



SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL GUIDELINES DURING COVID-19

Updated Nov. 5, 2020

The Bottom Line

School in Saskatchewan resumed in-person in September 2020. For younger children, reducing physical contact is the primary focus, as thorough physical distancing may not be practical. Hand and surface sanitation must occur frequently, designated entry and exit points are assigned, large gatherings are not permitted, and caregivers must call ahead to make an appointment to enter the school.

Saskatchewan Back-to-School Guidelines

All COVID-19 school guidelines in Saskatchewan follow a similar structure; however, formalities applied to each rule may vary slightly between each school board, each school, and perhaps even each classroom. The following guidelines are commonalities between all released guidelines from Saskatoon public and Catholic schools, Regina public and Catholic schools, and the Government of Saskatchewan. For more information, please visit individual school, school board, and government websites.

- Students returned to in-classroom learning as of September 2020. If large outbreaks occur within schools, there remains the potential for the switch to hybrid or remote learning. Should a student wish to continue with online learning for various reasons, they must register through the school board's online learning platform rather than receiving a virtual teaching plan.
- Beginning November 9, 2020, masks are mandatory for all students in Regina, Saskatchewan. Since September 2020, masks have been mandatory for Grade 4 to Grade 12, and strongly recommended for younger grades.
- Sanitizing stations for hand and surface cleaning are readily available in each classroom. Sanitization of all areas has increased, especially in areas that are frequently used such as laptops, toys, washrooms, frequently touched surfaces, and all eating areas.

- An isolation area exists for students who feel ill and cannot leave the school immediately. Students and staff should not come to school if they are sick.
- Physical distancing of 1-2 meters should be implemented when feasible. No physical contact should be prioritized, as implementing physical distancing may be impractical for young children.
- Water fountains have been temporarily disabled and water bottle fill stations have been installed in every school.
- Hand washing instructions are visible in all washrooms. If feasible, classrooms may be assigned to specific washrooms with staggered usage times.
- Classrooms will remain consistent. In High Schools, a block schedule may be implemented which includes alternating school days. Breaks are staggered, designated play areas may be assigned with consistent cohorts, limited interaction between students is recommended, as are direction markers in hallways. Schools also have designated entry and exit areas indicated by signage.
- Large gatherings such as assemblies are limited to classroom sizes or occur virtually.
- If caregivers must enter the school, they must make an appointment, fill out a health screening questionnaire, practice diligent hand hygiene, wear a mask, and keep a 2-metre distance between all school personnel and children.
- Guest speakers and other school visitors are not permitted at this time.
- Students must bring their own supplies to school in their backpacks. Teachers are responsible for ensuring students know what they will need for classes the next day. Sharing of supplies is not permitted. High School students will only have access to a locker upon request and the sharing of lockers is not permitted. Items that cannot be easily sanitized, such as stuffed toys, are not permitted.

- Students should not share food and must bring their own utensils. No-waste food storage is preferred. Some schools are allowing the communal use of food utensils with mandatory sanitization between uses. Communal supplies such as salt, pepper, ketchup, etc. will not be available. Some schools may also restrict the use of shared microwaves. Students are not permitted to help with food preparation unless during Food Studies classes, where strict sanitization requirements must be followed.
- Students are encouraged to go home for lunch. If they must stay, they are to eat at their desk or in consistent cohorts at designated eating areas. Hot lunch delivery and school nutrition programs will continue, but must follow Saskatchewan's Restaurant and Licensed Establishments Guidelines.
- Caregivers should transport children to and from school whenever possible. Buses have assigned seating and students from the same family are seated together. Students must board busses from back to front, and exit from front to back.
- Field trips requiring transportation are not permitted. Walking or biking to destinations may continue if physical distancing is possible at that location.
- Efforts have been made to increase the provision of mental health services within schools. Anxiety management modules should occur within classrooms and school personnel should increase responses to negative mental health and stress symptoms in students.

The Controversy of Returning to School

Many teachers, caregivers, and students are having a difficult time adjusting to school during COVID-19. Many caregivers who are immunocompromised themselves or care for students that are immunocompromised have chosen to continue online learning with their children for the year 2020-21. Teachers are worried about their own safety, and by extension the safeties of their families and extended families to whom they return at the end of the day. These worries are exacerbated by the knowledge of the developmental, social, and physical health risks children will continue to face if schools were to shutdown once again. Concerns around the transmission rates within schools preventing students from returning to school are especially present in caregivers of children with special needs. Schools have proven to be unimmune to COVID-19 transmission, with cases steadily rising in various schools throughout the province.

Possible Responses

The following suggestions are for school personnel to make their environment safer, assist students with learning gaps experienced during remote learning, and reduce symptoms of anxiety. These strategies are suggestions in addition to the required risk mitigation strategies mentioned above.

- Be open, honest, and direct with children about risks and safety precautions. Answer questions and involve them in the conversation.
- Attention should be paid to children's social, emotional, and mental health needs in addition to their academic needs. Attention should also be paid to each child's outside-of-school contexts and how their COVID-19 experiences might be shaping their behaviours and anxieties upon returning to school.
- Recognize the relationship of privilege to normative understandings of success and how COVID-19 may have impacted the learning of many students. Simplify curriculum to support confidence during learning recovery.
- Ensure children are clear on how they can protect themselves and others. For younger children, implement physical distancing and frequent hand washing by making it fun. Children may stretch their arms out and spin to indicate their 'space bubble' and give air high-fives. Try using phrases such as 'don't be a space invader' to imply that it is not okay to be too close to each other right now. Keep lotion by sinks to prevent dry hands and create hand washing songs to encourage proper frequent 20 second hand washing.
- For younger children, try using hula hoops for seating to keep children at a distance from one another. Other mitigation tactics include plexiglass between children during nap time, providing baggies for children to put their own items in (e.g., playdough, scissors, markers, small toys, etc.), and taking advantage of outdoor learning environments.
- Children will be looking to people in authority for guidance. Normalize mask wearing, physical distancing, and proper ventilation and correct PPE shaming among peers. Inquire frequently about any symptoms children may be having.

For original sources and documents, please visit: www.childtraumaresearch.ca

With generous support from: