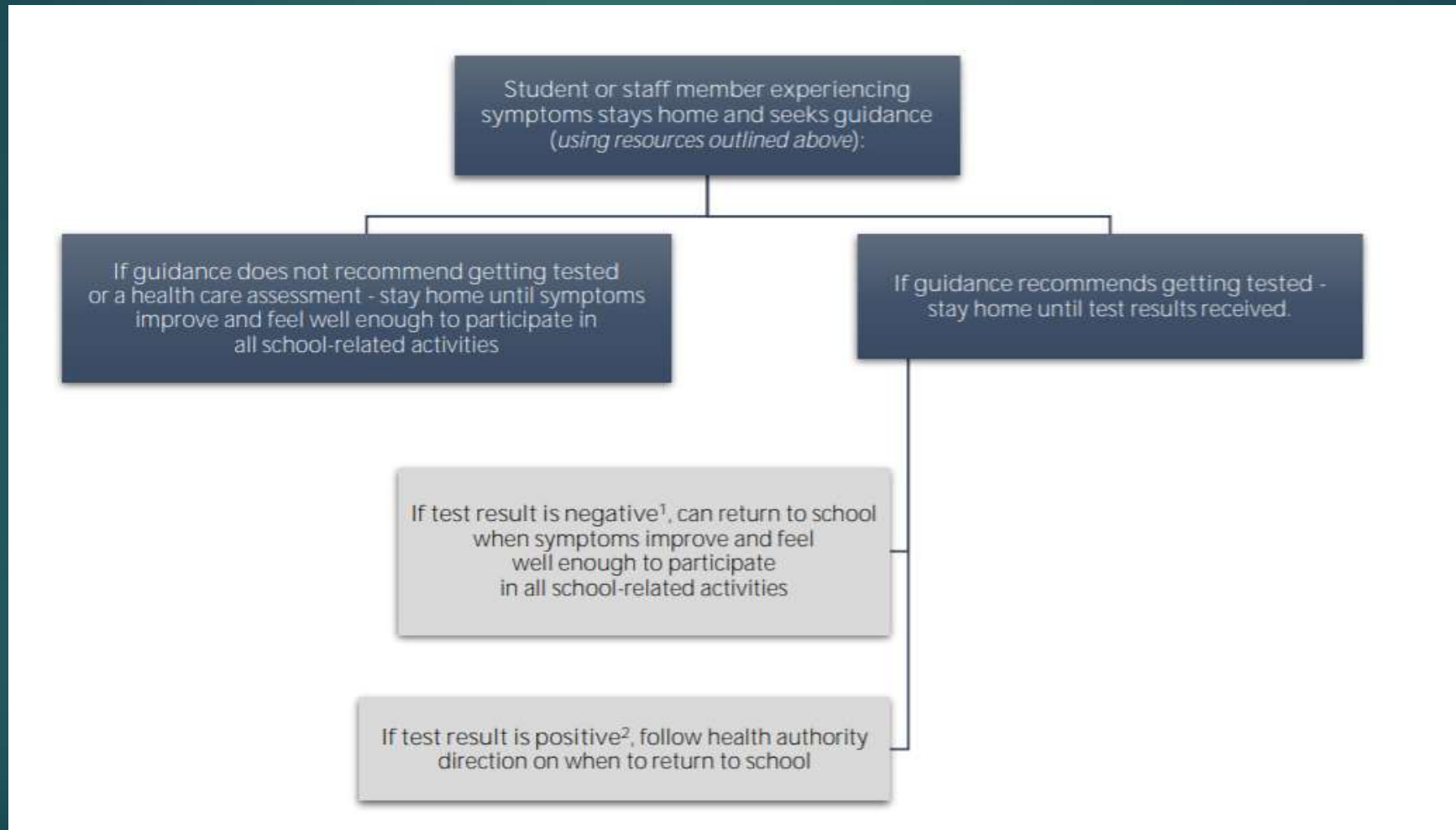
Daily Screening Protocol

- ▶ Parents/caregivers will be asked to monitor their children daily for symptoms and not to send them to school if they are sick.
- ▶ Staff and other adults should complete a daily health check prior to entering the school.
- ▶ If a student, staff or other adult is sick, they must not enter the school.

