

Return to **School** Plan

Together.**Again.**

September 2021



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Preparation of Schools, Staff and Students..... | 4 |
| Plans for School Operations..... | 16 |
| Conclusion | 18 |
| Appendix A: Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Guidance for Return to School Kindergarten to Grade 12 | 19 |
| Appendix i: Guidance for Staff or Students Who Become ill While in the School Setting..... | 35 |
| Appendix ii: Hand Hygiene Guidance..... | 37 |

Executive Summary

The NL Back to School Plan for September 2021 prioritizes the safety and well-being of students and staff. It is a joint plan of the Provincial Department of Education, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP). The following plan describes how NLESD and CSFP schools are expected to operate in the 2021-2022 school year. This re-entry plan follows guidelines and recommendations outlined in the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Guidance for Return to School Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2021-2022, included as Appendix A of this document.

The recommendations from public health for the upcoming school year are based on community transmission risk.

- The community is at **lower risk of COVID-19** spread when there is low or no sustained community transmission.
- The community is at **higher risk of COVID-19** spread when any of the following apply:
 - there is high or increasing community transmission;
 - there is introduction of new cases in a community or setting where there is low vaccination coverage;
 - there is evidence of immune escape from circulating variants of concern (VOC);
 - there is a community outbreak, especially if it occurs in a setting where people may not be fully vaccinated.

The following information accounts for Public Health guidance for a **LOW RISK OF COVID-19** reality. Should the situation change (to HIGH RISK), school districts operational plans, similar to those used during the last school year will be enacted.

- What to expect for this school year
- Masking and Handwashing
- Student Transportation/ Busing
- Cleaning and Disinfection
- Cohorts and Physical Distancing
- Extracurricular/Co-curricular Activities, Events
- Ventilation and Air Exchange
- Mandatory Self Screening
- Community Use of Schools
- Daily Health Check - Stay Home When Sick

What to expect for this school year

- All schools will return to full-time in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year with health and safety measures in place.
- Provided the epidemiology remains consistent, it is expected that all schools will begin in September with low-risk measures in place, meaning that all schools will begin the year in nearly normal pre-COVID-19 conditions.

Masking and Handwashing

- Masking remains a good defence against possible exposure to germs and viruses - this practise is still acceptable and encouraged within our province's schools for those who wish to wear them. However, masking is no longer mandatory in a low-risk environment.
- Should the transition risk change in a particular area or region, the use of non-medical mask (NMM) will likely resume.
- Students and staff will have regular opportunities to practise hand hygiene and will be strongly encouraged to do so.
- While helping to keep the COVID-19 numbers low in Newfoundland and Labrador, regular hand hygiene has been a contributing factor in a low prevalence of colds and flus throughout the last 18 months.
- Hand hygiene will be particularly encouraged in high risk areas in accordance with Public Health advice.

Student Transportation/Busing

- Busing services return to normal capacity for students in a low-risk environment.
- Masks are not required.
- Should a school move into a high-risk designation, reduced occupancy may occur where possible, and masking may be required.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- All schools resume routine cleaning practices, and hand sanitizers will continue to be available and encouraged regularly.
- There is no longer a need to quarantine paper products.
- Should the risk level change to high, enhanced cleaning measures will be implemented in line with those used during the 2020-21 school year.

Cohorts and Physical Distancing

- Cohorts and physical distancing of two metres are not required, but congestion and crowding in indoor common spaces should be avoided and school staff will take measures to prevent such activities wherever possible.

- Directional arrows will be maintained in schools, and the separate entrances established in the last school year for entry/exit will be maintained, to minimize congregation.

Extracurricular/Co-curricular Activities and Events

- Arts events, field trips, inter-school sports events, and other special activities can resume.
- In-school co-curricular activities can resume.
- School staff continue to be encouraged to take advantage of our outdoor environments, as conditions permit.
- Events and gatherings, such as assemblies, can resume for students in grades 7 to 12.
- Public Health continues to recommend virtual options be considered for K-6 students.

Ventilation and Air Exchange

- Staff will continue to review and maintain HVAC systems where available to ensure they are in proper working order.
- Where HVAC systems are not in place, windows should be opened when weather permits, as per the Provincial Government's Natural Ventilation Protocol.
- The Department of Education and both School Districts are working on a plan to improve air quality in schools throughout the province. Further details will be announced in the near future.

Community Use of Schools

- The use of school facilities by community groups will be permitted.
- Those interested should consult NLESD's [Community Use of Schools \(OPER-602\)](#) policy. Those interested in Community Use of Schools for CSFP should contact the Board office.
- All visitors must complete a health check and refrain from entering if they are unwell.
- Food services have been advised that they can return to their regular operational and food safety practices.
- Masking in shared areas, such as a shared staff lunch space, is not required.

Daily Health Check - Stay Home When Sick

- All school community members have a responsibility to ensure they are monitoring their personal health and consulting the [Daily Screening Questionnaire for Schools](#) before attending a school.
- When someone is feeling unwell, they should do their utmost to ensure they do not risk exposing others if staying home is warranted.

Preparation of Schools, Staff and Students

Guidance for schools for 2021-2022 is based upon recommendations on community transmission risk as outlined in Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Guidance for Return to School Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2021-2022 included as Appendix A of this report.

The following information (sorted alphabetically) is based upon current Public Health guidance for both low- and high-risk of COVID-19 transmission. Should the situation change (to HIGH RISK), school district operational plans, similar to those used during the last school year will be enacted. Detailed information on operational plans can be found at the link in the conclusion of this report.

Adjusting to Return to School

School staff will have resources available to learn more about supporting students and the potential impact of trauma on student learning, behaviour and relationships. Professional learning resources for teachers on trauma and social emotional learning are available in the Professional Learning series of Member Services. This will help students adjust to a return to school, and provide a solid foundation for building meaningful relationships with school staff and peers.

Attendance

All schools will return to full-time in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year with health and safety measures in place. It is important that accurate student attendance data be taken in the event that contact tracing is required. Parents who choose to keep their children out of school will be required to submit an application for Home Schooling to either District. More information on [Home Schooling can be found here](#).

Breakfast Programs

When there is low risk of COVID-19, breakfast programs can continue. A 'Grab and Go' format should be implemented, and students should eat in their classroom to avoid mass gatherings in common areas. Surfaces, bins, and containers used in all food preparation areas will be disinfected before and after each use.

Classroom Setup

Where possible, students should remain in the same consistent seat in the class as much as possible. This area becomes the student's personal space and should be located as far away from the nearest student as practical. Where possible, the same students should remain with the same teacher with minimized rotation.

