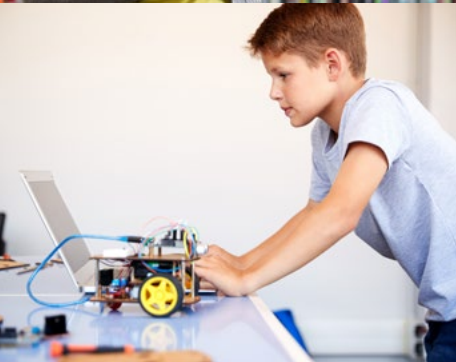


Return to School: Guide for Parents and the Public

September 2020



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Wellbeing



- Culture of respect and mindfulness.
- Promotion of safe and healthy behaviours.
- Increased support for vulnerable students.
- Particular attention paid to mental health.



Kindergarten–Grade 8

- Students are in class groupings with reduced class sizes.
- Mask use outside of class is encouraged for K–5 students.
- Masks will be used outside of class for 6–8 students.
- Physical activity, movement and outdoor time are encouraged.



Grades 9–12



- Personalized and flexible learning options.
- Leverage the use of technology to support learning.
- Masks will be used outside of class.
- Promotion of physical distancing in class.



Buildings

- Modified schedules and transition times are organized to favour physical distancing.
- Common areas well marked for traffic flow.
- Enhanced cleaning practices.
- Cafeteria is adapted to the context of the pandemic.



Buses



- Routes and schedules are adjusted.
- K–5 students are seated one per seat, no mask required.
- Members of the same household can sit together, no mask required.
- Students in Grades 6–12 are seated two per seat if they wear a mask.



Return to School

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Letter from the Minister

Dear students, school personnel and families,

In April 2020, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development made the difficult decision to close schools for the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year. This decision was not made lightly. It was done with the health and safety of students and staff at the top of mind. This decision also allowed the education system to focus on long-term preparations for the 2020–21 school year to provide students and staff with a healthy, safe and positive learning and teaching environment and get students back on track for academic success.

On June 12, we released a high-level plan to provide school districts with direction and help them begin planning a safe and healthy return to school in September. Departmental staff have continued to work closely with Public Health, school districts and administration to further define this plan and to foster a learning environment that is safe and welcoming. Ensuring New Brunswick students have access to high-quality education remains our primary mandate. To achieve this goal, we will need the help and support of parents, students and the school system. The decisions and processes defined in this plan were not made lightly or without due consideration. We have undertaken significant consultation with education system partners, stakeholders and Public Health.

New Brunswickers have a shared responsibility of helping keep our schools safe and healthy. Families need to be kept up to date with changes to Public Health guidance and educational system procedures and practices as quickly as new information becomes available. By reinforcing Public Health advice through role modelling behaviour, together we can demonstrate to our students that measures in place to address COVID-19 are vital.

This document provides more details of what parents and students need to know before returning to school in September 2020. This plan will continue to grow and evolve as new information becomes available from public health experts.

I encourage you all to follow and support the health and safety directives developed for your child's education. We all have a responsibility to minimize exposure to COVID-19. By working together, being respectful and attentive, New Brunswick will continue to demonstrate leadership and vigilance as we continue to live through this pandemic together.

Sincerely



Dominic Cardy

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Letter from the Chief Medical Officer

Dear students, school personnel and families,

We know that having access to quality education is key to the overall health and well-being of our children. Attending school is important for learning and development and provides the structured routine that allows children to flourish.

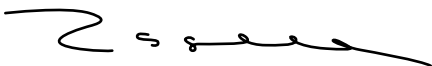
Public Health has worked closely with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to develop an approach to returning to school that enables students to learn and teachers to teach while ensuring protective measures are in place for all members of our school community: students, families and school.

Families have an important role to play in the safe return to school. Families can positively impact their children and contribute to the health of their communities by:

- modelling the behaviours needed to limit the spread of COVID-19, such as hand washing, proper cough and sneeze etiquette and staying home when sick;
- monitoring children daily for symptoms and calling 811 or their primary healthcare provider to arrange testing if symptoms occur; and
- talking to their children about COVID-19 and why their lives may look and feel different for a while.

