



Primary and Secondary Educational Institution Guidelines

On June 9, 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan announced that in-classroom learning will resume for the 2020-21 school year. To help school divisions prepare for the return of students and staff, the guidelines below have been developed to inform local planning.



For younger children, maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead. The precautionary measures within these guidelines will be implemented to reduce risk, and include standards for cleaning and sanitization along with measures for general operations, facilities, transportation and programming.

To provide provincial-level direction on operational matters resulting from the pandemic, an Education Response Planning Team (RPT) was formed with representation from the Ministry of Education, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials. The RPT has developed additional information on operationalizing these guidelines, which will be made available for school division personnel.

As school-aged children return to regular activities, including programming and activities now allowable under the Re-Open Saskatchewan plan, these guidelines will help ensure that operators of provincial Prekindergarten to Grade 12 schools can plan for school to resume as previously scheduled this fall. Classes will begin as early as September 1, depending on local school division calendars.

Guidelines for General Operation

Hygiene

- Promote proper hand hygiene practices for staff and children. Practices must include using soap and water when hands are soiled and hand sanitizer when visibly clean. Although general use containers need to be available, where possible, students and staff should have their own hand sanitizer. Supervise the use of hand sanitizer with young children.

- Hand sanitizer must be approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN number) and listed as effective for use against COVID-19 (per Health Canada website).
- Except when in close contact with a sick student, masks and eye protection are not required, beyond those used by staff as part of their regular precautions for hazards normally encountered in the workplace. They should only be used when all other controls have been fully explored.

Limiting Physical Contact

- For younger children, maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.
- Staff, parents and students must encourage and practice preventative measures, such as limiting physical contact, throughout the school day (i.e. during instruction, recess, nutrition programs, extra-curricular) and avoiding close greetings (i.e. hugs, handshakes).
- Help younger children learn about physical distancing and less physical contact by creating games that include basic principles such as ‘two-arm lengths apart’ and avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes. Encourage physically distant greetings such as ‘air fives’ and waves.
- Plan for reduced physical contact activities and, where possible, avoid activities that require clustering around a particular item or small area.
- Modify procedures for entering the building to support physical distancing. Possible strategies include staggered entry into classes and schools, separate group entrances, limiting pickups and drop offs to one parent/guardian, etc.
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Children from the same household (e.g. siblings) do not need to maintain physical distance from each other.
- Wherever possible, physical distancing should be maintained, even within the same group. Consider modifying room configurations (e.g. separating tables) to promote physical distancing.

- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between students and staff. Activities that require physical contact should be avoided.
- Groups of students and the staff members assigned to them should stay together throughout the day and not mix with other groups. Staff should remain with the same group whenever possible. Strive to minimize the number of different teachers and educational assistants that interact with groups of students throughout the day.
- Modifications may be needed for all shared spaces, including boot rooms, hallways, waiting areas, etc. Thought can be given to establishing visual cues and direction flow plans.
- Specific responses for Prekindergarten and Kindergarten environments will be developed by school divisions, taking into account the unique nature of the learning programs and student development.
- Where possible, school division administrators and staff should use telephone or video conferencing to meet with staff and parents.

Limiting Shared Materials and Equipment

- Establish clear protocols for bringing materials (i.e. bags, school supplies) into and out of schools.
- Where possible, remove or reduce play with toys that encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact. Keep toys that encourage individual play.
- Students and staff should not share food and drinks and other personal items. Label personal items with the student's name to discourage accidental sharing.
- Strategically limit the number of touch points per day on electronic devices.
- Classroom activities and recess times should not include equipment that might be touched by multiple students. Due to the increased cleaning required, it is best to decrease the number of toys/equipment available to children. Remove toys and other items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Extra-Curricular

- Plans for extra-curricular activities and other gatherings will be developed in consultation with the Chief Medical Health Officer once the group/gathering capacity limits for fall 2020 are known.

Facilities

- Consider modifying room configurations to promote physical distancing. Where practical, the use of physical barriers (i.e. engineered controls) may be established where distancing cannot be achieved.
- Ensure adequate soap and hand sanitizer in each building, especially near entrances. Make disinfectant wipes available for wiping down frequently used surfaces.
- Signage may be used to remind parents and guardians not to enter the facility if they are sick. Signs should be posted at school entrances.
- Signs and markings in hallways should be considered to limit cross-exposure.
- Establish a plan to prevent mingling of groups in washrooms, and to minimize the number of shared surfaces.

Cleaning and Sanitation Guidelines

- Frequent cleaning and disinfection is important to prevent the spread of the disease.
- All disinfectants used must be approved by Health Canada (DIN). All label instructions for disinfectants, including contact time, should be followed.
- A school-wide plan for enhanced cleaning and disinfection should be established using the current provincial guidance. Roles and responsibilities, staff training where needed, and a maintenance schedule are recommended. Items/objects that cannot be effectively cleaned/disinfected daily or between classes should be removed for the time being.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection of commonly contacted areas.
- Any food contact surfaces, including water fountains/dispensing equipment, must be disinfected with a product safe for food surfaces or immediately rinsed following disinfection.
- Garbage bins should be emptied frequently.