Communication with Students and Families

The Districts will continue their efforts to provide effective communication to all stakeholders and to support schools as we collectively prepare for a return to school in September. The Districts and individual schools will continue to provide updates to families through the mediums most familiar to their school communities. At the District level, this includes through releases, advisories and interviews with local news media, [NLESD website](#), [NLESD Twitter](#), [the CSFP website](#), [CSFP Twitter](#) and other means where appropriate. For schools, this may include School Messenger, email notifications, school websites, social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, etc), or other local communications tools. Students and teachers will continue to use the Google platform for communication and teaching and learning interactions.

Community Use of Schools

When there is low risk of COVID-19, use of schools by community groups will be permitted. However, all visitors must complete a health check and not enter if they are sick.

If there is a high risk of COVID-19, community use of schools is unlikely to occur and guidelines will align with public health recommendations.

Contactless Payments

To reduce the handling of cash, schools may wish to consider electronic email transfers (e-Transfers). For further information, contact the regional Finance manager, and [supporting Finance documents](#) in the Appendix of this report.

Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

The expectation is that teachers will do their utmost to determine the diverse learning needs of their students as they return to school. Due to irregular attendance during 2020-2021, students may be at different levels of knowledge and skills in specific courses and grade levels. Teachers will continue to “meet the students where they are” and focus on developing strong relationships to further support their learning. Assessment practices will take into account the pandemic conditions and allow both flexibility and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding and application of key concepts. For further information see [Assessment and Evaluation Protocol](#).

Curriculum Night/Meet the Teacher Night/Parent-Teacher Meetings

When there is low risk of COVID-19, family members are permitted to attend in-school events.

If there is a high risk of COVID-19, visitors will not be permitted to enter schools. Curriculum Night/Meet the Teacher Night/Parent-Teacher Meetings will not take place face-to-face, but rather schools may offer virtual opportunities to engage with families.

District Level Support for Schools

When there is low risk of COVID-19, District programs staff will conduct in-person site visits to support teaching and learning.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, District staff will continue to dialogue with school staff concerning support for students primarily through virtual means. This may include, for example, reviewing priorities and caseloads, prioritizing the needs of schools and students, and planning their responses and services accordingly. The Districts recognize that certain aspects of student programming and school needs may be best facilitated in person or with direct service(s). In these instances, District staff will limit the number of schools visited on any given day while following all health and safety recommendations.

Doors

Classroom and office doors should be left open during the day to minimize the number of students or staff who need to open the door physically. Please note that in keeping with the lockdown and secure schools policies and procedures, the handsets should still be left in a locked position, even if the door is open.

Drills

When there is low risk of COVID-19, fire drills and lockdown drills will continue as normal.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, a modified practice drill will take place that reviews the procedures in the case of a real life-threatening situation. The modified practice drill must reinforce maintaining physical distance requirements, whenever possible.

Entry/Dismissal Requirements

School entry times may be staggered, and multiple entry doors may be used to allow for physical distancing. Students will be required to wash/sanitize their hands as they enter the school.

Experiential Courses

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, some courses (including skilled trades courses, home economics, music, physical education, and fine arts) will require greater modifications than others given the goal of maintaining physical distance and the need to clean and disinfect shared equipment.

Field Trips

When there is low risk of COVID-19 field trips are permitted (including busing).

When there is a high risk of COVID-19 field trips that require vehicular transportation will be put on hold. School staff may continue with visits to nearby outdoor points of interest (parks, nature trails). Alternatively, teachers may wish to use virtual field trip options until the province has indicated that larger gatherings can take place in indoor venues.

Hand Sanitizer Dispensers and Cleaning Solutions

Students should sanitize their hands upon arrival at the school and, as a general routine, every hour thereafter. Specifically, students should also sanitize hands before and after eating, using any type of equipment, and wash their hands after using the washroom. While the sharing of equipment is discouraged, there will be instances where common equipment may be used by more than one student. In these cases, hand sanitizer should be used before and after use.

Upon return to school in September, hygiene routines will be reinforced regularly. Each staff member will be expected to highlight the importance of handwashing, avoiding touching one's face/eyes/nose/mouth, and the importance of coughing and sneezing into one's sleeve if a tissue is not available.

Health Room/Area

Each school and work site must have a designated health room or area. This room/area will be used for the temporary placement of any student or staff member who becomes ill during the day. Refer to [School Health Room Guidelines](#) for more information.

Illness

If a student or staff member has signs of illness they should stay home. Anyone who has been in contact with someone who has tested positive with COVID-19 must follow public health directions. Information on Provincial Government directives and COVID-19 testing is available [here](#).

If a student becomes ill during the day and/or they exhibit signs of illness, they will be required to enter a designated health room or area. A parent/guardian, or an emergency contact, will be called for immediate pickup. While in the health room/area the student will be required to wear a disposable mask, and any staff member assisting the student will be required to wear a mask and face shield. The student is not to return to school until medical clearance has been provided to the family by medical authorities. School administrators are not to request proof of medical clearance from families.

Please refer to [If a Student or Staff Member Develops Symptoms](#) for information on protocol to follow for possible case of COVID-19 in schools.

International Students

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, the Districts will welcome international students as travel restrictions are lifted. All students entering the country as part of the International Student Program will be required to follow guidelines established by the Department of Education and public health. It is expected that international students will be arriving in the province to attend school for September 2021.

Kindergarten Students

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, family members of Kindergarten students are permitted to attend in-school events (e.g., First Day of Kindergarten, parent - teacher meetings).

Kinderstart

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, family members are permitted to attend in-person Kinderstart.

There will be an update on Kinderstart programs (for students entering Kindergarten in September 2022) in October 2021. Parents with programming questions for their child should contact their school administrator.

Library Learning Commons (LLC)

Students may access the learning commons to borrow books. Student learning activities may also continue in the LLC.

Lockers and Cubbies

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, student use of lockers and cubbies is permitted.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, school administrators should conduct an analysis of their school's space to determine whether lockers and cubbies can be used while maintaining physical distance, possibly creating scheduled staggered times where groups of students access lockers to reduce congestion in corridors. In general, schools should prioritize what student materials are needed in the classroom to reduce the need for multiple trips to lockers. The sharing of lockers/cubbies is not encouraged, unless for current cohort members or siblings from the same households.

Lunch, Cafeterias and Food Service Providers

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, food services can return to regular operational and food safety practices. This includes the use of microwaves in school cafeterias.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, food services will align with the current public health recommendations.

Mask Wearing/PPE

When there is low risk of COVID-19, masking is still acceptable and encouraged for those who wish to continue, but will no longer be mandatory.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, all staff may be recommended to wear a level one medical mask when in contact with students and/or staff, when in indoor spaces. While NMM may be recommended for students in Grade 4 to Grade 6, no child will be required to wear a mask if they are unable to tolerate it.

