

# Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education School Re-Entry Information

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On Tuesday, July 21, The Government of Alberta along with Alberta Education announced that schools across Alberta will be welcoming students back under Scenario 1: In-class learning with enhanced health and safety measures.

We are looking forward to being back in our school buildings with our staff and students on August 31. It is our promise that safety and wellness in our schools will continue to be a priority as we return to school.

## Government of Alberta Resources

- [COVID-19 information: Guidance for schools on re-entry scenario 1](#)
- [COVID-19 information: parents' guide 2020-21 school year](#)
- [Get the facts: Back to class for 2020-21](#)
- [K-12 school re-entry tool kit](#)

## Daily Health Checks and Screening Measures

Self-screening questionnaire: Parents, students and school staff must review the self-screening questionnaire each day before going to a school building. Visitors must also use this questionnaire to determine if they may enter a school.

- [Self-screening questionnaire \(PDF\)](#)

## Re-Entry Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The questions and answers in this document are accurate as of Friday, July 31, 2020 and are subject to change based on Health and Safety guidelines. Each individual school will be sharing their own re-entry guide with families before the first day of school that will help answer school-specific questions for the 2020-2021 school year.

### Will school bell times/semesters change due to COVID-19?

School bell times have not been modified as of July 31 and can be found [here](#). Your child's school day should not be dramatically different from the regular school days prior to COVID-19. School-specific information will be shared with families as the new school year approaches. **Note:** Monsignor McCoy High School will continue running a two-semester format.



## **Will staff and students be required to wear a mask?**

No. Students and staff are welcome to wear a mask but masks are not required at this time. Parents are welcome to send masks to school with their children. Schools will foster a respectful environment in which there are no stigmas associated with wearing masks and taking other precautions. Staff will be provided with masks (and face shields when necessary) and each school has masks available if children show symptoms of illness during the school day.

## **Hand sanitizer and regular hand washing:**

Hand sanitizer stations are being installed at the entrance of every school as well as outside every classroom. Hand drying stations are being replaced by paper towel dispensers. There will be regular scheduled handwashing breaks (i.e. after recess, before lunch, etc.)

## **Physical distancing and cohorting:**

As the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is reduced by limiting exposure to others, cohorts are recommended in schools where possible. A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. The size of the cohort will depend on the physical space of the classroom or learning setting.

Cohorting will be done in schools for the purposes of contact tracing and limiting unnecessary physical interaction. Staff and students will be mindful of physical distancing even within a cohort whenever possible to minimize the risk for transmission (i.e. spacing between desks).

## **What modifications are being made in classrooms?**

- Classrooms, desktops, and countertops will be decluttered of all non-essential items to allow for custodial cleaning. This will also provide a 'minimalist' type environment to accommodate space required for social distancing, limit frequently touched items and prevent sharing of spaces and items.
- Area rugs and soft furnishings that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected will be removed.
- There will be little to no communal items in classrooms. Books, computers and high touch items will be sanitized regularly.
- Where possible, natural ventilation will be maximized by opening the doors and windows to periodically circulate airflow.
- Each class will have a sanitization station outside the classroom. Students are welcome to bring their own personal bottle of hand sanitizer if they choose.
- Assigned classroom seating will assist in contact tracing
- Workspaces and desks should be separated from each other by a minimum of 2 meters.
  - If 2 meters cannot be arranged between desks/tables, desks may be set up in rows or around the perimeter of the room so that children are not directly facing one another. This way, if a student coughs or sneezes, they are not likely to cough or sneeze directly on the face of another student.
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### **Will my child be required to sit at their desk all day?**

No. Students will be able to move around their classroom and work with their classmates as scenario 1 strives for a “near normal” school situation. Staff will be mindful of physical distancing within their cohort to minimize the risk for transmission. Teachers may also choose to deliver instruction outdoors when appropriate. Our goal is to keep the school day as “normal” as possible while following health and safety guidelines.

### **Who will do the enhanced cleaning?**

Custodial staff will be engaged in more frequent cleaning. Daytime custodians will be present so that ongoing cleaning of “high touch” surfaces (door knobs/light switches/handrails) and common spaces (bathrooms) can be conducted frequently throughout the day with deep cleans in the evening.

Gentle, non-toxic cleaning products (approved by Health Canada) will be available to staff and students for occasional use. Only custodial staff and other, selected, support staff will work with cleaning supplies other than those described here.

### **Shared School Spaces**

Learning Commons, gymnasiums, and foyers remain available for instructional use maximizing physical distancing where possible. Fitness centres and gymnasiums are only to be used for curricular purposes - again with an emphasis on maintaining physical distancing. Playgrounds remain open for student use. Protocols about visiting the school office whether that be for parents, students or staff will be established and shared at each school level. Each school is required to have a space dedicated for COVID-19 quarantining.

