

Virtual Town Hall

September 1, 2020



QUESTION AND ANSWERS

Student Health

- 1. If a student suffers from seasonal allergies or other chronic conditions that may present in a similar way as COVID-19, what should parents do?**

This will undoubtedly occur. In this situation, parents may want to consult their child's physician or call 811 for advice. Once you are certain that the symptoms are unrelated to COVID-19, talk to your child's teacher, so that he/she is aware and can help ensure a positive school experience.

- 2. If a child tests positive, is it safe to assume that all siblings will be asked to self-isolate regardless of whether or not they are symptomatic?**

As long as the siblings live in the same household as the child who tested positive, or have been identified as close contacts of the positive child, even if they don't live in the same household, they must self-isolate for 14 days whether or not they have symptoms.

- 3. What happens if my child gets sick while at school?**

If a student displays symptoms consistent with COVID-19, he/she will be asked to wear a non-medical mask and self-isolate in a separate room until the student is able to go home. Parents/Guardians will be notified that their child is ill and will be asked to pick him/her up from school. Staff cannot transport students to their homes. Once home, please call HealthLine 811 or your family doctor to determine next steps.

We have worked closely with Public Health officials to ensure that proper protocols are in place. If contact tracing is necessary, Public Health will contact you directly.

Students will NOT be tested for COVID-19 without parent approval.

*For more information, please refer to our Illness in Care procedure located in Living Sky School Division's Return to [School Plan](#) (Appendix G, Page 39).

*You can also find information about notification and illness in school in the [Parent Package](#), which is part of Saskatchewan's Safe Schools Plan.

*Please make sure the school has updated/correct contact and billet information.

4. If my child is sent home with a cough or sniffles, and he/she gets tested for COVID-19, and the results come back negative, is he/she allowed to return to school?

Yes. Public Health will provide further guidance about when it's possible to return to school. More information is available in Saskatchewan's Safe Schools Plan (as above).

5. What happens if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the school?

If a child, teacher or staff members tests positive for COVID-19, Public Health will provide assistance and begin the contact tracing process immediately.

Teachers, staff and parents/caregivers of students who are considered to be close contacts of a person with COVID-19 will be contacted directly by Public Health through the contact tracing process.

All teachers, staff and parents/caregivers of students in the same classroom (cohort) of a person with COVID-19 will be contacted directly by Public Health and by their school via email. This notification will occur separate from the contact tracing process.

Those teachers, staff and parents/caregivers of students in the same cohort who are considered to be non-close contacts will be advised to self-monitor for symptoms and be offered priority testing options.

Public Health will then advise on further actions that may be required, and it is important to note this could vary based on the circumstances of the positively identified case. A positive case in the cohort (classroom) may not present a high risk to the entire cohort.

Further steps could include requirements for the cohort (classroom) to self-isolate at home and public health will advise in each situation.

Those teachers, staff and parents/caregivers of students in the school population, outside of the same cohort, can also seek Public Health advice regarding self-monitoring for symptoms, transmission risk and access to priority testing options at any time.

A confirmed positive case of COVID-19 at the school does not necessarily result in school closure.

6. What if an outbreak is declared at the school? Surely the school will be closed?

In Saskatchewan's Safe Schools Plan, an outbreak is declared if two individuals in a school test positive for COVID-19. The declaration of an outbreak does not automatically result in school closure. Like outbreaks in acute care, long-term care, or business settings, an outbreak declaration may be

triggered by a low number of cases but is used by Public Health to mobilize and coordinate a response to the infection. With the declaration of an outbreak, all parents of that school will receive notification and the declaration will be posted to Saskatchewan.ca.

7. Without close participation with their peers, is there a way safety can be achieved without hurting the child's spirit and love for interaction?

Although this fall students will be coming back to schools that look different, with directional arrows on the floor, dispensers of hand sanitizer on the walls, masks... the most important thing has not changed. Staff are going to be excited to see students, and the joy of being together again will far outweigh everything else that looks or feels different.

We encourage staff to settle in, re-establish relationships with students and colleagues, and get used to new routines. This will take time. We've all been away from our regular routines for several months and returning to school will be an adjustment.

As we re-adjust to our new reality, we'll get more used to our circumstances, and learning will come.

Last fall, we kicked off the year with a presentation from Dr. Jody Carrington. She reminded us that we are wired to do hard things. She also spoke of the importance of just BEING with students, as often that's exactly what they need. We are ready, and we're really looking forward to seeing our students, your children, at school!