Some staff such as instructional resource teachers, student assistants, and school administrators may require additional protective equipment when working with students with unique needs, such as difficulty with fluids and drool, spit, or excessive saliva, or those who require administration of medication by school staff, or other health supports.

Students who require visual cues for communication will be identified by student services staff and specialised PPE will be provided for staff that support these students. This will include masks with a clear window by the mouth area that will assist for communication.

Occupational Health and Safety Committees

The ongoing public health emergency has created new awareness of, and highlighted the role for, Occupational Health and Safety committees/OHS Worker Representatives. The Districts' OHS policies and COVID-19 specific guidance are the starting point for all District work sites. While employees are implicitly empowered to seek advice from their respective bargaining unit representatives, this does not replace their duty to make supervisors aware of any perceived issues. Supervisors are empowered to address issues, within the context of District standards, to ensure safe workplaces. The Districts have begun to review training needs for new and existing OHS committee members, including those who require initial training and those who require re-certification.

Training will be offered to committee members early in the school year. OHS Committees are still able to conduct meetings, inspections, and hazard assessments in the absence of committee training.

Online Support for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Districts will continue to offer various levels of professional learning for teachers in the use of digital tools (e.g., Google Docs/Meet/Classroom) for online teaching and

learning. The Districts will continue to provide professional learning opportunities for staff in the area of assessment and evaluation across all grade levels.

Outdoor and Non-classroom Space

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, staff will be encouraged to take students outdoors when possible during the school day for instruction and recess. Schools will be permitted to use playground equipment as long as handwashing occurs prior to and after use of playground equipment.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, playground use will not be permitted.

Plexiglass Separation

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, portable plexiglass separation is not required in high traffic common areas, or in areas used by itinerants, but may remain in place as determined by the school administration.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, portable plexiglass may be placed in high traffic areas where physical distancing is not possible such as in the main office, or in spaces used by itinerant staff for one-to-one student assessments, where physical distancing can be maintained, plexiglass will not be needed. Where neither physical distancing nor barriers are present, staff and visitors will be required to wear non-medical masks.

Recycling

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, schools can recycle items such as beverage containers.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, students will be asked to bring home all containers and recycle in their own home, rather than at school. Schools can continue to recycle items such as cardboard boxes from school-based deliveries.

Remote Learning

The Districts are committed to providing remote teaching support for students who cannot attend school due to medical reasons. For a student to be approved for remote learning, parents/guardians must provide the school with a [Request for Access to Remote Learning](#) along with medical documentation from a specialist doctor indicating that the student is immunocompromised and cannot attend school face-to-face. The Districts will review on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with Public Health and the Department of Education, before determining approvals.

School Hygiene

The Districts have modified existing school cleaning procedures and practices to comply with COVID-19 guidance. This school hygiene protocol has been reviewed and approved by public health officials.

School Parking Lots

For 2021-2022, it is anticipated that parents may be more inclined to transport their own child(ren) rather than avail of the school busing system. This will increase vehicular congestion, and therefore the time it takes to get all cars and buses on and off the lot. As with all aspects of the school system, safety is of paramount concern. Schools already strive for peak efficiency with traffic, so there generally is no flow-design change that will modify the physical reality of the lots. Solutions invoked must be in adherence with all relevant employee collective agreements, but the best options involve an increased drop-off time window and increased supervision on the lot to ensure parents adhere to the rules (which may result in a loss of instruction time). For instance “kiss and drop” needs to flow efficiently - children cannot be retrieving book bags from the trunk while parents block traffic. Increasing the duration before class when students can be dropped off decreases the peak traffic volume.

School Re-Entry Template

School principals in the NLESD (in consultation with their Director of Schools (DOS)) will complete/update the [School Re-entry Template](#) which will delineate a comprehensive plan for school operations in Scenario 1, 2, and 3. The CSFP will delineate their plan for school operations in consultation with the Director of Schools.

Sharing of Resources

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, quarantining of paper products is not recommended. When there is a high risk of COVID-19, staff will limit sharing of classroom material and promote and use electronic resources where possible in class. Adequate supplies for instructional units will be provided to each student, and where this is not practical to give each student their own resources, then shared equipment should be cleaned or disinfected between use. For instance, teachers will instruct students in the cleaning of such items as their keyboard, mouse, skilled trades tools, home economic equipment, and certain musical instruments.

School Supplies and Equipment

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, students should have their own school supplies, and the sharing of school supplies between students should be discouraged. If a device such as a Chromebook is being scheduled for alternative use, it must be wiped down with disinfectant and cleaning cloth by the user, before changing users. Isopropyl alcohol solution may be used on electronic devices. High touch technology surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected using the Protocol as outlined in the Appendix - [Protocol - Cleaning High Touch Technology Surfaces](#).

School Signage, Markings, and Separations

Signage on walls and floors will help students and staff maintain awareness of the precautions associated with COVID-19. Schools are encouraged to continue displaying signage that highlight health and safety. Signage will also be placed inside the washroom, reminding students of both physical distancing and proper hand hygiene protocols.

Staff Accommodations

The Districts are confident that all staff can safely return to school with existing health and safety protocols in place. Staff who are immunocompromised or have underlying medical conditions may be assessed on an individual case-by-case basis. Staff who express that they are not able to return to school due to pre-existing health considerations, and have supporting medical documentation, are advised to contact their [Regional Director of Human Resources \(NLESD\)](#) or [Human Resources Administrator \(CSFP\)](#) for information on the process to be considered for a workplace accommodation. The Districts will consult with union representatives with respect to employee accommodation requests.

School Fundraising

The NLESD has updated its COVID-19 related fundraising protocol, allowing for limited fundraising under certain conditions. Schools should connect with their Director of Schools for the latest information.

Screening and Contact Tracing

The first requirement before anyone leaves home to go to a school site is to complete a [School Screening Questionnaire](#). This is applicable to students, staff, visitors, contractors, etc. (anyone who intends to access the school site).

Although families are asked to screen their child daily for any symptoms of cold, flu or other symptoms associated with COVID-19, if school staff observe that a child is ill, a parent/guardian will be called to pick up their child from the school promptly. Students exhibiting illness will not be permitted to travel on the school bus

The screening form is subject to change as per the guidelines from public health. Only individuals answering “No” to all questions on the screening form can come to the school site. If a student voluntarily shares that they or a member of their family has COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test, this must be immediately shared with the school administrator for follow-up with families.

