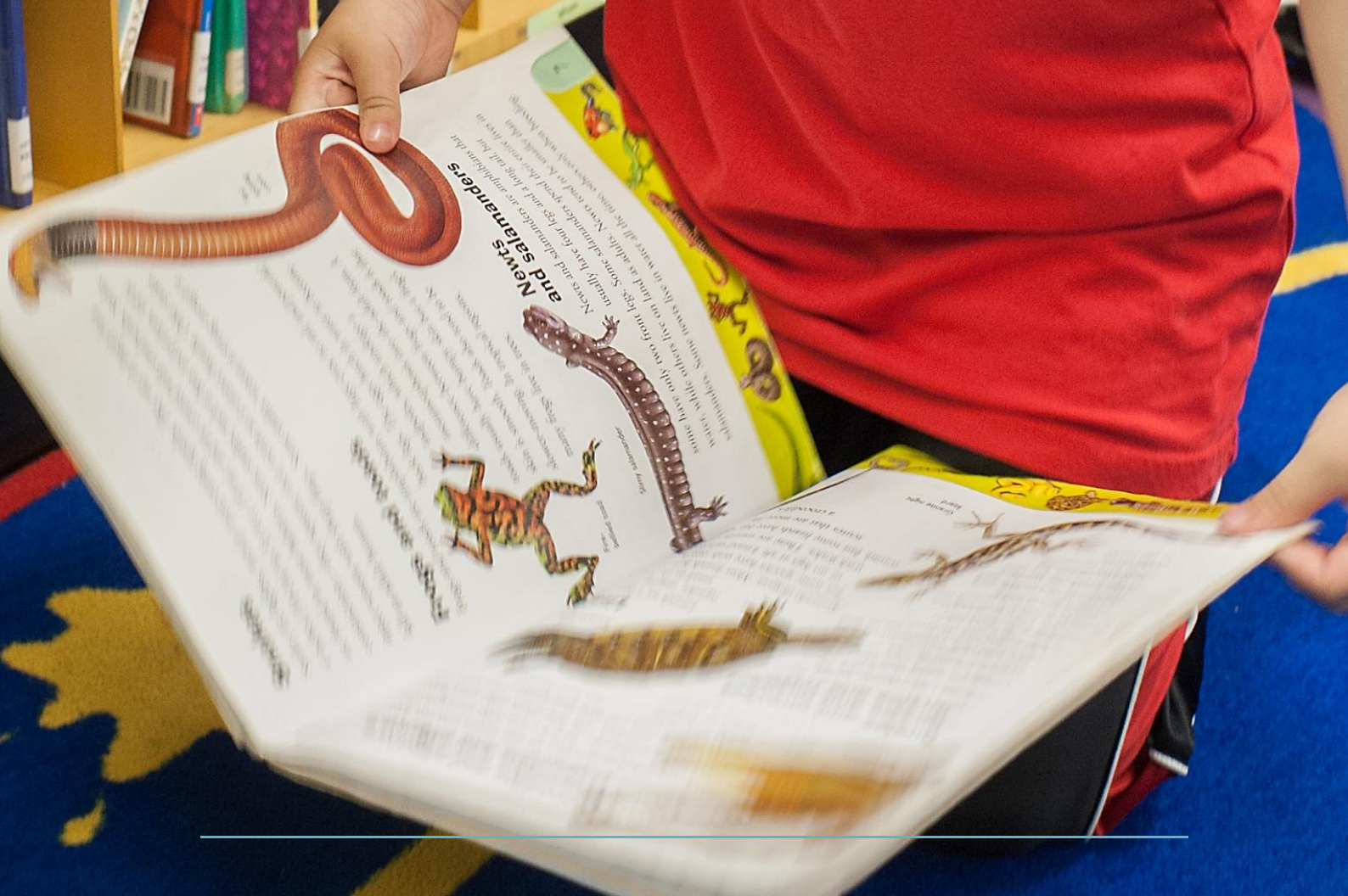




WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL PLAN

2021





Welcome back students and staff!

The combined efforts of students, teachers, families, administrators and school staff helped make the 2020-2021 school year as close to normal as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students attended in-class learning and participated in sports and extracurricular activities, teachers, parents, and school staff embraced public health measures with determination, and cases of COVID-19 were minimal and quickly addressed with support from the Chief Public Health Office. Prince Edward Island was the only Canadian jurisdiction to be able to maintain in-class learning all school year.

