

Northern Gateway Public Schools

2021-22 Return to Normal Plan

COVID-19

February 11, 2022



Northern Gateway
Public Schools

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Message from the Superintendent

Dear Parents and Families,

On February 8, the Government of Alberta announced a [three-step plan to reduce and eliminate public health measures](#), including how we approach COVID-19 in our schools.

We know there is shared excitement for the ending of pandemic restrictions, as well as varying levels of concern when it comes to ongoing risk management. Our Back to School Plan has been updated to reflect the province's new Return to Normal Plan:

Step 1: Masks in Schools

- Starting Monday, February 14, masks will be optional for students in schools or on school buses.
- All staff must continue to wear masks.
- Adult visitors must continue to wear masks in schools.
- If a student becomes ill at school they will be required to wear a mask and isolate until they can leave the school.
- Any student who chooses to continue to wear a mask may do so and will be supported in their choice.
- Vaccinated students who test positive for COVID are required to isolate for 5 days and mask in school for a period of 10 days from onset of symptoms. Unvaccinated students are to isolate for 10 days. Please refer to the [Daily Health Checklist](#).

Continuing Safety Measures

At this time, adults are still required to wear masks in school and on buses. This includes all school staff, visitors and bus drivers. Spectators are able to attend school sport games and are required to follow all health protocols including masking. Because of the current requirement to mask, spectators will not be allowed to have food or drink at indoor activities.

Additional safety measures will continue, including:

- [Daily health screening](#) for students, staff and visitors before coming to school
- Staying home when sick
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting in schools and on yellow buses
- Handwashing and sanitizing
- Moving individual classes online if needed
- Additional planning and measures for medically fragile students

Step 2: Removing other school health measures

The Government of Alberta is targeting March 1, 2022 for [Step 2 of their plan](#) depending on hospitalization rates. Step 2 includes removing any remaining school health measures.

We will continue to monitor updates from the province and share information as it becomes available. We remain committed to providing safe, caring and inspiring learning environments for our students and staff. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to safety, learning and cooperation.

Kevin Bird
Superintendent of Schools

Ongoing Communication with NGPS families

We are committed to providing staff and families with updates as we receive new information and direction. Please continue to check ngps.ca, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages regularly.

February 9, 2022	Province eases health measures
December 30, 2021	Students return to in-person learning on January 10
November 29, 2021	COVID-19 vaccines approved for 5-11 year olds
October 5, 2021	UPDATE: Province announces new reporting information
September 23, 2021	UPDATED Daily Health Checklist
September 16, 2021	New health measures announced for schools
September 3, 2021	UPDATE: Masks required in school common spaces starting September 7
September 3, 2021	Temporary measures to reduce transmission come into effect September 4 at 8 am.

Section 1 - What to expect in 2021-22

- On February 8, 2022, the Government of Alberta announced that [province-wide public health measures will be eased and lifted](#) as the fifth wave of COVID-19 subsides and pressure on the healthcare system eases.
- On December 30, 2021, the Government announced that the [Kindergarten to Grade 12 student winter break is extended to January 10 province-wide](#), and that January Diploma Examinations are cancelled. At this time, classes are scheduled to resume for students on Monday, January 10, 2022.
- On September 3, 2021 the Government announced a [temporary return to health measures](#) in an effort to reduce transmission.
- On August 13, 2021, the Government of Alberta announced a near normal return to the 2021-22 school year based on Stage 3 (reopening) of Alberta's Open for Summer Plan that sees the lifting of all COVID-19 related restrictions.

Section 2 - Safety and well-being

NGPS is committed to providing safe and caring learning environments for our students and staff. We all have a role to play in following safety protocols set out by the province and the Division.

Our 2021-22 Return to Normal Plan focuses on familiar safety strategies that support a safe learning environment within our school communities:

Daily health screening for illness

Families and staff are encouraged to continue using the [Alberta Health daily checklist](#), updated on February 9, 2022, before coming to school each day. Families and staff are not required to submit the checklist to the school. It is a tool to assess wellness.

Students and staff who feel ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to the school. All isolation requirements for students who are close contacts or test positive for COVID-19 remain in place at this time.

Please contact the school office if your child is staying home due to illness.

Staying home when sick

Following provincial health protocols around illness is a key strategy to slow down or stop the spread of COVID-19, as well as to keep our school communities and individual classes healthy and in school. Please stay home when sick.