It is understood that positive responses on the screening will be prevalent, given the symptoms are both extensive and similar to colds, flus, allergic reactions, and other common ailments. This may lead to increased absenteeism by staff and students. On initial onset of symptoms (e.g., even if they are suspected to be caused by allergies)

individuals should contact Community Health (811) and follow advice regarding the need for testing, and when they can again attend school. If a teacher observes new or worsening signs of illness in a child that includes COVID-19 symptoms, they must inform school administration and have the child go to the school's designated health room/area for parent/guardian pickup. Care must be taken not to stigmatize the student or cause unnecessary fear.

Public health will provide direction if there are concerns regarding a COVID-19 case in a particular school. Schools should not provide notification to staff or students' families if a staff member or student becomes ill at home or at school, including if they display symptoms of COVID-19, unless directed to by public health. School administration is not permitted to request medical testing results from families. When a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19, the school will follow the directions of public health. This may require one or multiple classes to move to a distance learning model, and/or may require the school to be closed to in-person instruction for a length of time, based on the time recommended by public health.

Please refer to [If a Student or Staff Member Develops Symptoms](#) for information on protocol to follow for possible case of COVID-19 in schools.

Schools keep reliable attendance data on students and staff, which lends itself to good contact tracing. Again this school year will be a requirement to also maintain contact information on all others entering the building. This requirement is a relatively minor extension to the existing requirements around Safe and Caring schools. For example, when a parent who has been requested to attend a meeting by school administration, or a delivery person pages the main entrance, the school secretary or other staff person responding will now:

1. Ask them if they have completed the [School Screening Questionnaire](#) (which should be posted on the door for this purpose);
2. Ask the person to come to the office to complete a contact form. This can best be accomplished verbally (i.e., telling someone the information for the school staff to record electronically). Alternatively it may be a paper form, with hand sanitizing required before using common pen, etc.

Temperature checks on their own are not reliable indicators of possible COVID-19 infection. Consequently, the use of thermometers to measure individuals' temperature is not a recommended public health strategy and, as such, will not be undertaken at school entry. That said, the self-assessment form does indicate elevated temperature as a reason not to attend school, however this will be as per a family's overall assessment of their child each day.

Staff Gatherings

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, masking in shared staff areas like lunchrooms is not required.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, staff are expected to promote maintaining physical distance whenever possible as role models for students.

Students who Require Individualized Programming and Services

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, Student Services staff will implement and monitor Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Support Services Plans (ISSPs).

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, Student Services staff will be responsible for assessing the needs of PPE for staff who work with students who may not maintain physical distance. Individual behaviour management plans will be developed for students who need support with self-regulation. District staff may be consulted to assist in developing strategies for such plans. Strategies for the desensitization to masks will be reviewed. Please refer to Student Services Protocols in the Appendix of this report for more information.

Student Transportation (Busing)

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, occupancy may return to normal levels for K-12. Masking is not required.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, there may be reduced occupancy, where possible, and masking may be required. Representatives from the District's Student Transportation Division will assist schools as necessary.

Technology

Students in Grades 7-12 will be provided with one of the 30,000 Chromebook devices purchased by the Provincial Government in 2020-21 for the duration of the school year, to ensure continuity of learning. In the event of a move to online learning, a device loaning program similar to 2020-21 will be put in place for K-6 students.

Vending Machines

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, vending machines will be available for use unless otherwise directed.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, vending machines will not be available.

Ventilation

District staff are to monitor operation of HVAC systems to ensure they are in proper working order. For schools with no mechanical ventilation, schools should follow the

Natural Ventilation Protocol. The Department of Education and both School Districts are working on a plan to improve air quality in schools throughout the province. Further details will be announced in the near future.

Visitors, Volunteers, and Family Access

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, visitors, volunteers, and parents/guardians will be permitted inside NLESD or CSFP schools.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, visitors, volunteers, and parents/guardians will not be permitted inside NLESD or CSFP schools. The exception to this is parents who may have necessary programming meetings scheduled by school administration, or volunteers as approved with administration. If a parent has to pick up their child, school staff will escort the student to the exit door, where the parent will be waiting outside.

Water Bottles

When there is a low risk of COVID-19, water fountains will be available for use and bottle fill up.

When there is a high risk of COVID-19, students will be encouraged to bring their own labelled, full water bottles to school each day. Water fountains may be used to refill water bottles, however drinking directly from water fountains will not be permitted.

Plans for School Operations

Student Attendance

There are three potential teaching and learning scenarios for the 2021-2022 school year. CSFP schools generally can operate safely in Scenario 1 regardless of risk level:

Scenario 1: In-school classes resume (near normal with health measures)

- This scenario will be initiated based on public health advice when the risk of COVID-19 transmission is deemed to be low.
- Regular in-class instruction resumes for all K-12 students.
- When there is a low risk of COVID-19, In K-6 and 7-9 schools, cohorting is not required however school administrators should consider programming impacts if a school moves to high risk and cohorts are to be implemented.
- It is much more difficult to cohort in 10-12 schools, due to the nature of high school programming and the vast array of courses in which students may be enrolled.
- Where possible, subject teachers will go into the student's homeroom to teach, thereby minimizing student movement throughout the building. Certain specialist teachers will continue to receive students in alternate learning environments including the music room, gymnasium, etc.

Scenario 2 (Blended): Split in-class attendance (with additional health measures)

- This scenario may be initiated based on public health advice when the risk of COVID-19 is high and will be communicated to families by District/school staff.
- Priority is for in-class instruction for ALL K-6 students, to the extent possible.
- 100 percent in-school participation for students with exceptionalities and/or who require additional supports
- Approximately 50 percent in-class instruction; 50 percent learning at home
- Taking into consideration local circumstances, schools may divide students into two groups to go back to in-school classes on an alternating schedule.
- Where physical distancing is not possible between student desks, the greatest possible spacing will occur.
- More information for teaching and learning in Scenario 2 can be found in the [Online Learning Protocol](#).

| Week 1 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Group A | In-school | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning | In-school |
| Group B | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning |

| Week 2 | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Group A | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning |
| Group B | In-school | At-home learning | In-school | At-home learning | In-school |

This alternating pattern would continue for the duration of Scenario 2.

Scenario 3: At-home learning (In-school classes are suspended/cancelled)

- This scenario may be initiated based on public health advice in the event of high-risk of transmission of COVID-19, and will be communicated to families by the Districts.
- Schools will offer at-home instruction and learning opportunities to their students. The expectation is that teaching and assessment of curriculum outcomes will continue. As such, teachers may be required to be in attendance at school, unless that school has been ordered closed by public health.
- To the extent possible, schools must consider and enable the full participation and inclusion of students with exceptionalities within the school environment.

