

Protocols for K-12 education

Restricting access to the school

- All workers and students who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days or were identified as a close contact of a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must stay home and self-isolate in accordance with guidance from the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#).
- Clearly communicate with parents and caregivers their responsibility to assess their children daily before sending them to school. Alternatively, conduct a daily health check at drop-off by asking parents and caregivers to confirm their child does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease.
- Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school. If a student develops symptoms while at home, parents or caregivers must keep their child at home until they have been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, and their symptoms have resolved.
- If a student develops symptoms while at school:
 - 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.
 - Contact 811 or the local public health unit to notify them of a potential case and seek further input.
 - Where possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres from the ill student. If not possible, staff may wear a mask if available and tolerated, or use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth.
 - Provide the student with tissues to cover their coughs or sneezes. Throw away used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene.
 - Avoid touching the student's body fluids (e.g., mucous, saliva). If you do, practice diligent hand hygiene.
 - Once the student is picked up, practice diligent hand hygiene.
 - Workers responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the student was separated and any areas 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.

Administration areas

- Limit the public coming into the office. Encourage parents and others to call instead of visiting the school.
- Designate a 2 metre area in front of or behind a kiosk. Consider the use of tape or other floor markers to designate where people can stand and line up (if required).
- Plexiglass may be used to separate administrative workers from the public if two metres of separation cannot be maintained.

Student management and hygiene

Hygiene

- Develop policies around when students should wash their hands. This should include, at minimum:
 - When they arrive at school and before they go home
 - Before eating and drinking
 - After using the toilet
 - After sneezing or coughing into hands or tissue
 - Whenever hands are visibly dirty
 - When moving between different learning environments (e.g., outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom).
- Workers should assist younger students with hand hygiene as needed.
- If a sink is not available use alcohol based hand sanitizer. Antiseptic agents are to be used as a last line of defense only.
- Food should not be shared by students.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables with soap and cold water then rinse before consuming.
- Place all parent provided food items in a designated, delineated and freshly sanitized tabletop/countertop area labelled "Incoming Food" upon arrival.

Physical distancing

- Parents and caregivers should remain outside of the school to drop off their children.
- Avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes and remind students to keep their hands to themselves when possible.
- Consider using educational videos and online programs as a part of learning so young students can sit independently and distanced from each other.
- Consider teaching classes outside when practicable.
- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between students and staff. For younger students, adapt group activities to minimize physical contact and reduce shared items. For adolescent students, minimize group activities and avoid activities that require physical contact.
- Organize students into smaller groups that stay together throughout the day.
- Strive to minimize the number of different teacher(s) and educational assistant(s) that interact with groups of students throughout the day.
- Consider different classroom configurations to maintain distance between students or different locations in the school (e.g., different classrooms, gym or library, outside).
- Discourage any food or drink sharing.
- Eliminate group food preparation activities.
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch, and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.

Physical distancing

- Establish and post [occupancy limits](#) for shared spaces such as lunch rooms and break rooms. Consider removing chairs or tables to ensure occupancy limits are not exceeded. If possible, provide additional areas for workers to have their breaks, including outside areas if available.
- Stagger start and end of shift times as well as break times for workers to prevent crowding when entering and leaving the workplace.
- Maintain 2 metre physical distancing whenever possible between workers and students. Consider the use of virtual meetings or other means to reduce the number of staff onsite. Modify work processes and practices to encourage physical distancing between staff and student, and other workers.
- Provide instructions to workers on methods for maintaining physical distance such as not greeting others by hugging or shaking hands.
- If workers need to meet in person, ensure there is a 2 metre space between each worker.
- Manage the flow of people in public spaces such as hallways and on stairs, consider the use of one-way systems.
- Assemblies and other school-wide events should be held virtually to avoid a large number of people gathered in one space.
- If staff need to travel between worksites, maintain physical distance in vehicles wherever possible. Consider separate vehicles if possible. Larger vehicles may be able to accommodate physical distancing by using a seat configuration that maximizes distance between people.

Hygiene

- Encourage workers and students to remain on site and not to leave during lunch or at break times.
- Ensure hand washing supplies are available at all times (i.e., soap, clean towels, paper towels and, if needed, 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Develop and establish handwashing policies and procedures for all staff and others at the school. WorkSafeBC [handwashing signage](#) is provided to communicate good handwashing practices. Post handwashing signs near all sinks. Workers, including teachers, administrators and support workers should wash their hands frequently to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Ensure workers are provided with appropriate supplies and facilities with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. Hand hygiene stations should be set up at the school entrance and other locations as appropriate.
- Consider the maximum number of workers and students required to wash their hands at peak times and ensure that sufficient hand washing or sanitizing stations are available for these times.
- Promote effective hygiene practices. Refer to [WorkSafeBC's hygiene practices signage](#).

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

- [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) guidance](#) for K-12 school settings is that personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves are not needed, beyond those used by staff

as part of regular precautions for the hazards normally encountered in their regular course of work.

