



Parkland School Division COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

This is a working document and will be updated frequently as pandemic conditions or public health orders change.

What if my child has symptoms related to allergies or a pre-existing condition?

The student should be tested at least once before returning to school and have a negative COVID-19 test result. These symptoms would be their baseline health status. As long as the cough or runny nose is always the same and does not get worse, the student can attend school. You will need to inform the school of your child's pre-existing condition.

If one of my children is being tested for COVID, do all of my children have to self-isolate?

Not necessarily. If you check yes on the PSD Self Screening Questionnaire, it does not automatically mean you require a COVID test or need to self-isolate. If you check yes, you are required to complete the Alberta Health Services (AHS) COVID-19 Self-Assessment (found [here](#)). Currently, the AHS guidelines do not require family members to self-isolate or get a COVID test unless a family member has tested positive. If in doubt, we recommend calling 811.

How will social distancing be handled on buses?

The Government of Alberta return to school plan recognizes that physical distancing is not possible in some situations, such as on buses. To help mitigate the lack of physical distancing, students will be assigned seats and bus drivers are required to keep records of seating plans. This arrangement allows AHS to perform contact tracing as necessary, identifying students who came into close contact with other students. Essentially, the students within 2 metres of each other are considered a cohort.

The seating plan will be based on the order of pick up in the mornings: the first students to board the bus will be seated at its rear, the next students will be seated in the next furthest seat, and this seating arrangement will continue forward to enable students to avoid walking past each other regardless of their grade or age. This seating plan will keep family members together in their cohort as well.

As physical distancing is not possible on a school bus, students in Grades 4-12 will be required to wear masks on buses. Students in Grades K-3 are encouraged to follow this practice as well.

- [Parkland School Division COVID-19 Transportation Measures](#)
- [Changes at Transfer Sites - VIDEO](#)

How will transferring between educational options in the Return-To-School Re-Entry Plan be supported throughout the school year?

We anticipate a number of situations where families may need to make decisions in the best interest of their children which may mean switching educational programs.

If families select Option 2 - Teacher supported At-Home Learning (Through Your Designated School), there will be a number of predetermined dates where families can elect to return to in-school classes (Option 1). This will allow for planning for staffing, resources and instructional planning. We anticipate having a number of dates set throughout the year.

If families select Option 1 - Return to In-School Classes and then want to move to either option 2 or 3, we would look at making that move as required.

Those students who choose Option 2 and wish to re-enter the classroom, may do so on the following dates:

- Monday, October 5
- Monday, November 16
- Monday, January 4
- Tuesday, February 16
- Wednesday, April 7

High school students may change from Option 2 to Option 1 at the term breaks during the quarter term school year:

- Monday, August 31
- Monday, November 16
- Monday, February 1
- Thursday, April 22

How is home education different from Virtual learning?

The primary difference between Virtual Learning and Home Education is that Home Education is parent-led with facilitator support while Virtual Learning is teacher-led with parent support. Also, students may work in multi-graded groupings in virtual learning environments while home education students work independently. In Virtual Learning, learning delivery is primarily online, so participating families would need to provide their own Internet access, as well as one dedicated device with a webcam per student. In Home Education, resources are parent-created or purchased, and sometimes supplemented with ADLC materials. Attendance in Google Meets will also be tracked in Virtual Learning.

Who decides on the cohorts and how big can a cohort be?

As indicated in Alberta Education's Guidance for School Re-entry, the size of a cohort will depend on the physical space of the classroom or learning setting. Cohorting will decrease the number of close contacts a case of COVID-19 would have in a school and assist public health officials in their efforts to trace contacts and contain an outbreak. School administrators will work with their instructional staff to determine cohorts.

What about volunteering at school?

There should be no non-essential visitors allowed into the school. Parents/guardians can attend the school if they are required as part of the educational programming needs of the school and a record of all visitors will be kept to facilitate contact tracing if necessary. Visitors will be asked to complete PSD's screening questionnaire. If a service provider or volunteer answers YES to any of the questions, the individual will not be admitted to the school.

Can schools, parent groups etc. still provide hot lunches?

Under the present guidelines, the use of volunteers to prepare hot lunches, snacks etc. should be limited or eliminated during re-entry. If volunteers are required, all applicable industry specific and/or Alberta Health Services [procedures](#) regarding safe preparation must be followed. Any 'grab-and-go' or snack food items should be pre-packaged and distributed in a manner that limits touching. (For instance, items could be laid out by type/flavour to prevent multiple students searching through looking for a favourite flavour of granola bar.)

What happens when someone tests positive?

Any school authority/school connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 will be contacted by Alberta Health Services (AHS) and may be required to close in-person classes to allow the public health investigation to take place. The decision to send a cohort/class home or to close a school will be made in consultation with the local Medical Officer of Health.

- [PSD Responding to Illness Protocol](#)
- [Resource for COVID-19 in K-12 Schools \(Guidance for before, during and after an outbreak\)](#)

Contact tracing will be performed by Alberta Health Services with the school division assisting as necessary.

If my child is sent home from school because they are presenting any symptoms of illness, do they have to self-isolate for the full 10 days before they are allowed to return to school?

If you have any these symptoms you are legally required to isolate for at least 10 days from the start of your symptoms or until they resolve, whichever is longer:

- Fever
- Cough (new cough or worsening chronic cough)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (new or worsening)
- Runny nose
- Sore throat

If you have any of these other symptoms, stay home and minimize your contact with others until your symptoms resolve:

- Chills
- Painful swallowing
- Stuffy nose
- Headache
- Muscle or joint aches
- Feeling unwell, fatigue or severe exhaustion
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite)
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye

A student showing COVID-19 symptoms who has allergies or other pre-existing medical conditions that cause similar symptoms should get at least one negative COVID-19 test result before returning to school.