Based on the guidelines referenced above:

- Teachers will continue to be responsible for assessing the progress of their students. Teachers will maintain a record of contact time and assessment and evaluation records for each student under their supervision.
- School administration will continue to be responsible for monitoring of student engagement and academic progress of all students in their school.
- Students will continue to be responsible to actively engage in learning and diligently pursue their education.
- The District, families, and students must continue to follow public health measures in place.

- More information for teaching and learning in Scenario 3 can be found in the [Online Learning Protocol](#). More information for teaching and learning in Scenario 3 for the CSFP will be available before the start of classes.

Conclusion

This report is considered to be a dynamic working document based upon current information provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador through the Departments of Health and Community Services and Education. Its purpose is to inform all educational stakeholders of the plans to date. As such, it is possible that revisions to this plan may be released, based on potential changes to public health advice as a result COVID-19.

All parties would like to thank our stakeholders for their support, understanding and cooperation. Providing our children with the highest quality learning opportunities in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment is paramount.

The plan for September 2021 must be flexible and acknowledge it is not a “one size fits all” for all schools and work sites. COVID-19 may present itself in different schools, communities, and regions at various times and levels. The Districts will work in collaboration with its educational partners, and public health officials to determine which scenarios of teaching and learning are appropriate for schools.

Reference documents for the NLESD are available at the following link: [NLESD Back to School Protocols 2021-22](#). For CSFP COVID-19 documents, visit csfp.nl.ca.

Appendix A: Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Guidance for Return to School Kindergarten to Grade 12

The physical, emotional, and developmental health of children and youth has been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions placed on schools. Newfoundland and Labrador experienced less instruction time loss than many other jurisdictions. However, at a national level, school disruptions, including school closures and implementation of education models that have reduced direct interaction between children, their peers, and their teachers (e.g., online learning), have led to significant learning disruption, exacerbated educational inequities and deprived children of other supports and activities available through schools including food programs, physical activity and sports, clubs, and teams.

Emerging evidence suggests school closures impact children's academic achievement. Most evidence suggests a greater impact of school closures on vulnerable populations. Nationwide school closures have disproportionately affected students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds, racialized children and youth, newcomers, and students with disabilities.

With this in mind, public health recommendations are focused on keeping schools open and keeping children in school to the greatest extent possible while balancing public health and safety.

Key Facts

- The document outlines the health and safety measures recommended for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), Conseil Scolaire Francophone (CSFP), private, and Independent Indigenous School Boards for the 2021-22 school year.
- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities. Everyone who is eligible is strongly encouraged to get two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Re-initiation and maintenance of extracurricular activities (e.g., music, sports, and clubs) is an important component of the return-to-school plan.
- In addition to vaccination, daily health checks and staying home when sick are the most important ways to keep schools as low-risk settings for COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses like colds and influenza.
- Health and safety measures at schools are strongly recommended to include daily health checks, routine cleaning and disinfecting, regular hand hygiene and promoting the use of all available space in indoor common spaces.

- Temporary public health measures, including use of non-medical masks, physical distancing, and cohorting may need to be implemented based on local epidemiology and will take into consideration student age, grade, and vaccination status.
- The public health measures implemented in the school setting for the 2020-21 school year helped prevent transmission of COVID-19 as well as other viruses and infections.
- Since the last iteration of this document, COVID-19 Case and Contact Management Guidance has been updated to consider vaccination status during individual risk assessments.
- Planning for the 2021-22 school year will be based on community transmission risk and other factors such as burden of disease, as we move from pandemic response into endemic management of COVID-19.

Summary

This document is intended to support planning by administrators, education and support staff, and inform students and their families of anticipated changes for when they return to school in the fall. It is aligned with [Together. Again.](#), Reopening Newfoundland and Labrador, a plan focused on protecting people and safely getting life back to normal.

By the start of the 2021-22 school year, the incidence of COVID-19 is expected to be consistently lower in Newfoundland and Labrador. As more people continue to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations, community immunity will increase. **The 2021-22 guidance recommends some continued health and safety measures to keep Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools as low-risk settings for COVID-19.**

As with other communicable diseases, public health may recommend additional health and safety measures beyond this guidance for schools in communities or regions if necessary. These measures are based on factors such as local epidemiology, current evidence related to the COVID-19 virus and COVID-19 vaccines, and will be implemented at the discretion of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and/or Regional Medical Officers of Health.

Routine measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses will be strongly recommended to include promoting and facilitating hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick, maintaining building/school ventilation, and ensuring regular cleaning and disinfection of high traffic/touch areas. Additional measures may be recommended if a school experiences a COVID-19 outbreak. Examples of additional outbreak measures could include increasing frequency of cleaning and disinfection, maintaining classroom cohorts, mask recommendations, and/or limiting extra-curricular activities.

COVID-19 in Newfoundland and Labrador

- Adults are much more likely than children to experience severe illness or death from COVID-19, with risk increasing with age.
- The majority of children and youth who become infected with COVID-19 are either asymptomatic or have mild symptoms such as cough, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, fever, or gastrointestinal symptoms such as abdominal pain or diarrhea.
- To date, there have been no COVID-19 related hospitalizations and no deaths reported in children aged five to 18 due to COVID-19.
- There has been a continued decline in COVID-19 community incidence, prevalence and hospital and ICU admissions.

COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake in Newfoundland and Labrador

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities. While COVID-19 is present in our communities, there will continue to be COVID-19 exposures in schools and cases amongst students and staff. However, when most people ages 12 years and older are immunized, such exposures are even less likely to lead to further transmission. Local public health officials consistently monitor cases of COVID-19 in schools and the community and will continue to offer support and guidance.

For the most up-to-date vaccination rates in Newfoundland and Labrador, please visit www.gov.nl.ca/vaccine.

Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures help keep schools safe by reducing the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19. These measures are more effective in environments, like schools, where multiple measures can be implemented.

The recommendations for the upcoming school year are based on **community transmission risk**.

- The community is at lower risk of COVID-19 spread when there is low or no sustained community transmission.
- The community is at higher risk of COVID-19 spread when any of the following apply:
 - there is high or increasing community transmission;
 - there is introduction of new cases in a community or setting where there is low vaccination coverage;
 - there is evidence of immune escape from circulating variants of concern (VOC);

- o there is a community outbreak, especially if it occurs in a setting where people may not be fully vaccinated.