8. If a member of our household isn't feeling well, do the children have to stay home from school?

In this case, call 811 for advice. It may be that the household member should be tested before sending the student to school. COVID-19 testing is now available to anyone who requests it, regardless of whether they have symptoms or not. A referral for testing can be made by contacting HealthLine 811 or your family physician.

Student Safety

9. Are students expected to go home for lunch?

If it is possible for students to eat lunch at home, we encourage that, for sure. This will make it even safer at lunch for those who are unable to go home to eat. Thank you.

10. Will there be dividers between the desks or just placed farther apart?

On August 11, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer directed several additional measures to be included in all school division plans. One of these was front-facing instruction for students. This means that in the majority of our classrooms, dividers will not be necessary.

In some situations, front-facing instruction is difficult to achieve, and these have been reviewed as exemptions by Public Health, taking into consideration that all other safety conditions are in place (e.g. distancing, cohorts of students, etc.).

Specific guidelines are in place for PreK-2 classrooms, and these are available in our resource document designed specifically for families.

Masks

11. Can the school division require students to wear masks?

Yes, the school division can require students to wear masks. This is a matter of safety of students and of staff. It is a reasonable requirement given COVID. It is supported by Public Health and by the Ministry.

Teachers and staff must comply with the directions of the school division and cannot independently require students in their classes to wear masks or not wear masks.

It is important to be very clear on when masks must be worn, what type of mask is required and who must wear masks. For this reason, we have a section on mask use included in our [Return to School Plan](#) and our Parent Resource document (to be sent out Wednesday, September 2nd).

12. What happens if a student in a grade mandated to wear masks refuses to wear one?

The reason for requiring masks is partly to protect the wearer but primarily to protect other people. When the school division has decided they need to be worn and someone is not wearing a mask, there is an assumption that the person may be putting others in potential danger.

So, if a student refuses to wear a mask, the staff member who notices will begin by asking him/her to put one on. Hopefully, this will be all that is needed. However, if the student insists on not wearing a mask, even when requested/reminded to do so, he/she will not be allowed to remain in the school until the matter can be resolved.

If a student cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, the student must not come to school until such time as an appropriate accommodation plan can be put in place. The first step will be for the school to receive appropriate medical information.

We have put a mask policy in place to make the school safer for everyone, and we hope that, although you may not agree with it, you will respect it.

13. What kind of mask should I purchase for my child?

LSSD will supply two reusable masks to all staff and students; a supply of masks from the province will also be available. We encourage students to have additional non-medical cloth masks, made

using two or three layers of fabric. **Bandanas and gaiter masks are not recommended as appropriate face coverings. In addition, any print on the mask must be school appropriate.**

14. How many masks will be provided to students who don't bring their own? Will extra masks be provided to students whose masks get wet from breathing or talking too much or through other means?

LSSD will supply two reusable masks to all students; a supply of masks from the province will also be available. We encourage students to have additional non-medical cloth masks made using two or three layers of fabric. Bandanas and gaiter masks are not recommended as appropriate face coverings. In addition, any print on the mask must be school appropriate.

15. What are teachers being told to do regarding students who don't wear masks properly, will it be a distraction from education in classrooms?

Teachers will deal with masks in the same way that they deal with all other distractions. There is no doubt that adjusting to masks and enhanced hygiene practices will take time, but staff and students will adjust.

16. Will kids be made to feel like they can't talk if they're not wearing a mask?

It will take time to get used to wearing masks, but staff will work with students to adjust to new routines in place because of COVID-19.

17. Once children are in their cohorted classroom and lessons are being taught, can they remove their masks during this time if they are forward facing and distanced in their desks from one another?

We encourage teachers to allow for mask breaks by going outdoors more often and instructing students to take their masks down when they are working at their desks and facing the front.

18. Are we to supply kids a container or something for in their desk, if they are able to have a break safely?

We have not said anything except that lanyards are not a good idea. Please ask the school if containers are necessary, or if staff have other ideas for storage.

19. How are coats and backpacks going to be stored? They are touching their neighbour's backpack currently.

Each school will have a process for storing coats and backpacks. At a recent meeting with our regional medical health officer, we were informed that the risk of contracting COVID-19 from having one's jacket or backpack come into contact with another item that may have virus particles on it would be extremely remote.

20. How will classes be set up?

Schools will keep students in cohorts as much as possible.

- In the elementary grades, the cohort will be the student's home classroom.
- All classrooms will implement consistent seating plans for students.

- In the primary grades, where tables are used instead of desks, we are working with our regional medical health officer to determine what, if any, modifications should be made.

While all of our high schools will have seating plans for students, there is more than one way to group students, considering factors such as the size of the building, student enrolment and grade configuration. The key, in all cases, is to reduce the number of classmates and staff with whom students interact.

