

ANNEX 1

Back-to-School Guide for Parents and Guardians

Frequently Asked Questions

For safety reasons, I would prefer distance education but neither my children or myself have a medical condition.

The Minister of Education indicated to school divisions that unless a child (or parent from the same household) has a justified medical condition, distance education will not be offered at the moment. Only two options are available: in-class learning or home schooling.

What is a cohort and how is this model beneficial?

A cohort system is similar to a bubble. It is a group of students belonging together in a same classroom for most of the day to avoid multiple channels of transmission. In the event a potential case arises, Public Health would be able to trace the case more effectively within the cohort. During recess, each cohort will have a designated area in the school yard to ensure physical distancing. When students are no longer in cohorts, they must maintain a physical distance of two (2) meters between themselves and other students and adults.

Will my child wear a mask all day?

Students Grades 4 to 12 must wear a mask when unable to maintain a physical distance of two (2) meters. Students Kindergarten to Grade 3 are not required to wear a mask.

Is my child eligible for school transportation?

With the restrictions imposed by the Province regarding physical distancing on the school bus, the DSFM will have to follow the provincial regulation: transportation will only be offered to students residing more than 1.6 km from the school. We understand that for some parents and caregivers, this can be a challenge, but we must follow the regulations. Once the pandemic is behind us, the DSFM will resume its regular service.

Physical-distancing guidelines on the school bus obligates the DSFM to provide two waves of transportation, morning and afternoon. The purpose of two waves of transportation is to pick up students residing the farthest from the school in the first wave, to avoid having the bus redo a complete route during the second wave.

Cleaning and using technology equipment?

To ensure that all laptops, tablets or desk tops are used to their maximum, schools will be sure to clean the item once a user no longer needs it. Disinfecting wipes will be used to clean keyboards and screens.

What will happen with music and physical education classes

Art classes and Physical Education classes are mandatory and DSFM schools will continue to offer these classes. We recommend the school to have music class directly in the cohort classroom to avoid unnecessary movement within the school. Schools will establish their own protocol.

We recommend, when possible, to have Physical Education classes outdoors.

Can teachers give paper assignments/booklets to students?

Yes. This will consist of individual booklets and when it is time to return it to the teacher, it will be placed in the child's bin. Once in the bin, it will remain in isolation for three days to avoid a possible contamination.

Mask purchase

Manitoba Education indicated that they would provide to school divisions two masks per student and staff for backup. Please add a minimum of two reusable masks to your school supply list, to be washed daily after use.

Ventilation

Virus transmission are less likely when surroundings are well aerated. Here are a few strategies used by the DSFM:

- *Ensure filters are cleaned.*
- *Aerate the school by opening the windows as often as possible.*
- *Minimize the use of ventilators, or using them at low-speed if necessary.*
- *Ensure the air is not vented towards anyone or towards commonly used surfaces.*

Food handling

The best way to avoid transmission is by having parents or caregivers provide lunches and snacks to their child. When possible:

- *Staff members will serve food.*
- *Use utensils rather than hands to serve food.*
- *For snack programs, use individually wrapped snacks and serve individually.*
- *Ensure food handling hygiene measures are followed.*
- *S'assurer de suivre les mesures d'hygiène quant à la manutention de la nourriture;*
- *Cease all activities or classes that include student participation.*

What to do in Case of Pandemic Evolution or Regression?

Decisions regarding the return to school and the necessary protocols to put in place continue to come from Public Health. COVID-19 data analysis is provided by Public Health and considers several factors. School divisions must follow Public Health recommendations. Keep in mind that the scenario could change at any time, with little warning, depending on the Province's situation regarding COVID-19.

In the event Public Health removes physical-distancing restrictions, the DSFM schools will resume regular in-class programming.

The DSFM has already elaborated a plan in the event Public Health advises that students resume remote learning from home.

Outbreak or Possible Contact Tracing

If one of our schools has a confirmed case, all parent communication will be taken over by Manitoba Public Health.

Contact tracing will also be done by Public Health with the help of predetermined cohorts.

Public Health may:

- *contact students, families or staff member who may have been in close contact with a confirmed (or probable) case and advise the need to self-isolate or to self-monitor. Public Health could also determine when it is safe to return to school*
- *requisition documents, schedules, etc., identify cohorts, staff members and visitors who may have come into contact with the confirmed case*
- *offer to administer tests to contacts of the confirmed case*
- *determine if a partial or complete school closure is necessary*

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DSFM Responses to Ministerial Requirements for Preparing School Buildings

- The DSFM will ensure that their schools have sanitizing gel dispensers at all entrances and at all the rooms throughout the school. Our Maintenance staff will ensure a continuous stock of sanitizing products.
- The hand hygiene plan is the following: before entering and exiting the school bus, before entering the school, after recess (morning and lunch), after using the restroom.
- All staff members will use the Manitoba Health Screening self-assessment questionnaire before coming to school. We ask all parents and caregivers to be vigilant and to keep their child at home if he or she is showing any flu-like symptoms.
- Parents and caregivers will also be informed at the beginning of the school year that if their child begins to show symptoms during the school day, he or she will be isolated at school and the parent or caregiver will be required to pick up the child immediately.
- All schools will have appropriate signage: physical distancing and no entry if showing any symptoms.
- School halls and school yards will have physical-distancing signs and ground markers to guide traffic.
- Barricades blocking access to certain areas may be used if necessary.
- Use of school cafeterias are suspended until further notice.
- Toys and reading areas will be removed from the classroom. Students will have personal bins to place educational material, books, etc.
- The Transportation Department is currently reviewing bus routes to ensure the maximum capacity on the bus.
- Our Student Services are in regular communication with Public Health to ensure necessary follow-ups for student needs.

DSFM Responses to Academic Preparation

- The divisional curriculum support staff has prepared a guide for student recovery learning and recommendations for teachers. The professional learning communities within each of our schools ensure structured collaboration time between teachers. The September administrative days will be focused on identifying and planning recovery learning.
- The Division will continue to support all teachers in their assessment of recovery learning needs.
- Our goal is to provide in-class instruction to all students. However, our capacity to ensure sufficient distancing and limiting students to cohorts while at school, hinders our capacity to offer all course options on site. Students in Grades 11 and 12 may be required to take some courses remotely.
- Students in remote-learning courses who do not have access to a computer, one will be provided by the DSFM. If a student does not have Internet access, the DSFM will try to arrange access or provide course content and teacher support using alternative methods.

DSFM Responses Regarding Staff Preparation

- The Division's Student Services staff has prepared a guide outlining possible mental-health challenges. School Principals have received this guide and will review it with staff members during the administrative days in September.
- All staff members will be required to administer the Manitoba Health self-assessment questionnaire for COVID-19 symptoms before coming to school. Staff members will also be reminded of the importance to not come to work if the self-assessment results indicate to do so.
- All schools will have a designated isolation room for students showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- All schools will have a plan for physical distancing.

DSFM Responses Regarding Student and Family Preparation

- All families will receive a copy of the reopening plan.
- We will begin the school year with a staggered entry on September 8th and 9th. As such, only half of the students will attend on each day in order to allow teachers to teach distancing and cleaning guidelines in smaller groups. Schools will notify parents and caregivers as to which day their child or children will attend.
- Parents and caregivers will receive a memo highlighting the importance to continue to be vigilant and to have an emergency plan in place should their child be sent home.
- Our Student Services staff has created a back-to-school plan which includes mental health and well-being for each and everyone.