Table 1: Overview of Public Health Guidance Based on Low and High Risk of COVID-19 for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools in Newfoundland and Labrador

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Public Health Measures | COVID-19 Vaccine: Vaccination rates in Newfoundland and Labrador can be found at www.gov.nl.ca/vaccine . Everyone eligible will be encouraged to get two doses for long-term protection against COVID-19. | |
| | Public Health Case Management: Public health will continue to monitor cases of COVID-19 and determine if actions should be taken to prevent or control spread. Schools should continue to maintain accurate attendance records and class and bus lists to assist with contact tracing if required. | |
| | Provincial Recommendations: Public health will continue to offer individual and community guidance and recommendations to manage the risk of COVID-19 in Newfoundland and Labrador. | |
| | Regional Variation: Medical Officers of Health continue to provide recommendations around public health and safety measures beyond this guidance. | |
| Environmental Measures | LOW RISK OF COVID-19 | HIGH RISK OF COVID-19 |
| | Cleaning and Disinfection: Routine cleaning practices are recommended. Access to hand hygiene facilities (hand sanitizer dispensers and sinks/soap) is strongly advised. Quarantining paper products (e.g., books, schoolwork, and tests) is <u>not</u> recommended. | Cleaning and Disinfection: All guidance listed in low-risk with the addition of enhanced cleaning schedules. |
| | Ventilation and Air Exchange: Continue to ensure all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are working properly. Schools should follow the established Natural Ventilation Policy. | Ventilation and Air Exchange: Continue measures as listed for low-risk. |

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| Administrative Measures | <p>Gatherings and Events: Gatherings and events will be able to take place. Consider virtual options for assemblies for the Kindergarten to Grade 6 school population until this group is adequately vaccinated against COVID-19.</p> | <p>Gatherings and Events: Types and size of gatherings and events should align with public health recommendations. Consider virtual gatherings where possible.</p> |
| | <p>Cohorts and Physical Distancing: Cohorts and physical distancing of two metres will not be required; however, schools will continue to be encouraged to prevent crowding in indoor common spaces (e.g. entrances, hallways, gymnasiums, etc.).</p> <p>Other: Ensure isolation plans are in place for students or staff who become ill while at school if they are unable to leave right away.</p> | <p>Cohorts and Physical Distancing: Cohorts and physical distancing may be recommended, taking into consideration epidemiology and immunization status of the population.</p> <p>Other: Consider alternative education plans (e.g. online learning) for those individuals who are at higher risk of COVID-19.</p> |
| | <p>Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips: Extracurricular activities and field trips, including inter-school sports, arts events and special-interest activities (e.g. overnight trips) will be able to take place.</p> | <p>Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips: Activities and field trips should align with public health recommendations.</p> |

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| Administrative Measures | <p>Community Use of Schools: Use of schools by community groups may continue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visitors: Visitors should complete a daily health check and not enter the school if they are sick. ● Food Services: Food services (e.g. meal programs, cafeterias, fundraisers, etc.) can return to regular operational and food safety practices. ● Staff only spaces: Physical distancing and/or masking will not be required in shared staff areas such as lunchrooms. | <p>Community Use of Schools: Should align with public health recommendations.</p> |
| | <p>Busing: Occupancy may return to normal levels for K-12. Masking <u>not</u> required.</p> | <p>Busing: Reduced occupancy where possible. Masking <u>may be</u> required.</p> |
| Personal Measures | <p>Complete a Daily Health Check and Stay Home When Sick: Everyone should continue to complete the Screening Questionnaire for School and stay home when they are sick and use the online COVID-19 Assessment Tool to determine if testing for COVID-19 is required.</p> | <p>Complete a Daily Health Check and Stay Home When Sick: Continue protocols as for low-risk.</p> |
| | <p>Hand Hygiene: Hand hygiene should continue to be practiced regularly according to Public Health Guidance. Students and staff should use hand sanitizer upon entering a classroom.</p> | <p>Hand Hygiene: Continue protocols as for low-risk.</p> |

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| Personal Measures | Masking: Masking is still acceptable though <u>not required</u> . | Masking: Non-medical masks (NMM) <u>may be</u> recommended. |
| | Physical Distancing: Physical distancing is <u>not required</u> for any age group. | Physical Distancing: Physical distancing <u>may be</u> recommended, taking into consideration epidemiology and immunization status of the population. |

Public Health Measures

Case Finding, Contact Tracing, and Outbreak Management

When a person is confirmed positive for COVID-19, public health officials will investigate, identify, and notify close contacts of a confirmed case, and provide public health advice related to testing and/or self-isolation. If a staff person or student in a school is confirmed by public health as positive for COVID-19, public health will work with the School District leadership at the regional level to determine what actions may be required. Specific public health measures may be implemented in facilities where a case or cases occur to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 and keep others safe. Regional public health officials will manage cases and contacts of COVID-19 according to the [Interim Guidance: Case and Contact Management of COVID-19 Immunized Individuals](#). Public health will provide direction if there has been a potential exposure to COVID-19 in the school setting. Schools should not provide notification to staff or families if a staff member or student was not in the school setting during their infectious period, unless directed by public health.

Daily Screening for COVID-19

Daily screening is recommended for staff and students. Students and staff with cold, influenza, or COVID-19-like symptoms should stay home, and complete the online [COVID-19 self-assessment and referral tool](#) or contact 811. Currently, testing is recommended for anyone with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, even mild ones. Testing guidance may change depending on the epidemiology of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses as the school year progresses.

Environmental Measures

COVID-19 has been detected on a variety of surfaces and survival depends on the surface material. It is possible that infection can be transmitted via fomites by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching mucous membranes (i.e. mouth, nose, eyes). The understanding of the role of fomites in COVID-19 transmission has evolved since the first wave, and they are no longer thought to be a primary mode of transmission. However, fomites may contribute highly to transmission of other

respiratory and gastrointestinal pathogens. Therefore, environmental cleaning is an important permanent measure.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Low COVID-19 Risk

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. It is recommended schools be cleaned and disinfected with the following in mind:

- Routine cleaning and disinfection practices are recommended.
- Clean and disinfect any surfaces that are soiled.
- Use common, commercially available detergents and disinfectant products and follow the instructions.
- See [Health Canada's list of hard-surface disinfectants](#) for use against coronavirus (COVID-19) for specific brands and disinfectant products.
- Diluted bleach may also be used as an effective [disinfectant](#) solution.
- Empty garbage containers daily.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine).
- Wash hands before putting on gloves and after removing gloves.
- Quarantining of paper products (e.g., books, schoolwork, and tests) is not recommended.
- All staff, students, and visitors should use hand sanitizer upon school entry and throughout the day.

High COVID-19 Risk

Continue all recommendations above with the addition of the following:

- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces at least twice every 24 hours including door knobs, light switches, toilet handles, tables, desks, chairs, keyboards and toys used by multiple students.
- Limit the use of frequently touched items that are not easily cleaned.