- Where PPE has been identified for tasks prior to COVID-19 pandemic, continue to use this PPE when performing these tasks.

Cleaning and sanitizing

- Schools should be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the BC CDC's [Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings](#). Cleaning practices should be in line with the provincial health officer's [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Childcare Settings](#).
- Develop a cleaning policy that focuses on high-traffic areas and high-contact surfaces such as doors and cabinet handles, stair railings, washrooms, shared office spaces, desks, keyboards, light switches, and communications devices.
- Set up a cleaning and disinfecting schedule so that high touch surfaces are frequently cleaned during the day. General cleaning and disinfecting of the premises should occur at least once a day. Frequently-touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day.
- Remove shared items where cross-contamination is possible (e.g., shared school supplies, coffee and water stations, and snack bins).
- Incorporate end-of-shift wipe downs for all shared spaces.
- Empty your garbage containers often (at least daily).
- Clean and disinfect cots and mattresses prior to use and after they are used or soiled. Use single use only pillow cases and blankets and dispose of them immediately after single use. Where pillow cases and blankets are not single use, launder between each student.
- Providing adequate instruction, training, and supplies to custodians on the cleaning protocols developed for the workplace.

Buses and school transportation

- Clean and disinfect the high touch areas of the bus at the start of your shift and after drop offs. Buses used for transporting students should be cleaned and disinfected according the guidance provided in the BC CDC's [Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings](#) document.
- Encouraging private vehicle use where possible to decrease transportation density.
- Have students sit in their own seat wherever possible, students from the same household can share seats if space is limited.
- If safe distances cannot be maintained between students and bus drivers, plexiglass barriers may be erected provided they do not obstruct the view of the driver or the safe operation of the vehicle.

Communication strategies

- Remind staff that all health and safety measures in place prior to the pandemic are still in place.
- Attempt to mitigate staff confusion and concerns by communicating essential health and safety information to them in writing before they return to the workplace. If possible, give staff an appropriate amount of time to review this material, and to respond with questions.
- Upon first return to the workplace, hold a health and safety meeting to review workplace practices relating to COVID-19 and other health and safety matters. Additional communication may be required as new information is made available that may affect work practices.
- Daily check-in meeting with workers to provide them with new information and review any concerns.
- Ensure that parents and caregivers understand your policy that students must stay home if they are sick.
- Minimize the number of non-essential people coming into the school such as parents and caregivers and contractors.
- Keep parents and caregivers informed about what you are doing in your educational setting regarding taking extra precautions.
- Ensure that workers know how to raise safety concerns. This may be through your joint health and safety committee.
- Establishing a central location where new information is posted relating to COVID-19 in your workplace.

Documentation and training

- Train your workers on:
 - The risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
 - Safe work procedures or instruction to be followed, including hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.
 - How to report an exposure to or symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Changes you've made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep records of that training.
 - Document COVID-19 related meetings and post minutes at a central location.
- Keep records of instruction and training provided to workers regarding COVID-19, as well as reports of exposure and first aid records.

Safety responsibilities by role

Employer (school district)

- Select, implement, and document risk assessments and appropriate site-specific control measures.

- Ensure that all resources (information, authorization administrative changes, technology, training, human resources) and materials (personal protective equipment, equipment, cleaning and disinfecting products and systems) required to implement and maintain plan are reasonably made available as practical when required.
- Ensure that supervisors and workers are informed about the content of safety policies.
- Conduct a periodic review the effectiveness of the plan. This includes a review of the available control technologies to ensure that these are selected and used when practical.
- Maintain records of training and inspections.
- Re-examine all tasks in the workplace, especially those that require the direct care of students, and ensure that safe work procedures are updated with COVID-19 practices.
- Where possible, have workers perform only essential tasks to maintain the student's education and well-being. Tasks that are non-essential should be put on hold until directed otherwise by the provincial health officer.

Supervisors (principals and vice principals)

- Ensure that workers are knowledgeable regarding the controls required to minimize their risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Direct work in a manner that eliminates or minimizes the risk to workers.
- Post or relay educational and informational material in an accessible area for workers to review.

Workers (teachers, education assistants, support staff and outside contractors)

- Know the controls required to minimize their risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Participate in COVID-19 related training and instruction.
- Follow established work procedures and instructions as directed by the employer or supervisor.
- Report any unsafe conditions or acts to the supervisor.
- Know how and when to report exposure incidents.

Service operations managers (operations forepersons)

- Maintaining an inventory of PPE for custodians, [cleaning and disinfectant products](#), and well-maintained equipment used for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Providing adequate instruction to custodians on the hazards associated with cleaning work areas and on the safe work procedures specified in this exposure control plan.
- Directing the work in a manner that ensures the risk to custodians is minimized and adequately controlled.
- Revising the work schedule to ensure priority intensive cleaning of impacted work area surfaces and touch points.

www.worksafefbc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/education