- Sanitation/cleaning procedures will need to be implemented to support multiple users accessing technology.
- Indoor shared spaces and structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between groups should not be used.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids. Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves. They must be changed after every interaction and when changing tasks. Beyond this situation, glove use is not required nor recommended.
- Ensure the school is well stocked with hand washing supplies at all times, including soap, paper towels, waste bins and, where appropriate, hand sanitizer with a minimum of 70 per cent alcohol approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN number).
- Store hand sanitizer out of the reach of young children and supervise its use.

Guidelines for Illness in Care

- Promote proper hand hygiene practices for staff and students. Practices must include using soap and water when hands are soiled and hand sanitizer when visibly clean. Although general use containers need to be available, where possible, students and staff should have their own hand sanitizer. Supervise the use of hand sanitizer with young children.
- Checking temperatures, detailed screening or requiring COVID-19 testing of students and staff are not required or recommended at this time, based on current evidence.
- An illness administrative procedure with precautions specific to COVID-19 will be created by school divisions. Symptoms of illness that are not consistent with COVID-19 should continue to be managed per existing policies.
- Students and staff who are sick should be advised to stay home. Not all symptoms of illness need to be subject to this requirement (i.e. headaches, cramps, etc.). Staff would not be required to enter the school when sick to create plans for substitute teachers.
- All parents, guardians, students and staff who are confirmed to be COVID-19 positive and/or under mandatory self-isolation must not enter the school. Instead, they must stay home and self-isolate. Students and staff can return to school once they are cleared by public health.

- Schools should identify an appropriate isolation area for anyone with COVID-19 symptoms who are not able to immediately leave the facility. If a student develops symptoms at school or upon arrival at school, the student should be isolated from other students and the parent or guardian should be notified to pick up the student immediately. Provision for supervision of the student must be in place.
 - If a separate room is not available, the student needs to be kept at least two metres away from other students and staff.
 - If the student requires close contact and care, staff must wear a procedural/surgical mask and eye protection during all interactions with the sick child, and should try to avoid contact with the student's respiratory secretions.
- Once the student leaves, staff must wash their hands and ensure all areas that the sick student touched are cleaned and disinfected. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be removed from the area and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of three days.
- All staff must self-monitor for symptoms and use the online Saskatchewan COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool.
- Except when in close contact with a sick student, masks and eye protection are not required, beyond those used by staff as part of their regular precautions for hazards normally encountered in the workplace. They should only be used when all other controls have been fully explored.

Nutrition Programs

- Proper hand hygiene must be practiced before and after eating.
- School-supplied food should be delivered directly to the classroom. Students should eat lunches in their classrooms.
- No self-serve or family-style meal service. There should be no common food items. Food should be served in individual portions to each child by a designated staff member.
- Utensils should be used to serve food items. Reusable utensils must be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Food from home must not be shared with other students and should be stored with the student's belongings.
- Students are not allowed to participate in food preparation.

Mental Health and Social-Emotional Supports

- Supports for the health and wellness of students and staff will be provided, including helping students understand the importance of preventative measures that are in place and practising proper hand hygiene and coughing/sneezing etiquette.
- School division and school leaders are encouraged to implement trauma-informed practice to support students, staff and families. Trauma-informed practice includes: providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments; understanding coping strategies; supporting independence; and helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual student needs.
- The Ministry of Education will continue to offer supports for mental wellness, including but not limited to:
 - a resource posted on saskatchewan.ca to assist parents and caregivers;
 - working with Kids Help Phone to promote their professional counselling services, which are available 24 hours a day via phone, online chat or text, as well as their database of local community resources;
 - working with SaskTel to prevent and respond to bullying, cyberbullying and promote healthy relationships through the Be Kind Online website, which includes a number of resources and tools;
 - providing a provincial license for Respect in Schools training for all staff; and,
 - offering grants to school divisions to support mental health and student safety training initiatives.
- Saskatchewan's provincial curricula provide opportunities for students to learn about health, well-being and student safety.

Students with Intensive Needs

- Students with additional needs may require updated assessments and revised individual goals.
- For personal interactions, conditions must be created to allow for the provision of supports within a safe and secure environment, which may include the school setting or other appropriate spaces.

- All health and safety measures must be in place and communicated with the relevant staff and family prior to the provision of the service.
- All engagements will occur in a supervised setting, which may include the school or other appropriate spaces, and staff will not enter into private residences or provide personal transportation.
- Other methods of providing service or additional precautions may be suggested for those with compromised immune systems, in consultation with a medical professional.
- Consideration will be given to the directions given by the professional governing body of the staff providing the supports.
- It may not be possible to support all students with intensive needs in-person due to health and safety guidelines.

Transportation

- The following transportation protocols could be considered for implementation:
 - Students should be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan should be kept in order to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student being confirmed with a case of COVID-19. Students who live in the same household should be seated together.
 - Partitions around drivers can be considered.
 - Cleaning and sanitation of buses or other vehicles used to transport students is required between each run. Recreational travel requiring vehicles, such as field trips, is not permitted at this time.
 - Parents will be asked to transport their own children where possible.
 - Encourage pickup and drop off of students outside of the building, unless there is a need for the parent or guardian to enter the school.
 - If parents or guardians must enter the school, they should maintain physical distancing from staff and other children, and be reminded to practice diligent hand hygiene.