Maintaining Adequate Air Quality

COVID-19 is transmitted primarily by aerosols and respiratory droplets during close unprotected contact. Aerosols play a role in longer-range transmission, especially in poorly ventilated indoor areas. Adequate classroom ventilation is an important measure that can assist in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

Strategies to consider

- Use of available outdoor learning environments when weather permits. Move activities outdoors, when possible (e.g., lunch, physical activity), and consider moving classrooms outside when space and weather permit. Outdoor learning can decrease the risk of transmission of infection, and can improve student health and learning.
- Where there is no mechanical ventilation, schools should follow the established Natural Ventilation Policy. Where applicable, ensure that the ventilation system (HVAC) operates properly.

Administrative Measures

General Guidance

Low COVID-19 Risk

- It is recommended that staff and students be vaccinated against COVID-19, as vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19.
- It is strongly recommended that staff and students stay home when sick, practice good hand hygiene and practice good respiratory etiquette.
- It is recommended that schools keep a list of the date, names and contact information for all visitors who enter the school.

High COVID-19 Risk

- Consider different classroom and learning environment configurations to allow distance between students and between students and adults (e.g., different desk and table formations).
- Arrange desks/tables so students are not facing each other and use designated seating arrangements.
- Take students outside more often for learning and unstructured time.
- Ensure appropriate hand hygiene practices before and after outdoor play.

Cohorts

A cohort is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school year.

Low COVID-19 Risk

Cohorts will not be required; however, schools will continue to be encouraged to prevent crowding in indoor common spaces (e.g. entrances, hallways, etc.).

High COVID-19 Risk

Cohorting a group of students and staff may be recommended by public health in high-risk situations. Cohorts reduce the number of in-person, close interactions a person has in school without requiring physical distancing, allowing most students to receive in-person learning in a close-to-normal school environment.

- Composition of cohorts will be at the discretion of school administrators. Public health's recommendation is that cohorts consist of a class of students. The composition of the cohort should remain consistent for all activities that occur in school including, but not limited to, learning and breaks (lunch, recess, classroom changes, etc.).
- Teachers should move between cohorts as opposed to cohorts changing classes, unless it is for specialized instruction such as physical education, music, art, and laboratories. Cohorts must remain separated from each other while moving through the school.
- Within the cohort, minimized physical contact should be encouraged. The composition of a cohort should be changed as minimally as possible, except where required to support optimal school functioning. This may include learning, operational or student health and safety considerations.
- Designated seating arrangements are encouraged within cohorts, where practical. This will assist public health should contact tracing need to occur.
- Physical distancing of two metres should be maintained between cohorts.
- School administrators should keep up-to-date lists of all members of a cohort to share with public health should contact tracing need to occur.

Interacting with Cohorts

Low COVID-19 Risk

Not applicable, as cohorts are not required in the low-risk scenario.

High COVID-19 Risk

Schools should minimize the number of adults (staff and others) who interact between different cohorts as much as practically possible, while supporting learning and a positive, healthy and safe environment.

School Gatherings

Low COVID-19 Risk

It is anticipated that most gatherings and events will be able to take place. Consider virtual options for assemblies for the Kindergarten to Grade 6 population until this group is adequately vaccinated against COVID-19.

High COVID-19 Risk

Types and size of gatherings and events should align with public health recommendations. Consider virtual gatherings where possible.

Physical Distancing

Low COVID-19 Risk

Physical distancing of two metres will not be required; however, schools are encouraged to prevent crowding in indoor common spaces (e.g. entrances, hallways, gymnasiums, etc.).

High COVID-19 Risk

Physical distancing may be recommended by public health to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the school setting.

Student Transportation on Buses

Buses should be cleaned and disinfected according to Newfoundland and Labrador [Guidelines](#). Additional guidance provided by Transport Canada can be found [here](#).

Low COVID-19 Risk

Occupancy may return to normal levels of three students per seat for K-12. NMM will not be required.

High COVID-19 Risk

Reduced occupancy where possible. Use of NMM may be required.

When there is high-risk community transmission, mitigation measures could include:

- Encouraging alternative modes of transportation for children/youth who have other options (for example, walking, parent/guardian drop off).
- Individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had exposure to COVID-19 should not board the school bus.
- Students should clean their hands before they leave home to take the bus, when they leave school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home.
- Drivers should perform hand hygiene before boarding the bus for the first run and after getting off the bus.
- The driver should consider using a NMM while students board and exit the bus.
- All passengers on the bus may be required to wear NMM. However, no student is required to wear a NMM if unable to tolerate wearing one.
- Open windows, if weather permits.
- Conduct frequent environmental cleaning of high touch surfaces with approved disinfectant products.

- Assign seating to ensure children/youth sit with the same children each day while avoiding stigmatizing or discriminatory arrangements.
- Schools/school districts should keep up-to-date passenger lists to share with public health should contact tracing need to occur.

It is important to consider how these mitigation measures may affect children/youth with disabilities who use alternate modes of transport, including the accommodations or assistance that may be required in applying the measures.

Cafeterias and Food Services

Low COVID-19 Risk

There are no special considerations for cafeterias and food services. NMM are not required.

High COVID-19 Risk

As there are a wide variety of food programs and cafeterias in schools across Newfoundland and Labrador, the following list is not prescriptive and risk mitigation should be tailored to each school's particular context.

- Limit the number of individuals permitted in cafeterias at any given time.
- If cohorting is recommended, cohorts may use cafeterias at designated times. If the space is large enough to accommodate more than one cohort with the appropriate physical distancing between cohorts, then more than one cohort may be present at a time.
- Consider having students eat meals in classrooms or outdoors as opposed to congregating in a cafeteria.
- Increase the number of accessible hand sanitizer stations within the cafeteria.
- Reduce touching of food by individually wrapping or packing food when on display.
- Adopt touchless payment options when possible (with exceptions for those who have to pay by cash).
- Cafeteria staff should wear NMM when preparing and serving food.

Music Programs

Low COVID-19 Risk

Schools may resume music classes including band, singing or choir. This is only advised when the local community/school are at lower risk for COVID-19 spread.

Specific mitigation measures should include:

- Individuals should not share instruments or accessories (e.g., cleaning cloths, mouthpieces).

- Cleaning of individual instruments with saliva build-up (e.g., spit valves) should be done physically away from others (i.e., at least 2 metres) and by blowing into a disposable cloth or container that will collect the saliva, to reduce the risk of exposure of others.
- Individuals should not blow the spit onto the floor.

High COVID-19 Risk

Follow public health recommendations for music classes including band, singing or choir when the local community/school are at higher risk for COVID-19 spread.

