WELCOMING OUR STUDENTS BACK: RESTORING SAFE SCHOOLS

A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students: What to expect when welcomed back to school

August 13, 2020

Manitoba

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Restoring Safe Schools

Our shared goal: Kindergarten to Grade 12 students return to school with as much in-class learning as possible, while staying safe.

Our planning puts your child's health and safety first, along with teachers, staff and families within the school community. Specific safety procedures will be in place for each part of your child's school day from the moment students board the school bus to when they arrive at and leave the school.

Here's how:

1. Physical distancing will be practiced to the fullest extent possible in all parts of the school throughout the school day. This will include (but is not limited to): controlling the way students enter and exit the school at designated entrances, one-way or marked hallways, leaving space between desks and tables, staggering start and end-times for recess and lunchtime, timetabling to avoid spares, and limiting bathroom occupancy at any given time.
2. Where two metres physical distancing not possible, students will be distinct cohorts (groups), separate from other students, to reduce the risk of virus transmission throughout the school day.
3. Masks offer an added layer of protection. Students in Grade 5 and above, as well as teachers and staff, are strongly recommended to wear a non-medical mask in common areas throughout schools and when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Younger students can wear masks too.
4. Masks will be required when on school buses for all students in Grades 5 and above. Boarding and exiting the bus will be done with physical distancing and assigned seats.
5. Extra masks will be made available at all schools throughout the school year for those who do not have their own.
6. Extra handwashing and sanitizing stations will be set up and monitored to ensure students utilize them.
7. Special attention will be paid to younger students to ensure they follow all safety procedures, such as wearing a mask where required or strongly recommended and keeping their hands washed and sanitized.
8. All parents will be reminded regularly that students must stay home when sick or exhibiting any symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19.
9. Increased cleaning and disinfecting will occur around the school and throughout the day, especially high touch surfaces.
10. Any incident of COVID-19 in a school will result in immediate contact by Public Health with instructions if that student and/or cohort must self-isolate, if they need to be tested and when they can return to school.

How can parents/caregivers help keep students and schools safe?

Screen for symptoms every morning:

Check every morning. If your child has COVID-19 or flu related symptoms, keep them at home. An up–to-date list of symptoms can be found at: https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/about/index.html

Use the Self-Assessment tool to check if your child should be tested for COVID-19. Call Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 if you notice symptoms or if you need more information. Screening information will be sent home for you to reference at the start of each day.

If your child develops symptoms at school, they will be isolated and parents/caregivers will be called. Please pick your child up promptly. Make sure the school has your current contact information and a back up to call if you can't be reached.

Physically distance

Keep a safe distance during drop offs and pick ups. Avoid visits to the school.
Please email or call the teacher or school administrator when you need to talk.

To keep numbers low on buses we are asking parents and caregivers to drive their students to school instead of the school bus if possible. Talk to your school bus coordinator.

Pack a mask and encourage your child to wear it especially in common areas and when physically distancing is not possible.

Be prepared to talk about COVID-19

Provide reassurance to children and youth about their personal safety and health. Telling children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting. Reassure them about their safety and explain there are many things they can do to stay healthy.

For more information on talking to children about COVID-19, please visit:

UNICEF: https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return

World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/healthy-parenting/english-tip-6-covid-19-parenting.pdf?sfvrsn=232558c1_8

Students: What to expect?

Back to school will look different but your teachers and principals are excited to have you back. They are working hard to make sure schools are ready. Your school will help explain the changes. Here are some of the big differences:

- When arriving at school, moving in the hallways and eating lunch, teachers and staff will be helping students spread out and remember to physically distance.
- Students may be asked to stay in their own group/cohort to decrease contact with others. (A cohort is a group of students who stay together, mostly for the classroom but can be increased to 75 for recess and other activities).
- All students can wear a mask. Students in Grade 5 and above are strongly recommended to wear a non-medical mask in common areas and when physical distancing is not possible. Teachers and staff will have masks too. Masks will be available at school and on the bus if you do not have one.
- Students may be asked to sit in the same seat every day, especially on the bus.
- For high school you likely will have days you are learning at home. Follow the class schedule and talk to your teacher if you need extra support. Learning, assessment and marking will continue for all.
- As the situation is changing, your teachers, principals, parents and caregivers may provide new information throughout the school year.

Here are some ways to stay safe and healthy:

- Stay home when you are sick. Watch for symptoms.
- Tell staff, parents and caregivers when you are not feeling well.
- Wash your hands especially after coughing, blowing noses or sneezing, and when handling food.
- Do not share food or personal items.
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or tissue. Do not touch your face, particularly your eyes, nose and mouth
- Keep two metres of distance from others and avoid close contact. Think of a bike in between you and others.
- Instead of giving high fives, fist pumps or hugs, smile and wave to say hello.
- Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active, getting enough sleep and fresh air.
- Ask questions. It is ok to talk about your concerns and fears. We are all in this together.

Have more questions?

More information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including resources, planning documents, and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found at Latest COVID-19 Education News.

You can also visit EngageMB at https://engagemb.ca/welcoming-our-students-back-restoring-safe-schools to ask your questions. We'll share your question and the answer for others to see. Questions can also be answered privately, if they are not appropriate for sharing.

My Learning at Home is a resource to assist families to support their children in remote learning from home.

Current information about COVID-19 in Manitoba can be found at http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19/.