Showing signs of illness while at school

If a student becomes ill while at school, they will be asked to wear a mask while they wait in a designated area to be picked up. School staff who supervise the student will also wear a mask and will:

- bring the student to the school sickroom
Contact parents or guardians to pick up their child immediately, and
- follow Division safety strategies around cleaning and disinfecting the area and school sickroom.

Government isolation requirements - symptoms or testing positive

I have symptoms and I am fully immunized	Isolate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolate for 5 days from the day of onset of symptoms or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.• After this isolation period, up to a total of 10 days from the day of symptom onset, you are required to wear a mask at all times when in a public place or otherwise in the company of other persons, with no exceptions.
I have symptoms and I am not fully immunized	Isolate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You must isolate for 10 days from the day of onset of symptoms or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.• Whether you are fully immunized or not, even if you have a negative molecular (e.g. PCR) COVID-19 test or two negative rapid antigen tests, taken not less than 24 hours of each other, you still must isolate until symptoms resolve.• If you are within 3 weeks of the initial positive test of a previous infection you do not need to test again, and you can leave isolation when symptoms resolve.
I have symptoms and a negative test result	Stay home and away from others until symptoms resolve.

Updated February 9, 2022. Chart Information from albertahealthservices.ca, [Isolation & Quarantine Information](#).

If there is a case of COVID-19 at school

UPDATED: January 4, 2022: Because of the limiting of provincial testing to specific groups and the reliance on non-reported rapid testing, it is unlikely that the Government will be able to accurately report cases for schools.

Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of schools and school buses

Schools and school buses will receive extra cleaning.

Masks

- Masks are required for adults in all NGPS facilities.
- Masks are optional for all students unless they are returning from a COVID isolation (see below).

Students who are vaccinated, have symptoms and receive a positive COVID test are required to isolate for 5 days and wear a mask at all times in public (including school) for a period of 10 days from symptom onset. Students who have symptoms and a positive test and are not vaccinated are required to isolate for 10 days.

Students who are vaccinated, have no symptoms and receive a positive test should isolate and re-test 24 hours later. If the second test is positive the student is required to not attend school for 5 days and to mask in school for a period of 10 days from the initial positive test. Students who receive a positive test and are not vaccinated should isolate and re-test 24 hours later. If the second test is positive the student may not attend school for the required 10 day isolation period.

Health and safety measures will continue to be evaluated continuously in response to changing public health information and in the event circumstances and required health measures for schools across the province, schools in a particular region, or individual schools and classrooms, change, based on provincial direction and the COVID-19 situation in Alberta.

Handwashing and sanitizing

Schools will promote and facilitate frequent and proper hand hygiene for all students, staff and visitors, including before and after activities i.e. before and after using shared equipment, eating/serving food, entering/leaving school/classroom.

Schools will provide hand sanitizer throughout the building to support these requirements. Families are also encouraged to send their children to school with personal hand sanitizer.

Cohorts

Cohorting in elementary grades (K-6) will be used wherever reasonable to prevent the spread of infection if there is a respiratory illness outbreak at school.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE is not required for all staff, but additional PPE is important in different scenarios and will be utilized as needed to support students with different needs.

Section 3 - What school will look like

Arriving and leaving school

Each school will develop procedures for arriving and leaving school to minimize contact and promote social distancing where possible. These procedures will be communicated on the school websites.

School staff will be outside to remind students of these requirements, and to help students line up and keep an appropriate distance from each other.

During extreme weather, such as severe cold or rain, schools will have a plan in place so students can enter the school early.

Adults bringing students to school will be asked to maintain a safe physical distance between themselves and others.

Parents and guardians of children who have complex needs and require support to enter the building should contact their school office. Staff will work with them to develop a plan that is safe for both students and staff.

Lockers

Each school has determined the most effective way for students to store their personal belongings. Further information is available from each school.

Student supplies and learning materials

Students will have their own personal supplies to use that are stored separately. Teachers will plan learning activities to reduce or minimize the need to share equipment, textbooks or materials. If items are shared, they must be cleaned and disinfected after use. Students will wash or sanitize their hands both before and after using the shared items.

Washrooms and water fountains

Schools will have safety conscious and developmentally appropriate procedures that are reflective of their school populations for the use of washrooms and water fountains.

Common areas

Schools will have measures in place to promote physical distancing in space where students often gather, such as foyers, learning commons or T-intersections in hallways.