Symptomatic Person Protocol

1. Move the person away from others
2. Contact the student's parent to pick them up.
3. If the ill person requires assistance, where possible, maintain a 2-metre distance.
4. Provide the person with a mask or tissues if they are exhibiting respiratory symptoms. Masks should not be worn if the person has gastrointestinal symptoms. Throw away used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene.
5. Avoid touching the person's body fluids. If you do, practice hand hygiene.
6. Practice hand hygiene after the person has left.
7. Clean and disinfect the surfaces in spaces where the person's body fluids may have been in contact while they were ill.

Symptoms, Testing & Return to School



Symptoms, Testing & Return to School

- ▶ Guidance regarding symptoms: K-12 Health Check app, BCCDC online Self-Assessment Tool, 8-1-1 or health care provider.
- ▶ Symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition = can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal.
- ▶ May still attend school if a member of their household develops new symptoms of illness, provided the student/staff has no symptoms themselves
- ▶ Students or staff must stay home if they are required to self-isolate.



School Exposures and Notifications

Potential exposure at a school is identified - public health will work with the school to understand who may have been exposed and determine what actions should be taken.

Public health considers vaccination status when investigating school exposures.

Public health will only disclose a confirmed case of a communicable disease if the person was infectious when they attended school.

Public health continues to consider practices for general exposure notifications.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

- ▶ Surface that is visibly dirty will be cleaned and disinfected.
- ▶ Garbage containers emptied daily.
- ▶ BCCDC Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings guidance will be followed.
- ▶ Students and staff will wash hands before and after handling shared objects.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

- ▶ Items and surfaces that children have placed in their mouths or that have been in contact with bodily fluids will 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.
- ▶ There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper-based products. Laminated or glossy paper-based products also fine for use.

Frequently Touched Surfaces

- ▶ Cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces will occur at least once in a 24-hour period.
- ▶ Limiting access to water fountains is no longer recommended. Hand hygiene should be practiced before and after use.
- ▶ Frequently-touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often or at all can be used, if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Bodily Fluids Protocol

- ▶ 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 for blood and bodily fluids.
- ▶ Laundry should be placed in plastic bag.

Ventilation

In order to enhance school ventilation, the following will be considered:

- ▶ moving activities outdoors when possible;
- ▶ ensuring that the ventilation system operates properly;
- ▶ increasing air exchanges by adjusting the HVAC system;
- ▶ opening windows when possible and if weather permits.

Air Circulation

- ▶ When using air conditioners and fans in ventilated spaces, air should be moved from high places to lower places.
- ▶ Avoid horizontal cross breezes.
- ▶ Use of portable air conditioners and fans in unventilated spaces with doors and windows closed should be avoided, except when necessary during high or excessive heat events.

Strategies to ensure diligent hand hygiene

- ▶ Hand washing stations will be placed at various locations.
- ▶ Posters will be displayed to promote the importance of regular hand washing.
- ▶ Additional hand hygiene opportunities will be incorporated into the daily schedule.
- ▶ Hand washing supplies will be well stocked.
- ▶ 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.



When Student Should Perform Hand Hygiene:

- When they arrive at school.
- Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch).
- Before and after eating and drinking (excluding drinks kept at a student's desk or locker).
- Before and after using an indoor learning space used by multiple classes with shared equipment.
- After using the toilet.
- After sneezing or coughing into hands.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty.

When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene:

- When they arrive at school.
- Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch).
- Before and after eating and drinking.
- Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.
- Before and after giving medication to a student or self.
- After using the toilet.
- After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).
- After cleaning tasks.
- After removing gloves.
- After handling garbage.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty.

Respiratory Etiquette

Staff will teach and reinforce respiratory etiquette amongst students.