Public Health has worked collaboratively in establishing this comprehensive approach to returning to school safely and will continue to be involved throughout the school year. From providing guidance on prevention measures to managing an outbreak, Public Health will be with our students, families, educators and school staff every step of the way.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jennifer Russell, BA, BSc, MD, CCFP

Chief Medical Officer of Health



LIVING DOCUMENT

This document is intended to inform the public on the return to school in September 2020. As scientists around the world make new discoveries regarding the transmission, controls and treatment of COVID-19, the directives of Government will be adapted and may differ from what they are today. All relevant documents will be modified to reflect any new updates.

Revised: September 1, 2020

QUALITY EDUCATION

- Our mandate is to provide quality education for all public-school students.
- Students will receive quality, curriculum-based education even if they are not permitted in the school building because of COVID-19.

SAFE AND HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Each school will have an operational plan laying out the health and safety guidelines.
- Individual school operational plans will be shared with parents before school resumes.
- Kindergarten to Grade 8 class grouping (bubble¹) will minimize the risk of transmission in the school setting and promote safe social interactions. Class groupings will facilitate contact tracing.
- High schools will use blended learning, create more personalized learning opportunities and use physical distancing to minimize the risk of transmission.

FULL-TIME LEARNING

- Education is crucial for the development of children and for the future of the province.
- No matter what Public Health phase the province finds itself in, learning will continue full-time.
- The principle of inclusion is a cornerstone of our education system.

COLLABORATION WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

- This plan was developed with Public Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer.
- Public Health plays a critical role in ensuring a healthy and safe school environment. We will continue to collaborate with Public Health throughout the school year to ensure information is up to date and best practices are followed.
- If a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed in a school, the school will work with Public Health to support contact tracing.
- Public Health will make informed decisions and communicate directly with the district, school and parents on next steps.

¹ The term “bubble” refers to groups of students that are assigned to stay together in this grouping while at school.



The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Public Health have developed an outbreak management process to ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood when there is a positive COVID-19 case identified in the school system.

Parents, students and school personnel may become anxious if there is a positive case confirmed in a school. It is natural to want to know if a positive case is in your child's class. Public Health will inform those who are at risk of the next steps but will not release the names of those people who have tested positive. The protection of privacy remains a priority.

COMMUNICATION OF A CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASE

- The school will be informed by Public Health when there is a positive case in a school.
- The school administration will communicate with parents and the school community.
- Public Health may provide additional information.

CONTACT TRACING

- Public Health is responsible for the contact tracing, with support from the school system.
- Through their operational plan, schools will be able to provide Public Health with a list of individuals who may have come into contact with a positive COVID-19 case.
- Relevant students and school personnel will also be interviewed by Public Health for contact tracing.

DECISIONS

- Public Health is responsible for responding to communicable diseases, including COVID-19.
- Public Health will, through contact tracing and risk management, make decisions on who self-isolates. This may require an individual or several individuals, a classroom or multiple classrooms or even a school population to self-isolate.
- Public Health will inform these individuals of when they can return to school.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY DURING OUTBREAK

STUDENT AND PARENT

- If a student is ill, it is critical that they stay home. Call 811 or a medical professional if your child has COVID-19 symptoms. Follow medical professional's advice.
- Daily screening before leaving for school.
- Cooperation and communication are key to manage an outbreak.
- If you get an urgent call regarding the health of your child during the school day, you will be required to pick up your child as soon as possible, consistent with school practice. Parents should have an alternative plan for pick up.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Coordinate with Public Health by providing contact tracing information.
- Provide communication to parents and students in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in a school.
- Provide students with distance learning if a student is not able to attend school.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- Identify and communicate a potential/positive case.
- Inform a school of a positive COVID-19 case.
- Manage outbreaks.
- Provide support to schools and work collaboratively on health and safety.
- Inform students and parents and school personnel if they need to self-isolate, in collaboration with the school.
- Inform relevant students and parents and school personnel when a child is safe to go back to school.

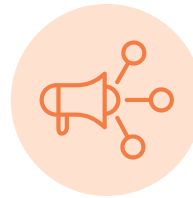
Outbreak Management



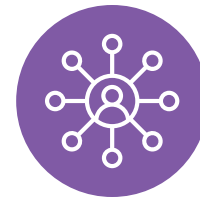
Public Health confirms a positive case / cases in a school



Public Health informs the school district and the school of a positive case / cases.



The school, in collaboration with Public Health will communicate with the school community.



Public Health does contact tracing and relevant individuals are notified.



