

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Student Health and Safety

What safety precautions will be in place?

Schools will take a zero tolerance approach to illness and COVID-like symptoms that cannot be explained by other underlying health conditions (e.g. asthma that produces a dry cough). Schools will also promote healthy attendance and hygiene along with cohorting (smaller groups of students who attend classes together) and physical distancing, where possible. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be made available to any staff or students who request it, but it is not required. Students can expect frequent hand washing/sanitizing and regular hygiene reminders.

Will my child need to wear a mask (or any other form of PPE) to attend school?

UPDATE from the Government of Alberta: Effective August 4, [school health measures include mandatory masks](#) for Grade 4 to 12 students and staff where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

What will recess look like?

Schools will make the best efforts to reduce risk without removing outside play. Students will not be required to wear PPE to play on the playground. Students will be expected to follow proper hygiene practices before, during, and after playing on the playground. Schools may reduce the number of children on the playground at any given time.

What is the plan for sick kids coming to school?

We are all in this together and each family will be expected to use the screening tool to self-assess each morning before sending their child to school. However, a child who arrives at school and is showing symptoms will be isolated based on health guidelines: a minimum physical distance of two metres and preferably in a location away from other students. Office staff will reach out to parents and/or emergency contacts to pick up the child, along with the reminder of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's directive that symptomatic students (and adults) MUST not come to school.

I'm in favour of a return to school in September, but what if there is a second wave between now and August? My views and choices may differ.

Alberta Education is targeting Scenario 1 – Normal school operations are able to resume. However, Scenarios 2 and 3 are included in the event of a school or regional outbreak of COVID-19. School divisions and schools must have planning in place so that they are ready to switch scenarios on short notice.

Will I have to drive my child(ren) to school? What if I don't want to send my child(ren) on the bus?

While busing will be provided for any student living farther than 2.4 km from their school, it is a parent's choice whether to send their child(ren) on the bus or drive them to and from school.

What happens if there is a COVID-19 case at school?

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 occurs, AHS will likely conduct contact tracing and advise PWPSD of the next steps.

Will there be additional cleaning in the schools?

Yes. We are currently procuring additional cleaning supplies for increased regular and routine cleaning. Students will be responsible to clean up after themselves more frequently and classrooms will have less clutter to allow for more effective cleaning.

Is it safe to send my child to school before a vaccine is developed?

The return to in-class learning is not without risk of virus transmission. Public health officials will monitor the situation closely and be ready with a plan that enables a rapid response to cases of COVID-19 in a school. While procedures will be in place to encourage physical distancing or cohorts where possible, it is also important to use the self-screening tool, stay at home if you are feeling ill, and get tested if you display any of the symptoms.

Mental Health Supports for Students

What plans do schools have for students who have been struggling and are now returning to school? What plans will schools put in place if we have to continue with remote learning?

Research shows that people of all ages recover better after a crisis if they feel safe and connected to other people, and if they have social and emotional support. This will be the premise that PWPSD will use to guide the re-entry plans. In the event that we have to continue with remote learning, supports and services will remain in place to support the mental well-being of students.

Addressing Potential Gaps in Student Learning

How will special learning plans be affected this school year?

In Scenarios 1 and 2, students who come to school will be provided with a learning plan specific to their individualized program plan, developed in collaboration with teachers and inclusive education staff, and discussed with parents on a case-by-case basis.

How will students "catch up" once they are back in school?

Schools have been provided the flexibility to adjust their subject timetables in 2020-21 to allow more instructional time for core subjects, while still providing a balance of non-core subjects and breaks throughout the school day.

Transition Plans for Return to In-School Learning

Are school divisions working together to coordinate planning?

Senior leadership are in regular contact with one another to develop similar plans in order to best meet the needs of all families in this area, when and where possible.

Will there be a Kindergarten orientation?

Many schools offer either an orientation, a staggered entry or something similar to help Kindergarten children comfortably adjust to their school. Please contact your school near the end of August to see how they begin Kindergarten.

When will parents find out which scenario schools will be returning to?

Alberta Education has stated they will make the decision on the return to school plan by August 1st.

Can I pick and choose which classes/subjects I want my child(ren) to attend at school, and I can teach the rest at home?

The decision for which scenario we are following is made by the provincial government. If you have specific concerns, we encourage you to speak directly with your school's principal.

Will at-home learning be an option if schools open with restrictions?

Yes. There are many different situations that could require families to choose home learning versus attending a school during this pandemic. This is an ongoing topic of discussion for the PWPSD Re-entry Committee, but PWPSD is considering a home learning option for families. Please register with your local school to reserve a spot in the event you would like to send your child later in the school year. Additionally, a teacher will be assigned to provide online learning to your child.

If at-home learning is still happening in September, will the process be the same or how will it change?

If at-home learning continues in September (Scenario 3), there will be more defined and enhanced requirements for all stakeholders that will be explained in our re-entry plan and ongoing communication. A group of teachers have developed additional guidelines and expectations for teachers and students.

If students are to attend school part-time, is it possible to attend a week on and a week off, as opposed to every other day?

In the event the government directs any school or jurisdiction to Scenario 2, the goal will be to provide a level of continuity

to learning that may not be possible with a week on/week off type of schedule. Having students attend a portion of each week would provide the best opportunity for learning continuity, retention and intervention.

Transportation Plans

How can students possibly physical distance on a school bus?

In situations where physical distancing is not possible (e.g., busses, classrooms and some sporting activities and therapeutic interventions), extra emphasis will be placed on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfecting. Where two metres of physical distance is not possible (especially if prolonged close contact for more than 15 minutes is required), teachers, staff and students will have access to non-medical face masks and may choose to wear them to protect one another.

Physical Education and Extracurricular Activities

Will students be permitted to participate in P.E. and have recess?

Yes, both Scenarios 1 and 2 include a variety of subjects and regular breaks.

Will school sports still run?

Under Scenario 1, teams may still practice in the fall.

UPDATE from the AASA, August 13, 2020: [Fall provincials postponed until Gov. of AB moves to Stage 3.](#)

School Year Calendar

What would Scenario 2 look like?

Under Scenario 2, we would look to stagger school days for students to enhance physical distancing and meet the limits of 15 students per classroom. This may look different in every school, based on student enrollments and space. In the event where students are attending school part-time, we will attempt to have all students from one home attending school on the same days.

Preparing for the New Reality

Does the PWPSD Re-entry Committee include parent reps?

The Committee includes a range of school administrators and Central Office executives, and some are also parents of PWPSD students. They have provided valuable feedback and insight into the realities of balancing remote learning while working full-time.