- ▶ Cough or sneeze into their elbow sleeve or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- ▶ Refrain from touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- ▶ Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, or unwashed utensils



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ▶ All K-12 staff and all students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear a mask indoors in schools and on school buses.
- ▶ Students in Grades K to 3 are encouraged to wear a mask indoors in schools and on school buses - mask wearing remains a personal or family choice for these students, and their choices must be respected.
- ▶ The school office will have non-medical masks available for staff and students, including anyone who becomes ill while at school.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- ▶ The use of masks should not reduce or replace other more effective infection prevention and exposure control measures in schools.
- ▶ All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside the school.
- ▶ Students and staff should be supported to know how to properly put on, wear, take off and store non-medical masks. (BCCDC and Government of Canada website).
- ▶ Schools must not require a health-care provider note to confirm if staff, students or visitors cannot wear a mask.
- ▶ No student should be prevented from fully participating at school if they do not wear a mask.

Exceptions for Mask Requirements

Mask Requirements do not apply to staff, students and visitors in the following circumstances:

- ▶ A person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioural reasons;
- ▶ A person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- ▶ If the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- ▶ If the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument, engaging in high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- ▶ If a person is eating or drinking;
- ▶ If a person is behind a barrier; or
- ▶ While providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements is important.

Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities

- ▶ When staff are working with a student indoors, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, staff are required to wear a non-medical mask.
- ▶ When working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, options include having the staff member wear a mask with a transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth.
- ▶ Students in Grades 4 to 12 are also required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering when receiving services indoors and a barrier is not present.
- ▶ For students in Grades K to 3, the student or parent should determine whether or not the student should also be wearing any PPE when receiving services in close physical proximity.

Personal Items

- ▶ Staff and students can continue to bring personal items to school but should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth.
- ▶ Strategies will be implemented to manage the flow of students around coat hooks.
- ▶ Personal items should be labelled with student's name to discourage accidental sharing. Sweaters/vests must be kept in bags when not being worn.
- ▶ Distribution of homemade food items will not be permitted at this time (e.g. birthday treats, bake sale items).

Music

- ▶ Masks can be temporarily removed while engaging in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument), but must be worn while singing.
- ▶ Shared equipment will be cleaned and disinfected as per Cleaning and Disinfecting guidelines and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after music equipment use.
- ▶ Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g. instrument mouth pieces) should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

PE & Sports

- ▶ Students and staff will be spread out within available space, and outdoor activities will be encouraged, as much as possible.
- ▶ Staff and students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear masks during PHE classes when they are indoors & a barrier is not present.
- ▶ Students are not required to wear masks during high-intensity physical activities; encouraged to move high-intensity physical activities outdoors whenever possible.
- ▶ Students will be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after using frequently touched pieces of equipment, as well as proper respiratory etiquette.
- ▶ Equipment that touches the mouth should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

PE & Sports

Why are masks not required during high intensity physical activity?

During high intensity physical activity, respiration rates are increased (resulting in a wet mask) and the wearer is more likely to touch their face and adjust the mask frequently.

These factors lessen the protective value a mask may offer. In addition, a wet mask is more difficult to breathe through; those wearing masks during high intensity activities should change them as soon as they become wet.



Playgrounds

- ▶ Measures taken when using playgrounds:
 - ▶ Ensure appropriate hand hygiene practices before and after outdoor play;
 - ▶ Attempt to minimize unintentional physical contact between students;
 - ▶ Sand and water can be used for play if children wash their hands before and after play.

Field Trips

- ▶ When planning field trips, staff will follow existing policies and procedures as well as the COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. :
 - ▶ For transportation, guidance in the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings document will be followed.
 - ▶ Volunteers providing supervision will be trained in and strictly adhere to required health and safety guidelines.
 - ▶ Trips will align with public health recommendations/Orders.
 - ▶ Guidance provided for overnight camps from BCCDC and the BC Camps Association will be considered.

Carpooling

Guidance regarding carpooling arrangements (personal or school-related):

- ▶ • Spread out vehicle occupants as much as possible.
- ▶ • Travel with the same people whenever possible.
- ▶ • Open windows when the weather allows.
- ▶ • Clean hands before and after trips.
- ▶ • Clean frequently touched surfaces regularly.

For carpooling related to school activities, students, staff and other adults must follow the mask requirements.



Extracurricular Activities



Intra- and inter-school extracurricular activities and special interest clubs can occur in alignment with the guidelines in the K-12 Guidelines and requirements of relevant local, regional and provincial public health recommendations and Orders for community gatherings and events.