INTRODUCTION

The Prince Edward Island Back to School Plan for September 2021 will build on the success of our 2020-2021 school year and prioritizes the safety and well-being of students and staff while striving to return to a near-normal school environment.

The plan describes what students, parents, guardians, and staff can expect this school year based on public health guidelines in line with Prince Edward Island's *Moving Forward plan*.

The 2021-2022 Back to School Plan is based on community transmission risk and outlines the public health measures that will be implemented in both low risk and elevated risk scenarios.

Provided the epidemiology remains consistent, it is expected that all Island schools will begin in September in a low-risk scenario with enhanced mask protocols. Should the situation change, school operational plans similar to those used during the last school year may be enacted.

PRINCIPLES AND FACTORS

The Back-to-School 2021-2022 public health guidance is informed by the following core principles:

- Minimizing COVID-19 transmission in the community is key to supporting in-school learning.
- The safety of students, staff, and school communities is essential.
- Full-time in-person instruction is vital to student learning and overall health and well-being.
- Peer-to-peer interaction and school-based activities maximizes social development.
- Some ongoing measures are recommended for schools throughout in the 2021-2022 school year, and other enhanced measures will depend on the level of risk in the community.

These principles are influenced by the following factors:

- Rates of vaccination are high among the eligible PEI population.
 - Adults are much more likely 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.
 - A fourth wave of COVID-19 is being driven by the Delta variant.
 - Children under age 12 are not currently eligible for vaccination.
 - Vaccines are not expected to be authorized for children ages 5-11 until late fall or early winter.
 - Indoor spaces like school buildings are a higher risk than outdoor spaces.
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2021-22 school year

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Unless otherwise stated, measures apply to all grades:

	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccination rates for those eligible are expected to be 80% or higher when school starts in the fall. When vaccine is approved for 5-12 year-olds everyone who is able will be encouraged to get fully vaccinated. Education authorities will work with the Chief Public Health Office and Health PEI to develop pop-up immunization clinics in schools for students and staff as necessary within the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.
Screening and Managing Symptoms of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily home or self-screening for symptoms of COVID-19 using the <u>COVID-19 symptom screening tool</u> is recommended for staff, students, and visitors. If experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, get tested; testing guidance may evolve over time, refer to the most up to date information on the testing webpage. Schools should follow procedures for students, staff and visitors who become sick during the school day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.



	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Hand Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent hand washing or using hand sanitizer is encouraged throughout the day and proper respiratory etiquette, using age-appropriate interventions. • Handwashing supplies and alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be made available throughout the school. • Signage on personal hygiene etiquette such as handwashing, and sneezing and coughing etiquette, should be clearly posted throughout the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.
Cleaning and Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular cleaning and disinfection schedules with additional focus on frequently touched objects like door handles, railings, and waste containers, and shared items, like sports equipment, both in schools and on buses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection for frequently touched surfaces, particularly between cohorts or where no cohorting is possible.
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to ventilation systems are recommended in schools where they do not meet standards. • It is recommended that ventilation systems be maintained to appropriate standards. • It is recommended to open windows when possible, and when weather permits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.



	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Masking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks are strongly recommended for staff, students, and visitors who are not fully vaccinated. • Masks are recommended for staff who work with students who are at higher risk of severe illness and outcomes from COVID-19 whenever physical distancing is not possible, regardless of vaccination status. • Masks are not required for students in school or on school buses. • It is the choice of the student, staff, or visitor to wear a mask if they choose. • Anyone who wants to wear a mask is supported in doing so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks are recommended for staff, students, and visitors in all grades when transitioning through school buildings. • Masks are recommended for staff who work with students who are at higher risk of severe illness and outcomes from COVID-19 whenever physical distancing is not possible, regardless of vaccination status. • Masks are recommended for staff in classrooms in Grades K to 6 when physical distancing is not possible. • Masks are recommended for staff, students, and visitors at all times in Grades 7 to 12 when physical distancing is not possible. • Masks are recommended for students in all grades on school buses.
<p>The Chief Public Health Office recommends some mask measures remain in place as a short-term measure until October 2021, with further assessment at that time. These measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks are recommended for staff, students, and visitors in all grades when transitioning through school buildings. • Masks are recommended for staff in classrooms in Grades K to 6 when physical distancing is not possible. • Masks are recommended for staff and students in all grades on school buses. 		