### **What will elementary school recess look like?**

Schools may limit the number of students on playground equipment at any one time and ensure students are washing/sanitizing hands before and after using the playground. In an effort to maintain good mental health and wellness, students will continue to have a chance to play and socialize with their classmates. Recesses may be staggered so that fewer children are on the playground and class sets of play equipment will be provided. Low contact games and activities that support reasonable distancing will be encouraged.

### **What about the Physical Education (PE) program?**

When possible, PE programming will be delivered outdoors. Teachers will modify units and activities so there is limited physical contact of people or resources. Initially, this will result in a focus on individual skills rather than team skills.



## **What about Music, Dance, CTF and CTS programs?**

Instruction of dance, music, and theatre may proceed so long as the [guidance for music, dance, and theatre](#) is followed. Music, dance and theatrical performances are cancelled at this time. CTF and CTS earning opportunities will be modified, where possible, to ensure appropriate physical distancing can be maintained.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips should not be scheduled, they remain cancelled at this time.

## **Academy Programs**

Academy offsite programming may proceed with appropriate social distancing and hand washing procedures in place.

## **School bus safety measures**

The public health measures for school buses include increased cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces, maintaining a protective zone for the driver, assigning students to seats that are grouped with other household members, and using loading/unloading procedures that support physical distancing. Students are now required to register for school bus transportation. Learn more about school bus registration on our website: <https://www.mhcbe.ab.ca/our-district/news/post/school-bus-registration>.

## **Will my child be required to bring or purchase their own electronic device to school? (i.e. iPad, laptop, Chromebook etc.)**

No. Should a student need to take a device home, families can make arrangements with their school principal to sign out a device as needed.

## **If a student has symptoms related to allergies or a pre-existing medical condition**

Students with preexisting conditions should be tested at least once before returning to school and have a negative COVID-19 test result. These symptoms would be their baseline health status. As long as the cough or runny nose is always the same and does not get worse, the student can attend school. Talk to your school about your child's pre-existing medical condition so the school may keep a confidential record of this condition. Learn more: [Alberta Health Services Guidance Document](#)

## **What will be the impact on school assemblies and liturgies?**

These gatherings will be suspended while there continues to be gathering restrictions. Announcements and Liturgies will be conducted using the school PA system or streamed video.



## If a student shows symptoms at school

Any student presenting symptoms as identified in the self-monitoring checklist will be asked to wear a mask and be isolated in a separate room and kept at least 2 metres away from others. We want to assure parents that the situation will be handled in a caring and compassionate way and their emotional needs will be met. The child's parent/guardian will be contacted and required to pick up their child from school immediately. Note: parents/guardians should ensure their child's school has the most up-to-date contact information.

- Staff supervising symptomatic students must
  - Keep student isolated
  - Provide the student with a face mask (schools will have a supply of disposable face masks available)
  - Use strict hand washing techniques
  - Maintain physical distancing
- After the student is picked-up, post a sign indicating the room must be cleaned and contact the appropriate custodial staff.
- All items the student touched/used that day will be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the student has been picked up. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (i.e. paper, books, cardboard puzzles) will be removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 10 days.

## If there is a case of COVID-19 at school

A public health team will investigate the case to find out when the symptoms developed and support the school to minimize the spread. Parents/guardians will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school and public health officials will contact those who were in close contact with the case.

The zone medical officer of health will work with school authorities to quickly:

- identify cases
- identify close contacts
- create isolation measures when needed
- provide follow-up recommendations

A COVID-19 case will not automatically lead to school closure. Parents will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school and public health officials will contact those who were in close contact with the person. Each school authority will support students and staff to learn or work at home if they are required to self-isolate.

## What about lunch programs?

Staff and students will be required to pack-in and pack-out all food each day. Parents/guardians will be asked to have student food provided in clean containers with their own utensils. Staff and students will not share food, utensils, dishes, and water bottles or drink containers. The provision of brown bag lunch may be a possibility.

- Schools that currently have a School Nutrition Program will continue to be served meals following guidance from Alberta Health Services.



### **What if my child is immunocompromised and requires online learning?**

Students requiring online learning will be accommodated on a case by case basis. Families are encouraged to contact their school principal or email [info@mhcbe.ab.ca](mailto:info@mhcbe.ab.ca) to explore modified learning options for your child.

### **Where can I find more detailed information about MHCBE's plans for the upcoming school year?**

Schools are in the process of developing their own school-specific re-entry guide to answer questions staff and families may have. A full school re-entry guide will be published for each school before the return of school in August.

### **If I have a question or concern who should I contact?**

All questions can be directed to your school principal or to the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education at 403-527-2292 or via email to [info@mhcbe.ab.ca](mailto:info@mhcbe.ab.ca).

*Please note:* School divisions do not have the authority to make public health decisions. If steps are taken in relation to a public health concern, is at the direction of Alberta Health Services and local health authorities. The Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education is in regular communication with Alberta Education, Alberta Health Services and school divisions across the province.