Public Health informs of next steps and orders individual, relevant class group or student population to self-isolate



Public Health informs individual when they can return to school

We Are All In This Together



EVERY NEW BRUNSWICKER HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

- Be kind. Do not judge others. Focus on playing your part.
- Care for yourself and your family by staying active and fostering wellness.
- Screening is critical. Prior to leaving for school, make sure your child is well. Review the screening questions each morning.
- If you or your child has COVID-19 symptoms or if you are not feeling well, stay home.
- Parents of students with specific health concerns should discuss return to school with their medical practitioner. Relevant information should then be shared with school for appropriate planning.

PROTECT YOURSELF, PROTECT OTHERS

- Every student and school personnel must ensure they bring a community mask to school. The mask must be cleaned daily.
- Being tested when symptoms are present is being responsible.
- School personnel will follow protocols for students who are ill.

CALL 811 WHEN YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS

- Check the Public Health website for the latest list of symptoms.
- Follow Public Health’s advice: they are the experts.

PERSONAL SAFETY ETIQUETTE

- Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your family from getting sick. Wash when leaving home, getting to school and throughout the day.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

WELLBEING AND SECURITY

- Breakfast and snack programs will continue uninterrupted to ensure food security.
- Parents, students and school will help foster a culture of respect and mindfulness.
- Safe and healthy behaviours will be promoted and modelled.
- Mental health and wellness support will be provided.



Schools will look different in September. To accommodate smaller groupings, some schools have had to create new classroom spaces. They might use cafeterias or libraries. Each school will have an operational plan detailing how students and school personnel will move within the building.

OPERATIONAL PLAN

- Schools will have an operational plan outlining their health and safety protocols. This plan will be shared with parents and the school community.
- Schools will review how students and school personnel will move inside the building to ensure physical distancing and class groupings are kept intact.
- Class groupings or physical distancing will be respected during recess, breaks and lunch time.

BUSES

- All students in K to 5 will maintain a distance of one metre (one student per seat) and are not required to wear a mask.
- Two members of the same household may sit together without wearing a mask.
- Students in Grades 6 to 12 will wear a community face mask when entering and exiting the bus. A student can remove their face mask if they are sitting alone or with a member of the same household during the duration of the bus ride.
- The school districts may reorganise the bus routes.
- Schools may adjust their schedules to accommodate route changes.

CONTROLLED AND LIMITED ACCESS

- To help with contact tracing, access to schools will be limited to control the flow of people.
- The flow of school personnel and other individuals between schools will be limited when possible.
- Additional health and safety protocols will be in place for anyone who is not a student or member of school personnel entering the school building.
- Parents will be only able to enter the school if they have an appointment or are picking up a sick child.
- Parents will need to wear a mask, maintain physical distancing and follow any other health and safety protocols.

ENHANCED CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

- Enhanced cleaning protocols have been established and will be outlined in each school's operational plan.
- Cleaning supplies are being purchased by school districts and secured to ensure availability.

HAND SANITATION STATIONS

- Hand sanitation stations will be in each class and at each entrance of the school.
- Students and school personnel are required to wash or sanitize their hands regularly.

DRINKING FOUNTAINS

- Bottle filling stations will be available and signs will be posted to outline safe use.
- Water fountains will not be in use.



WASHROOMS / CHANGEROOMS

- Handwashing signs will be posted in every washroom.
- Washrooms and changerooms will be cleaned a minimum of three times a day.
- School operational plans may limit the number of people who can be inside a washroom at any given time.

CAFETERIAS

- Cafeterias will follow Public Health and WorkSafeNB requirements for food service providers.
- Where a common dining area is used, physical distancing requirements will be in place.
- Meal times may be staggered to alternate between groups of students.
- Student groupings will physical distance by two metres from other groupings.
- Non-grouped students will physical distance by two metres.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

- Community use of schools is on hold until further notice.

VENTILATION

- Ensuring good air quality has consistently been a priority to ensure school environments are healthy and safe.
- School ventilation systems and requirements have been reviewed with Public Health and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.
- Existing standards and systems for ventilation in schools were determined to meet health and safety requirements at this time.



Classrooms will be different this year. However, efforts have been made to minimize the impact on the classroom as much as possible. While school will be different, the goal is to provide quality education while in a safe learning and working environment. Students and school personnel have an important role to play.