Lunchtime/Catered Lunch

- ▶ Schools should continue to emphasize that food and beverages should not be shared.
- ▶ School meal programs should follow regular operating practices.
- ▶ Food Safety Legislation and the Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools continue to apply as relevant.

Fundraisers

Fundraisers will be implemented in line with the guidelines outlined in the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings document. If the fundraisers involve the sale of food items, they should also align with the Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools.

Supporting Children

- ▶ Staff will maximize children's sense of safety and assist them in managing their emotions.
- ▶ Staff will continuously explain and clarify to children "next steps" and measures being taken to ensure their safety and wellness.
- ▶ The physical environment will be welcoming and safe.
- ▶ Staff will be aware of supports available for children.

MY CHECK LIST FOR EVERY CLASS THIS YEAR

1. Keep them safe
2. Lower their anxiety
about the current situation
3. Make them laugh
4. Make them feel loved
5. Teach them something

All in that order



Continuity of Supports

- ▶ Families will be made aware of and have access to resources that support social and emotional well-being and mental health.
- ▶ Teachers will be supported in recognizing and responding to signs of trauma.
- ▶ OLA staff will use a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children,
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/child-teen-mental-health/trauma-informed_practice_guide.pdf.
- ▶ Educators will consider how to build students' awareness and application of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

Communication & Training/Orientation

- ▶ OLA will clearly and consistently communicate guidelines from the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), resources available for information on COVID-19 including infection prevention and exposure control measures.
- ▶ As per WorkSafeBC guidelines, OLA will ensure they have active Site Committees and Joint Health and Safety Committees that meet regularly.
- ▶ As recommended by WorkSafeBC, staff will be trained 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.
 - ▶ Changes made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to communicable disease.

COVID-19 in BC

- ▶ BC currently has variable community prevalence of COVID-19. Communities with high levels of transmission are typically those with lower vaccination rates.
- ▶ BC has a highly vaccinated population, with the majority of those aged 12 and older having received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. As of August 22nd, 83% of eligible people 12 and older in B.C. had received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 75% had received their second dose.
- ▶ Four COVID-19 Variants of Concern have been detected in BC: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. Currently, Delta is the most common.

COVID-19 and Schools



Based on national and international evidence collected between January - July 2021:

- ▶ There is little high-quality evidence to suggest that having schools open meaningfully contributes to community transmission.
- ▶ The likelihood of a person attending school while infectious with COVID-19 reflects local community prevalence.
- ▶ The consistent implementation of prevention measures is critically important to limiting the spread of COVID-19.
- ▶ Widespread asymptomatic transmission is not commonly occurring within schools.
- ▶ Evidence continues to be gathered about the impact of staff and student vaccinations on mitigating risk of COVID-19 transmission at school.

During the 2020-21 school year in BC:

- ▶ Most cases of COVID-19 among students and staff were acquired outside of school, in their community or household.
- ▶ In Fraser Health from January 1 – March 7, 2021, out of 2049 cases among students (83%) and staff (17%), 267 cases (13% of student and staff cases) were likely acquired in school.
- ▶ Regional school medical officers noted that these results were similar to those seen in all health authority regions, based on case reviews.
- ▶ School staff do not seem to be at any greater risk of getting COVID-19 at work compared to other workplaces that include people.

COVID-19 and Children

- ▶ Most children are not at high risk for COVID-19.
- ▶ COVID-19 continues to have a relatively low infection rate among school-aged children (5-18).
 - ▶ Research is underway to understand the impact of the Delta variant on children, including differences in how it spreads and if there is increased risk of more severe illness in children who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated.
- ▶ Various surveys, including the COVID-19 SPEAK survey from BCCDC have reported that school-aged children have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, including worsening wellbeing, more child stress, less connection with friends, less engagement in extracurricular activities and learning impacts.

Resources

- ▶ Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Setting (Updated August 24/21)
- ▶ WorkSafeBC K-12 Education Protocols
- ▶ BC's K-12 Education Recovery Plan (Updated August 24/21)
- ▶ BCCDC Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools (Updated August 24/21)
- ▶ BCCDC – Communicable Disease Prevention Guide for Employers (June 2021)
- ▶ COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff Management of Illness and Exposures at School (Updated Aug.24/21)