	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Cohorting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohorting is not required in school or on buses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohorting may be recommended in Grades K to 6, for both staff and students during classroom learning, recess, and breaks. Cohorting not recommended in Grades 7 to 12 unless the school population is small enough that it can be effectively implemented. Students should sit with consistent groups on the bus. Visitors should be limited to essential activities for supporting learning.
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing is not required, however, preventing crowding in indoor common spaces (e.g., entrances, hallways, gymnasiums, and buses) is encouraged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing may be recommended in Grades 7-12, including, but not limited to, classroom desk configuration, locker/cubby access, cafeterias, and flow control in hallways and stairwells. Physical distancing may be recommended for staff areas. Physical distancing may be encouraged with people from outside of their close social groups and/or cohorts (if cohorts are in place).



	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Gatherings and Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should be given to hosting in-school gatherings, assemblies, and extracurricular activities in Grades K to 6 and in schools with larger populations. • Gatherings and school sport activities must follow current community public health measures (e.g. gathering limits of 200 outdoors, 100 if the activity includes close contact, and 100 indoors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.
Vulnerable Students and Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable students and staff can attend school; they may want to consult with their health care provider. • Alternative education plans (e.g., online learning) for those individuals who are at higher risk of COVID-19 and are not attending in person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.
Community Use of School Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community use of school facilities and access to buildings should follow current community public health measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community use of school facilities and access to buildings should follow current community public health measures.
Operational Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should have operational plans, including for the elevated risk scenarios. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School applies operational plan for elevated risk scenario.



	Low-Risk Ongoing Public Health Measures	Elevated Risk Enhanced Public Health Measures
Bussing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupancy may return to normal levels for K-12. Masking not required. <p>* The Chief Public Health Office recommends some mask measures remain in place as a short-term measure until October 2021, with further assessment at that time. Masks are recommended for staff and students in all grades on school buses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative means of transportation other than bussing are encouraged, where reasonable, including walking, bicycle riding, and parent/guardian drop-off and pick-up. Masks are recommended for students in all grades on school buses.
Cases, Contact Tracing, and Outbreak Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public health will continue to manage cases of COVID-19 through isolation and contact tracing in the event there is a positive case associated with a school. Schools should continue to maintain accurate attendance records and class and bus lists to assist with contact tracing, if required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue following guidance for ongoing measures.

CURRICULUM

- Given the interruption of the 2019-20 academic year, and the adaptations necessary to plan for the possibility of remote learning in 2020-2021, curriculum was revised for September 2020 to address learning gaps and curriculum outcomes.
- The 2021-2022 school year will see transitional curriculum plans. This means that in some instances, the revised curriculum for the 2020-2021 school year will be maintained while in other instances the curriculum will be more consistent with the pre-pandemic curriculum outcomes.

REMOTE LEARNING

- While Prince Edward Island's Web Remote Learning Plan for the 2020-2021 school year was largely unneeded, it is being updated for the 2021-2022 school year and will be made available in the coming weeks.
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ADDITIONAL SCHOOL RESOURCES

While we anticipate a near-normal school year for the 2021-2022 school year, the Province of Prince Edward Island recognizes there are long-term impacts of the global pandemic.

It is our responsibility to ensure that students learn but also thrive and that their mental health and wellbeing is a priority. We also need to make sure our hard working and dedicated school professionals have the resources they require to support their physical and mental well-being as they continue to educate our children during this pandemic.

The following staff resources will be added to schools for the 2021-2022 school year:

- 50 teachers
- 34 education assistants
- 15 school counsellors
- 14 youth service workers
- 4 autism consultants
- 21 bus drivers
- 44 cleaners
- 19 administrative support personnel

Schools will also be provided the required cleaning, disinfection and personal protective equipment required to carry-out safe operational plans.

CONCLUSION

This report is considered a working document based upon current information provided by the Chief Public Health Office. 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 of COVID-19.

The Province of Prince Edward Island and our Education Authorities 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 to their success.

The plan for September 2021 must be flexible and recognize that COVID-19 may present itself in different schools, communities and regions at various times and levels.

Schools will communicate regularly with parents and guardians on the operational plan for their schools based on the COVID-19 situation.

We wish everyone a safe and healthy 2021-2022 school year!