Personal Measures

Stay Home When Sick

- It is recommended that staff and other individuals accessing the school screen themselves, daily, for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or exposure to COVID-19 prior to entering the school.
- It is recommended that parents and caregivers screen their child daily using the [Screening Questionnaire](#) for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school.
- Any student, staff, or other individuals who have cold, influenza, or COVID-19-like symptoms should complete the online [COVID-19 self-assessment and referral tool](#) or contact 811.
- Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies or other COVID-19-like symptoms, which are related to an existing condition, can continue to attend school, as normal, when they are experiencing these symptoms. If they experience any change in symptoms they should complete the online [COVID-19 self-assessment and referral tool](#) or contact 811.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be advised by public health on when they can return to school.
- Those who have symptoms of COVID-19, test negative, and have no known exposure criteria must stay home for 24 hours after their symptoms resolve.
- Individuals within the school setting who are contacts of someone with COVID-19 will be managed by public health. The individual may or may not be excluded from school based on an individual assessment, which would include consideration of vaccination status and/or symptoms of COVID-19.

It is recommended that school administrators:

- Promote vaccination of staff and other individuals entering the school.
- Clearly communicate with school staff and other adults entering the school of their responsibility to assess themselves daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or other infectious respiratory disease prior to entering the school.

- Clearly communicate with parents and caregivers about their responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school.
- Establish procedures for those who become sick while at school to be sent home as soon as possible (see Appendix i).

Hand Hygiene

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene. Parents and staff can teach and reinforce these practices among students (see Appendix ii)

How to practice hand hygiene:

- Wash hands with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19.
- Temperature does not change the effectiveness of washing hands with plain soap and water, though warm water is preferred for personal comfort.
- If sinks are not available (e.g., students and staff are outdoors), use Health Canada approved hand sanitizer (these often contain at least 60 per cent alcohol).
- See the [List of Hand Sanitizers Authorized by Health Canada](#) for products approved by Health Canada and authorized for sale in Canada.
- If hands are visibly soiled, hand sanitizer may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by hand sanitizer.
- To learn about how to perform hand hygiene, please refer to the [Newfoundland and Labrador Handwashing poster](#).

Strategies to ensure diligent hand hygiene:

- Facilitate regular opportunities for staff and students to practice hand hygiene.
- Use portable hand-washing sites or hand sanitizer dispensers where sinks are not available.
- Students and staff should perform hand hygiene upon entering the school and any classroom.
- Promote the importance of diligent hand hygiene to staff and students regularly.
- Use posters and other methods of promotion.
- Hand washing supplies are well stocked at all times including soap, paper towels and where appropriate, hand sanitizer.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available, and filled, outside every classroom, gymnasium, cafeteria, etc.
- Staff should assist younger students with hand hygiene as needed.

Respiratory Etiquette

- Individuals should cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, and throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.
- Parents and staff can teach and reinforce these practices among students.

Personal Protective Equipment

Wearing Masks in Schools

It is important to acknowledge that some people may choose to wear a mask and mask wearing may be a necessity for people who are at a higher [risk of severe disease or outcomes](#). Schools are encouraged to reinforce kindness and consideration towards an individual's personal masking choice. The risk of COVID-19 community transmission will be closely monitored and if there is a change in epidemiology or evidence regarding COVID-19, recommendations related to wearing NMM may change.

Low COVID-19 Risk

Masking is still acceptable for any staff or students who choose to wear one, though not required.

High COVID-19 Risk

Based on high-risk community transmission of COVID-19, all staff may be recommended to wear a level one medical mask when in contact with students and/or staff, when in indoor spaces. While NMM may be recommended for students in Grades 4 to 6, no child will be required to wear a mask if they are unable to tolerate it.

NMM may be recommended in the following situations:

- On school buses.
- When a child cannot maintain physical distancing for extended periods of time and in close proximity to a person outside of their regular class cohort.
- For students in Grades 4 to 6 if they can be worn consistently (until this group is adequately vaccinated against COVID-19).
- When performing physical activity, if students can tolerate it.
- When participating in group singing.

Things to remember:

- NMM should be sized and worn correctly. Failing to do so may present a risk rather than a benefit.
- NMM should be changed after they become wet or soiled.
- NMM should be washed after a day's use.
- Parents and guardians should be reminded of appropriate use and cleaning, back up and storage of NMM.
- NMM can become an unintended hazard (for example, physical injury if caught on playground equipment).

References:

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Public Health Agency of Canada. (2021). Reframed School Guidance 2021-2022. Unpublished document.

Appendix i: **Guidance for Staff or Students Who Become ill While in the School Setting**

| If a Student Develops Any Symptoms of Illness While in the School Setting | If a Staff Member Develops Any Symptoms of Illness While in the School Setting |
|--|--|
| <p>Staff must take the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately separate the symptomatic student from others in a supervised area. • Contact the student’s parent or caregiver to pick them up as soon as possible. • Where possible, maintain a two-metre distance from the ill student. Staff should wear a mask. • Provide the student with a non-medical mask to cover their coughs or sneezes. Throw away any used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene. • Avoid touching the student’s body fluids (e.g., mucous, saliva). If unavoidable, practice diligent hand hygiene. • Once the student is picked up, practice diligent hand hygiene. • Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the student was separated and any areas recently used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas). • Parents or caregivers must pick up their child as soon as possible if they are notified their child is ill. • Some students may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, consider having a space available where the student or staff member can wait comfortably, separated from others. | <p>Staff member should go home as soon as possible.</p> <p>If unable to leave immediately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptomatic staff should separate themselves into an area away from others. • Maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. • Use a non-medical mask to cover their nose and mouth while they wait to be picked up. • Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the staff member was separated and any areas used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas). |

The threshold for reporting student and/or staff illness to public health should be determined in consultation with regional public health officials.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of illness should not return to school until:

- **They have completed the Newfoundland and Labrador self-assessment tool or have been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases; AND**
- **24 hours has passed since their symptoms have resolved.**

Appendix ii: Hand Hygiene Guidance

| When Students Should Perform Hand Hygiene: | When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene: |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When they arrive at school.• Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch).• Before and after eating and drinking (excluding drinks kept at a student's desk or locker).• Before and after using an indoor learning space used by multiple cohorts (e.g., the gym, music room, science lab, etc.).• After using the toilet.• After sneezing or coughing into hands.• Whenever hands are visibly dirty. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When they arrive at school.• Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch).• Before and after eating and drinking.• Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.• Before and after giving medication to a student or self.• After using the toilet.• After contact with body fluids (e.g., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood).• After cleaning tasks.• After removing gloves.• After handling garbage.• Whenever hands are visibly dirty. |