

# School re-entry

## A message from the Superintendent of Schools

Dear parents, guardians and families,

With the last day of school behind us, and the anticipation of a beautiful summer ahead, I wanted to let you know how we are preparing for the 2020–2021 school year.

Thank you again for all of the [feedback you provided](#) in May regarding how you are feeling about returning to school in September. This information has been helpful as we further develop our plans for the 2020–2021 school year.

Our plans are being built around Alberta Education's [2020–2021 School Re-entry Plan](#) and under the advice and direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. The provincial plan has three possible scenarios:

- **Scenario 1:** In-school classes resume (near normal with health measures)
- **Scenario 2:** In-school classes partially resume (with additional health measures)
- **Scenario 3:** At-home learning continues (in-school classes are suspended/cancelled)

As we plan for the school year during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are building plans to be ready to pivot quickly between scenarios if needed. The decision to move between scenarios for a class of students, a school or all schools will be made by health officials in consultation with Edmonton Public Schools.

The province has indicated it hopes to return students to school under scenario 1 and will make a final decision by August 1. No matter what scenario we are under, we know that some things will be different than they were before COVID-19.

I know that you may still have many questions about next year. In mid-August, school principals will post their COVID-19 School Re-entry Plan on SchoolZone. This plan will provide you with detailed information about how your child's school will be safely ready to go in September.

I wish you all a safe, healthy and restful summer and I look forward to connecting with you again in August.



Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

*The following information will help you better understand how we are planning for a safe return to the classroom.*

## Family choice

In mid-August, schools will communicate with families about the provincial announcement. If the province announces schools will be returning to scenario 1 or 2, every family will be asked to indicate if they will be returning their children to face-to-face instruction in school or if they will be choosing at-home learning for their child.

If the province announces schools will be returning under scenario 3, all students will be learning from home.

## Provincial safety strategies

The provincial re-entry plan uses a number of strategies that work together to support our schools to be as safe as possible. These strategies include illness protocols, hand washing and sanitizing, physical distancing, cleaning standards, personal protective equipment (PPE) and cohorts.

## Illness protocols

Before coming to school each day, all staff and students must review the [provincial COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire](#) to make sure they are healthy. All visitors to the school will also complete the screening before entering the school. People with symptoms of COVID-19 or experiencing illness will not be allowed to enter the school. All schools will have [posters](#) on their doors with this directive.

If a student or staff member falls ill during the school day, they will not be able to remain at school. Students will be removed from the class and taken to another area of the school, where they will be supervised until their parent/guardian comes and picks them up from school.

## **Hand washing and sanitizing**

Everyone entering the school will be required to use hand sanitizer as they come in the building. Students and staff will need to follow proper hand hygiene throughout the day, including each time they enter and exit the school as well as before entering a classroom. Schools will have hand sanitizer placed throughout the school to support proper hand hygiene.

To encourage proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, there will be posters throughout the school ([sample AHS poster](#)) and staff will support students with verbal reminders.

Families are encouraged to send their child to school with personal hand sanitizer as well.

## **Physical distancing**

Schools will take measures to support physical distancing in areas of the school—classrooms, hallways, washrooms and common areas. Some ways this may be achieved are:

- Removing extra furniture to make more room for students to spread out.
- Altering schedules during the school day to reduce the number of students moving through hallways.
- Posting signs and marking floors to control traffic flow.

## **Cohorts**

In the provincial re-entry plan, a cohort is defined as a *group of students and staff who remain together*. Cohorting will decrease the number of close contact staff and students have in the school. It will also assist public health officials in their efforts to trace contacts and contain a COVID-19 outbreak, should there be one in the school community.

## **Cleaning standards**

A COVID-19 cleaning standard is being developed for all schools across the Division. This standard will reflect provincial COVID-19 standards for cleaning.

Schools will also be removing any soft furnishings and area rugs that cannot be cleaned to the standards.

## **Personal protective equipment**

Right now personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required for staff and students as part of the provincial re-entry plan; however, the following should be noted:

- All students are encouraged to wear a mask while at school.
- Masks are recommended for a student who takes ill at school and for the staff member who is supervising until the student is picked up by their parent/guardian.
- PPE will be part of a plan to support students with complex needs.
- Staff may choose to wear a mask or face shield in class.
- Parents/guardians may choose to send their children to school with masks.
  - The Chief Medical Officer of Health acknowledges that masks may not be appropriate for all children. Parents and guardians know their children best.

## **Transportation**

The province's re-entry plan addresses safety requirements for transportation. We are working with our transportation service providers to ensure these requirements are in place.

## **Field trips**

Under provincial direction, field trips that require students to ride on a bus are postponed. Additional considerations include:

- International field trips for the 2020–2021 school year are suspended due to the uncertainty and risks associated with travel during COVID-19.
- National trips are currently suspended and will be reviewed at a later date.
- Overnight trips are currently suspended and will be reviewed at a later date. The opportunity to plan and participate in overnight trips will be reviewed on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

At this time virtual field trips, classroom field trips or socially distanced community walking trips are able to occur with the appropriate safety measures in place.

## **Information and supports**

For more information on the provincial return to school, please see the following provincial documents. These documents are foundational to our planning for next year:

- Provincial [2020–2021 School Re-entry Plan](#)
- [Covid-19 Guidance for School Re-entry – Scenario 1](#)
- [Covid-19 Guidance for School Re-entry – Scenario 2](#)

If you are concerned about your child's well-being this summer, there are community resources to help:

- Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
  - This toll-free helpline provides confidential and anonymous services, crisis intervention, information about mental health services and referrals to other agencies.
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
  - [kidshelpphone.ca](http://kidshelpphone.ca)
  - Text CONNECT to 686868
- Health Link: 811
- Alberta Health Services
  - [Help in Tough Times](#)
  - [Healthy Together](#)
- The federal First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line, at 1-855-242-3310, is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week; online chat at [Hope for Wellness](#).

## **Next steps**

Over the summer, we will continue to prepare for all three provincial scenarios and a safe return to school for September. In addition to safety, our Division plan prioritizes continuity of instruction and student learning in all three scenarios.