GROUPINGS FOR GRADES K–8

- Physical distancing is difficult with younger students. Kindergarten to Grade 8 will be divided in class groupings (bubble).
- No physical distancing is required within a grouping.
- Students in groupings will be taught age-appropriate ways to reduce physical contact and promote hygiene.
- Class groupings will not interact with students from other groupings. Groupings will be separated by two metres.
- Online learning between groupings may be an option.
- Enhanced safety protocols will be in place for school personnel who visit multiple groupings.

Grades	Group Sizes
Kindergarten–2	Reduced group sizes, as close to 15 students as possible.
3–5	Reduced group sizes, as close to 22 students as possible.
6–8	Regular class sizes.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING FOR HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9–12)

- To allow high schools students personalized learning options, class groupings are not possible.
- To facilitate physical distancing and ensure a quality education, high school students may be learning in a blended environment, attending school every other day at a minimum.
- Schools that can provide appropriate physical distancing may operate without rotational attendance while respecting health and safety protocols.
- High school students will need to physically distance by one metre within a classroom and two metres outside the classroom.
- Attendance will still be taken for students who are engaged in distance education or blended learning.

PROTECT YOURSELF, PROTECT OTHERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- Stay home if you are ill or have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Wash or sanitize your hands when you arrive in your class and frequently throughout the day, as required.
- Respect and maintain physical distancing.
- Practice personal hygiene etiquette.



COMMUNITY MASKS

- Community masks are an effective tool to control transmission of COVID-19.
- All students and school personnel must have two clean masks for use during the school day.
- Masks are recommended for all emergency drills but not to the detriment of the response to the drill.
- Students will not have to wear a mask inside their grouping.
- Students in K–5 should be encouraged to wear a mask in common areas outside class groupings inside the school building. For example, going to the washroom, visiting a resource teacher, etc.
- Students in Grades 6–12 must use masks in common areas outside their class.

SHARING MATERIALS

- All shared materials such as computers, physical education equipment, musical instruments, microwaves, etc. will be disinfected between uses.
- Material that can not be disinfected must only be used by one student. For instance, playdough.
- Students in Grades 6-12 will be required to disinfect their desks and their chairs after each class.



Learning will be full-time for all students. The regular curriculum will be taught and there will be regular evaluations and report cards. Additional resources that support wellness and mental health will be put in place.

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 8 LEARNING

- Students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 will be in school full-time.
- Activities that promote good health and safety awareness will be incorporated in the curriculum.
- The number of school personnel interacting with a class grouping will be minimized.
- Learning activities outside, including snack time, place-based learning and unstructured time are encouraged.

HIGH SCHOOL LEARNING

- High school students will participate in a blended learning environment, at school and online.
- Students will be in the school at a minimum of every other day.
- Attendance will be taken when students are learning online.
- In order to achieve the learning outcomes in their personalized learning plan, some students may be recommended by the strategic team to be in school daily.
- Students enrolled in disciplines, like the trades, may be permitted to attend daily.
- Learning will be done using educational strategies such as online, project based, and experiential learning.
- Students will learn individually and in groups. Students will have access to virtual spaces that allow for collaboration, networking and teamwork.
- Students will bring their own electronic devices to school for learning.
- IT infrastructure will be enhanced to support the *Bring Your Own Device Initiative*.
- Secondary learning places may be established within local communities to support students who may not have dedicated internet or technology access.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, MUSIC AND ART

- Physical education, music and art are essential components of the curriculum. They are encouraged and should be taught when possible.
- Materials and equipment will not be shared unless disinfected.

CO-CURRICULAR, FIELD TRIPS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

- For K–8, these activities will be permitted as long as they meet the grouping requirements.
- For Grades 9–12, these activities will be permitted as long as students can physically distance.
- These activities will follow any additional health protocols required by Public Health.
- The class groupings will be protected when students are participating in an activity off the school grounds.
- Outdoor activities are recommended and should be prioritized.

ASSEMBLIES

- Large, in-person school activities or assemblies will not be permitted. They may take place virtually.



DISTANCE EDUCATION DURING AN OUTBREAK

- Education will continue to be mandatory during an outbreak. The following types of learning may be expected:

Grades	Type of learning	Contact with teacher
K-2	Paper-based	Daily check-in
3-5	Paper-based with some technology	Routine teaching engagement
6-8	Technology based	Regular teaching
9-12	Technology based	Regular teaching

- Learning objectives may be prioritized during an outbreak.
- Electronic devices will be distributed to students in Grades 6-8 who do not have access to technology if the students cannot be in the school.
- Principals must ensure an up-to-date and accurate list of students who require technology to support mandatory learning.