Some of our high schools have moved to a block timetable. This means that students will be part of just two or three cohorts and will make fewer transitions during the day. A block schedule will also allow students and teachers to pivot more easily, should we have to move to Level 3 of the provincial Safe Schools Plan for a period of time. Other high schools are smaller and are able to group students in cohorts. Teachers will move from class to class, thus reducing the potential for crowded hallways during class transitions.

In all classrooms, several steps were taken to facilitate distancing:

- Unnecessary furniture was removed from classrooms to provide greater space between students and encourage new methods of interacting to avoid close contact.
- When possible, students will be forward facing. Any exceptions will be reviewed with our Public Health officials, and alternatives will be implemented with their guidance.
- Area rugs and soft furnishings that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected were removed.
- Each classroom teacher will determine a flow for student movement, which will be clearly marked with directional arrows.

21. Are students consistently spaced two metres apart?

No. There is not a directive to ensure students are two metres (six feet) apart in Re-open Saskatchewan. Instead, the focus is on limiting physical contact.

Steps have been taken to ensure that students are spaced as much as possible, and other safety measures such as promoting proper hand washing, ensuring extra cleaning of common touch points, wearing masks and staggering break times are in place.

Miscellaneous

22. Does each class get a classroom or are they doing split grades?

Whether or not grades are split is a decision that is made at the school level. Schools are allocated staff based on a formula, and staff assignments are determined by the principal. In smaller schools, it may be difficult not to have split-grade classrooms if student enrolment is low.

23. Are students learning just core subjects?

Elementary curricula will continue as usual. High school students will be required to complete the same number of credits as they would normally, and high schools will offer courses in the same manner as they have in the past. There will be precautions because of the pandemic that will affect how some classes, such as physical education, are offered.

Kindergarten to grade 9 instruction through virtual (online) learning will center around English language arts and mathematics curricula. Outcomes from science, social science, health education, arts education, and physical education will be addressed through project-based learning. Students in grades 10-12 can choose from a selection of courses in order to achieve their high school diploma. Elective courses will be determined depending on student registration and interest.

24. What are the class sizes going to be like? Is it still going to be regular sizes or are they going to stagger the days.

Class configurations are determined at the school level, given the number of staff the school division allocates to each school. This is done using a formula and guidelines.

Classes may be smaller because some families have decided to take part in virtual learning. It's important to note that other precautions have been taken to help keep students safe. These include moving unnecessary furniture from classrooms, staggering lunch and recess breaks, having teachers move to students to prevent crowding in halls and wearing masks when distancing is not possible.

A few of our high schools are implementing a block schedule to ensure students are part of fewer cohorts. Other high schools are smaller, and cohorting students is possible without adjusting the student timetable.

25. Is it recommended for each child to have a device at school to work on? Is this only for older grades?

To help limit the number of students sharing devices, we are working to achieve a 1:1 ratio for students in grades 4-12. For K-3, we will support the continued use of the existing iPads within schools to accommodate the use of Seesaw and to minimize the sanitation challenges that go with keyboard devices.

We appreciate any students who want to use their own personal devices and will support them in doing so. This will also help us to ensure some flexibility in keeping current devices maintained and accommodating varying student numbers. A list of recommendations is included in our resource for parents. Education discounts are available to staff and students.

26. Are children able to be dropped off prior to 8:45 a.m. and can there be a teacher available outside of the school.

Supervision generally begins fifteen minutes before classes commence.

27. Is there going to be a staggered start to the school year?

This will vary in each school depending mainly on the number of students attending the school. Please contact your school for details.

28. Will substitute teachers be limited to our school?

No. If substitute teachers are limited to working in one school, we would not likely have enough to serve each school. Substitutes and casual staff will not, however, be allowed to work at two schools on the same day.

29. What if my Chemistry 30 or Foundations 30 teacher gets sick with a cold? Can my teacher teach us online from home?

Teachers are to be prepared for blended classes. This will support students who are away but also teachers who need to be away, as students can still access these classrooms. Teachers who are away on sick leave cannot continue to work.

30. We currently have only one janitorial staff and one on leave, how can it be expected for one individual to be able to maintain regular duties plus be expected to incorporate the increased sanitation and cleaning that is required for the back to school plan? Will the increased cleaning fall on the responsibility of the teachers?

The school division will solicit the services of a casual caretaker to replace the person who is away. Everyone will be expected to pitch in and help out with tasks such as wiping off desks after lunch and wiping shared devices after use. It would not be practical or possible for caretakers to perform such tasks in every circumstance. The other scenario is also true. We do not expect teachers to perform caretaking duties.