These symptoms would be their baseline health status. The student can attend school as long as they stay the same. Talk to your school about your child's pre-existing medical conditions so the school may keep a confidential record of these conditions.

How long will student/parent/staff members be required to self-isolate after having symptoms?

You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days, or until symptoms resolve whichever takes longer, if you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing health condition or if you test positive for COVID-19.

If you tested negative and have no known exposure to the virus, stay home until your symptoms resolve. If you tested negative and have had an exposure to the virus, you are legally required to quarantine for 14 days from the exposure date.

Who has to wear a mask, where, and why?

Mask use for all Alberta Grade 4 to 12 students, and all school staff, will be mandatory across Alberta when school returns for the 2020-21 year. Masks will be required whenever and wherever students are instructed to by a school staff member. The provincial requirements do not require mask to be worn in class, once seated. However, there may be situations within classrooms where masks may be needed based on the activity – as instructed by the teacher. COVID-19 can be spread by infected individuals who have not yet, or who may never develop symptoms. Masks, including homemade cloth masks or non-medical face masks, are another way to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in areas where physical distancing (2 metres distance between individuals) may be challenging or not possible.

- [Parkland School Division Mask Protocol](#).

What happens with classes like music, choir, band and drama?

PSD schools will continue to offer programs like music, choir, band. Schools that offer options like music or drama where singing is involved or playing of woodwind or brass instruments may have to modify the program (such as focusing on theory at the beginning of the year) and implement additional safety protocols. Schools will also follow the Alberta Health Services [Guidance for Live Music, Dance and Theatre](#) as outlined in the Alberta Biz Connect relaunch Guidance documents.

Can a school administrator or teacher decide to make students wear a mask at all times in class?

No. However, if a staff member has a request for a medical accommodation that may include a request that all students wear masks, that request would be considered through PSD's Human Resources department. While this is a step we MAY take, medical documentation would be needed to support this accommodation. There are other steps we could take with staff members including PPE, alternate assignment etc.

If there is a teaching space/classroom where the teacher is always within 2 meters of students (i.e. there is not 2 meters from the first row of desks to the front of the room where the teacher will be standing) can I or the teacher require the students to wear a mask at all times?

This is dependent upon the activity being conducted in the classroom. For example, if the students are seated, working on a worksheet, typing, reading etc. then it would not be reasonable for a teacher to require all students to wear a mask at all times. If the activity requires the teacher to lecture within close proximity to students, (facing them) it could be reasonable for those students close to the staff member (and the staff member) to wear a mask. Teachers will be asked to consider other alternatives before moving to mandatory masks (i.e. a Plexiglas sneeze barrier, instructional design, alternative teaching space, etc.). All the guidelines for Scenario 1 since they were first released have stated:

- *Physical distancing (2 metre spacing) is a useful public health measure to help prevent the spread of disease. Increasing the space between persons decreases the risk of transmission. Where 2 metres is not possible between desks, the greatest possible spacing is recommended.*
 - *If 2 metres cannot be arranged between desks/tables, students should be arranged so they are not facing each other (e.g. arranged in rows rather than in small groups of 4 or a semi-circle). This way, if a student coughs or sneezes, they are not likely to cough or sneeze directly on the face of another student.*
- *In situations where physical distancing is not possible (e.g., busses, classrooms and some sporting activities), extra emphasis on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, not participating when sick and cleaning and disinfecting on a regular basis before and after activities is strongly recommended.*
- *It is still recommended to maintain physical distancing within a cohort whenever possible to minimize the risk for disease transmission (i.e., spacing between desks).*

➤ [Guidance for School Re-Entry - Scenario 1](#)

➤ [CMOH Order 33-2020](#)

During group work, activities that require students to move around the room (science labs, partner work, etc.) can students be required to wear masks?

Yes

If the teacher is moving around the room helping students at their desks, can the students be asked to put their masks on during this time?

Yes

If the room is arranged with students facing each other across a table, are masks required?

Yes, but **to the greatest extent possible**, teachers are to ensure students are not facing each other.

In the Event of Cases Identified in a School

Does everyone in the class need to be quarantined if there is one symptomatic child/staff/visitor/volunteer?

No, everyone in the class does not need to be quarantined. If a child/staff/visitor/volunteer has one of the core symptoms of fever, cough (new cough or worsening chronic cough), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (new or worsening), runny nose or sore throat, they must stay home and isolate for 10 days. If they have any other symptoms of illness, they should stay home until their symptoms resolve. Any individual with symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested as soon as possible, which can be arranged through the [AHS online self-assessment tool](#). Contacts of someone who IS NOT a case of COVID-19 are not required to isolate or quarantine.

Does a whole class need to be sent home if the teacher becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19?

If a teacher or staff member becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19, Alberta Health Services Public Health will work with the school community to identify close contacts and ensure that they follow the appropriate quarantine restrictions. The specific details of the case will determine who is considered to be a close contact.

How many confirmed cases in a single school will result in closure of the school?

Any one confirmed case will result in an investigation by Alberta Health Services Public Health. It is likely with a single case that exposure is limited to a single class or group. Closures of specific classes, cohorts or schools may occur dependent on the outcome of an investigation. Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.

What does the school administration do if a staff member or parent/guardian of a student/child calls the school to say they/the student or child are COVID-19 positive and the school has not been previously notified by AHS?

Alberta Health Services (AHS) receives all of the case notifications directly from the lab. If there is confirmed case in a school, the school will be contacted by AHS. It is not necessary to contact AHS to confirm. The appropriate individuals and schools will be notified. Parents and staff with general inquiries can be directed to call Health Link at 811 or can visit the Alberta Health Services website: albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6410.aspx