Measures will include:

- limiting the number of students allowed in certain areas at certain times
- requiring students to walk straight through some areas so they don't crowd together in groups
- Reminding to students to allow for physical distancing

Recess and playground equipment

Schools will develop procedures to reasonably minimize contacts during recess and lunch periods.

Open- or closed-campus school communities

Junior/Senior high schools will work with their school community to decide if students will be allowed to leave campus during lunch breaks. If students are permitted to leave the school building, they must:

- exit through their assigned door
- respect physical distancing and all other COVID-19 health protocols when off campus
- assess whether they have any symptoms of illness before they re-enter the school—students with newly developed symptoms will not be permitted to return to school
- re-enter the school through their assigned door

Additionally, high schools will need to determine if students may leave campus and return to the school building during a spare period. Schools will also need to identify a space or spaces in the school where students during spare periods can be accommodated while physical distancing.

Lunch

Students will store lunches with their other personal belongings. All students must wash/disinfect their hands before eating, and eat only their own food. Elementary students will remain in their cohort to eat lunch. Multiple cohorts will not gather together to eat.

Junior and senior high school students who stay at school at lunch will be assigned to an area of the school for lunch.

If the school is using a common lunch area, they will develop a plan for the space to be cleaned and disinfected after students use the space.

School cafeterias and canteens must follow Alberta Government's [COVID-19 health guidelines](#).

Food in schools

At this time,

- Events involving food require increased planning and permission from the school administration/designate
- schools can allow delivery service of food from food establishments, provided that such orders are pre-ordered and pre-arranged through school administration/designate (School Council/Parent Fundraising Council~Society is likely going to be the designate. This Council~Society must still abide by the Principal's guidelines.)

School nutrition programs

Schools that offer school nutrition programs will continue to follow the processes put in place for the 2020-21 school year.

School Sport Spectators

Beginning February 14th, 2022 spectators will be allowed to attend school sports games provided the spectators follow all health rules including masking when applicable. Spectators are not permitted to have food or drink inside schools at this time to support masking.

Volunteers and visitors

NGPS looks forward to having parents, visitors and volunteers back in schools. This will look different from school to school based on the unique circumstances of each school community.

When visitors are invited into schools, all individuals are required to:

- Make an appointment by contacting the school office by phone or email

- [Screen for illness](#)
- Sign in at the school's visitor log
- At this time, adults must mask upon entering the building
- There is additional planning in schools for medically fragile students, staff and close contacts. Because of these plans it may not be possible for a parent volunteer to engage with certain cohorts or rapid testing might be required.

NGPS staff entering school buildings

At this time, Division staff are permitted to enter school buildings as required. This includes substitute staff, facilities maintenance personnel, transportation personnel, delivery personnel, teaching and learning staff and Division Office staff. These staff will only enter the school if the [COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist \(for children and adults\)](#) indicates they are safe to do so and if they have no symptoms. They must also mask in accordance with provincial health measure and sign the school's COVID-19 visitor log.

Family and school communication

Families can stay in contact with their schools through email and over the phone. Families who need to go into the school must book an appointment in advance. Family members attending the school for any reason will be asked to complete the school's visitor log and complete the [COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist \(for children and adults\)](#).

Community use of schools and joint use agreements

All community use of indoor school space is currently suspended - this is required to support the proper cleaning and disinfecting of the school facility and to limit access to the school by individuals who are not regular members of the school community.

All indoor joint use of schools for community members is currently suspended. School fields, tennis courts and ball diamonds will remain available for community use through the joint use agreement in the evenings and on weekends.

The Division will work with joint use partners on an ongoing basis to work toward safely reopening school spaces for community use.

School bus transportation

Students with COVID-19 symptoms or who are experiencing illness will not be permitted on the bus. Families are encouraged to consider getting their children to and from school if they are not comfortable with their child riding with other children on the yellow bus.

- students will be assigned a seat on the bus
- there will be a protective zone between the driver and student passengers
- school buses will receive extra cleaning with increasing measures as necessary

School council meetings

School council meetings may resume in person following all health regulations.

Social emotional supports

In supporting resilience within this environment, the existing wellness structures will continue to focus on shared leadership and Positive Behaviour Supports.

Shared leadership

Shared leadership across schools and sites is focused on creating the conditions for the following:

- **Collaboration:** student and staff engagement, school based collaboration, division based collaboration, parent engagement and outside partner collaboration
- **Assessment:** determine student mental health and well-being status. We are currently working with our community partners to review the process to ensure early identification for those in need of further support.
- **Continuum of Supports:** an inclusive learning environment where students can access integrated and/or specialized supports and services as required.

