

2021-22 Safe Schools Plan

The safety of our students and staff continues to be our top priority. As of July 11, Premier Scott Moe and Chief Medical Health Officer (CMHO) Dr. Shahab announced that Saskatchewan has entered the last phase of the Re-Opening Roadmap and all public health orders have been lifted.

While public health orders are no longer in place and the aim is to have the 2021-22 school year proceed as during pre-pandemic years as much as possible, the ministries of Health and Education are continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation in Saskatchewan. School divisions are also continuing to work with their local medical health officers in responding to any public health risks in school settings.

Much like other businesses and sectors throughout the province, public health officials have determined that it is safe for schools to resume traditional in-class learning.

High community vaccine uptake is key to protecting children ineligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. According to Dr. Shahab, children ages 11 and under are not independently mobile, so if the vaccination rate is high in parents, families, friends and educators, that indirectly protects children ages 11 and under. Schools have not been a major source of direct COVID-19 infection and the transmission rate is lower in schools than it is in the community. As of August 20, anyone turning 12 in the current year is immediately eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. This means that individuals born in 2009 can now be vaccinated, regardless of their birth date.

The Ministry of Health continues to offer best practice advice on how to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. This includes getting vaccinated, staying home when you are sick, and ensuring hand hygiene and environmental cleaning protocols are consistently used (see Appendix A).

The Ministry of Health recommends that children under the age of 12, unvaccinated teachers and unvaccinated support staff wear masks in common spaces such as hallways, washrooms, lunch rooms, libraries and school buses. Once students are seated in their classrooms, it is appropriate to remove masks. For outdoor activities such as recess or outdoor gym classes, there is no recommendation for students or staff to wear masks. Once vaccines are approved and widely available to children under the age of 12, recommendations regarding masking and other measures in schools will be revisited to factor in increased immunity within the student population.

All schools will continue to have the support and engagement of local Medical Health Officers (MHOs) in responding to any public health risks in school settings, including COVID-19. These MHOs can provide locally-tailored approaches to respond to the presence of COVID-19 in school settings, should that occur, and put in place mitigation and response protocols that align with provincial standards. When cases are identified in schools, schools and school divisions will continue to be notified by public health officials in order to inform students and parents. Contact tracing will continue to occur, and unvaccinated close contacts may be directed to self-isolate as deemed appropriate by public health.

Local MHOs are also closely engaged with the Office of the CMHO.

Updated as of August 20, 2021

Per Dr. Shahab,

“Public health—at both local and provincial levels—has a long history and well-established model for working with the education sector. As always, the Office of the CMHO will continue to work with local Medical Health Officers across the province, and collaborate with schools, divisions and the Ministry of Education, to continuously offer advice on the mitigation and management of COVID-19 in the school setting. Our longstanding track record of successfully working together has been further enhanced by our collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we remain committed to collaboration as we focus on a return to normal.”

The current approach is subject to change if there is change in risk or epidemiology.

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To assist school divisions in planning for fall 2021, the following elements for consideration have been prepared. Unlike last year, there is no need to submit your plans to the Ministry of Education this year.

Appendix A

Quick Reference Guidelines	
Safe Attendance	<p><i>Illness in Care</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, staff, families who are ill should stay home. <p><i>Communications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple modes of ongoing communication should occur.
Safe Transportation	<p><i>Transportation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning and disinfection should remain in place and be a standard practice. • It is recommended students under the age of 12 and unvaccinated adults wear masks in common areas such as buses.
Safe Access	<p><i>School-day Structure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No prescribed school-day structure is required.
Safe Facilities	<p><i>Facilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that children under 12, and unvaccinated school staff wear masks in common areas such as hallways, washrooms, lunch rooms and libraries. For outdoor activities such as recess or outdoor gym classes, there is no recommendation for students to mask. • School-wide plan for enhanced cleaning and disinfection should continue to be in place. • Ensure hand washing facilities are operational (hot and cold running water) and stocked (soap and paper towel).
Safe Classrooms	<p><i>Masks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is appropriate for students and staff to remove masks, if they choose, when in their classrooms. <p><i>Hygiene</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote appropriate hand hygiene. <p><i>Physical Contact</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no guidelines for physical distancing for students or staff. <p><i>Instruction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Saskatchewan curriculum will be taught by teachers. • The Provincial Education Interim Plan provides guidance for this area. <p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial exams are optional for the 2021-22 school year.

Updated as of August 20, 2021

<p>Safe Activities</p>	<p><i>Sports and Fitness Activities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume regular activities. <p><i>Dance, Drama, Band, Choir</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume regular activities. <p><i>Extra-Curricular Activities and Field Trips</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume regular activities. <p><i>Nutrition Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume regular activities. • Continue good practice of controlling areas where children are preparing food and/or eating (seated, hand hygiene, cleaning and sanitation of food surfaces, etc.).
<p>Other Items</p>	<p><i>Vaccinations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff assume the shared responsibility of assisting one another in maintaining healthy and safe workplaces. • Staff are encouraged to avail themselves of all Ministry of Health recommended vaccinations. • Staff are encouraged to discuss the efficacy of recommended vaccinations with their personal health care providers. • Anyone turning 12 this year and older is currently eligible for vaccines. <p><i>Rapid Testing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to follow current practice. <p><i>Contact Tracing and Quarantining</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collaboration between the Saskatchewan Health Authority and schools will continue and will reflect the needs of the school as required. • When cases are identified in schools, schools and school divisions will continue to be notified by public health officials in order to inform students and parents. Contact tracing will continue to occur, and unvaccinated close contacts may be directed to self-isolate as deemed appropriate by public health.