Positive Behaviour Supports

Positive Behaviour Supports is a well-rounded approach to support the mental health and wellness of students, staff and families. Positive Behaviour Supports include:

- A trauma informed lens focusing on voice and choice, predictability and consistency, and positive relationships
- Psychological First Aid, and the Traumatic Event Systems (TES) principles considered in addressing challenges during and following a challenging event, e.g., COVID-19
- [Guidelines for Re-Entry into the School Setting During the Pandemic](#) from North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response and,
- A focus on fostering the conditions that support mental health and wellness. The following resources may be of support for leaders in this regard:
 - [Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools](#)
 - [The Heart of Recovery: Creating Supportive School Environments Following a Natural Disaster](#)

Mental health and wellness supports

The following resources contain evidence-based approaches that support mental health and wellness.

- [Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools](#)
- [Government of Alberta K–12 Instructional Supports](#)
- [Government of Alberta: Children’s Mental Health](#)
- [Alberta Health Services: Information for Teachers](#)
- [Alberta Health Services: Healthy Together](#)
- [Mental Health Online Resources for Educators \(MORE\)](#)
- [Mental Health Literacy](#)
- [Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention: Self Care in Disaster Times and Beyond Toolkit](#)
- [Joint Consortium for School Health](#)
- [Schools Healthier Together](#)
- [Alberta COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#)
- [Alberta Student Learning Hub Mental Health Supports for Parents, Guardians and Families](#)
- Alberta Education: [Positive Behaviour Supports](#)
- Alberta Education: [Trauma Informed Practices](#)
- [Métis Nation of Alberta COVID-19 Mental Health Information](#)
- [Alberta Community and Social Services](#)
- [Supporting Learning at Home \(Mental Health\)](#)
- [Resilience - Tipping the Balance Towards Good Health](#) (article): Alberta Family Wellness
- [Brains Journey to Resilience](#) (video): Alberta Family Wellness
- [Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource](#)
- [ATA Creating a Compassionate Classroom](#)
- [ASEBP: The Sandbox, a regular publication promotes a healthy school workplace](#)

COVID-19 signage on entrances

Appropriate school procedures will be posted.

COVID-19 visitor log

Division staff not regularly assigned to the school, authorized visitors and family members attending the school must fill out the school's COVID-19 visitor log to:

- confirm they are not ill and do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- provide their name
- indicate with whom they are meeting
- note the time they arrived at the school
- note the time they left the school
- provide a signature confirming that the information is true and accurate

Section 4 - Teaching and Learning

We look forward to welcoming students and staff back into our classrooms. While we will do everything to keep students learning in class, parents are advised to be prepared and flexible to adapt to short-term shifts to at-home learning, should student and/or staff illness require it.

Online learning

Northern Gateway Public Schools will not be providing an online learning format; however, online learning options are available. Please see the provincial [Online Learning Directory](#) and speak with your local school principal.

Home education

As per Alberta's [Education Act](#), Section 20(1), *a parent of a student may provide, at home or elsewhere, a home education program for the student...* For further information, please see the [Home Education Regulation, September 2019](#). Students who are registered in a home education program for the current school year must remain in that program for the entire school year.

Supporting students with special needs

Specific strategies related to COVID-19 will be added as required to meet the student's needs.

The dispensing of medication will follow *Administrative Procedure 714 Medical Assistance for Students* and any applicable COVID-19 guidelines.

Division contract service supports (occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and/or psychologists) will provide service following their professional association guidelines and will wear personal protective equipment as needed/required.

Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs)

Grade 6 and 9 provincial achievement tests will resume and participation is mandatory for all schools not piloting the new draft Kindergarten to Grade 6 curriculum

Diploma examinations

Grade 12 diploma exams are mandatory in the 2021-22 school year; however, as per the Government's December 30, 2021 announcement, all January Diploma exams have been cancelled. At this time, Diploma exams are scheduled to be offered for every diploma exam

course in April and June.

Section 5: School based activities

There are no specific restrictions or requirements for school activities and services. Schools may continue with activities with consideration given to safety factors. These activities may include:

- Field trips
- Music, singing, dancing, theatre
- Sports
- Visitors to the school
- Food services
- Student transportation
- Work experience
- Ceremonies
- Graduations

Section 6: Appendices

[Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)

[Alberta Plan for Returning to Normal](#)

[Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools](#)

[CMOH Order 31-2021](#)