

School Re-opening Plan

August 17, 2020 Update



Park West School Division
Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Planning for Re-opening in Park West School Division	3
Planning for Three Response Levels	3
School Operational Plans	4
Staggered Return to School	4
Attendance and Participation in Learning	4
Planning for Safe Return of Students and Staff	5
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	6
Transportation	6
Preparing for the Return to In-Class Learning	7-8
Mental Health and Wellbeing	8
School Day Structure and Learning Plan for September	9
Remote Teaching and Learning	10
Instructional Expectations for the Suspension of In-Class Learning	11
Student Assessment	12
Communication with Stakeholders	12
Final Thoughts	12

Introduction

The Province has produced several documents related to the re-opening of schools. The provincial documents should be referenced for the detailed plans, requirements, and protocols for all schools. They may be found at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html> and include:

- Restoring Safe Schools: Guidelines for September 2020
- A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students: What to expect when welcomed back to school
- COVID-19 K–12 School Settings, Practice Guidance and Protocols

The purpose of this document is to provide additional information specific to Park West plans for schools.

Planning for Re-opening in Park West School Division

- Schools will re-open for teachers and staff on September 2, 2020, with students returning on September 8, 2020.
- Kindergarten to Grade 8 students will return for five days of in-class instruction (full instructional day) per week. Schools may choose to stagger student return at the beginning of the school year (see later section “Staggered Return to School”).
- Students in Grade 9 to 12 may follow a hybrid model of in-person instruction and at-home learning. If a hybrid model is followed, attendance in person will be at least every second day. See section below on Staggered Return to School – to be determined by individual schools.
- Provincial health officials are strongly recommending that all staff and students in grade 5 and up wear masks when social distancing is not possible. The school division will be providing reusable masks to all staff and students in Grade 5-12.

Planning for Three Response Levels

Maximizing in-class learning while maintaining a focus on safety and reducing the risk of transmission is the goal of the upcoming school year. As schools plan to welcome students back, they do so knowing that plans may change based on the advice of public health at that time, as well as over the days and weeks that follow. Contingency plans will be put in place for various public health situations, which may also vary across the province. Three response levels will be used:

- Level 1: In-class Learning
- Level 2: Blended Learning
- Level 3: Remote Learning

School Operational Plans

Schools will develop operational plans to ensure a safe return to school for students and staff while meeting the unique needs and contexts of school communities. The operational plan will detail procedures on how the groupings of students will function and move in the school. The individual school operational plans will be completed and communicated to stakeholders by September 4.

Staggered Return to School

Students in Grades K-12 may have a staggered return to school in September. The purposes of a staggered return are as follows:

- Additional time for focused student assessment to finalize recovery learning needs and for teaching students about the new divisional guidelines and provincial health measures necessary for in-school classes
- Additional time for teaching students about the new divisional guidelines and provincial health measures necessary for in-school classes
- Smaller groups for reviewing learning expectations

Individual schools will determine whether a staggered return to school is necessary.

Attendance and Participation in Learning

All students are expected to participate fully, even when remote learning is required.

- Remote learning will be available for students who are unable to return to school due to personal or family health risk factors related to COVID-19. Schools will require medical documentation to support remote learning in these instances.
- Families choosing not to send students for non-medical reasons are advised to contact the home schooling branch of Manitoba Education at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/index.html>.



Planning for Safe Return of Students and Staff

Park West School Division will be implementing several public health measures designed to increase safety and mitigate risk. They include:

- Symptom screening
- Hand hygiene
- Contact tracing and outbreak managing
- Increased and intensive cleaning
- Physical distancing
- Cohorts (maximum of 75 students) to limit student groups size and to minimize group interaction
- Limiting access to shared/common spaces
- Limiting access to visitors
- Use of personal protective equipment

When returning to school in September:

- Classrooms will be configured to support physical distancing with the use of alternate space as needed, such as multi-purpose rooms. Two metres of physical distancing is required to the greatest extent possible.
- Where physical distancing is not possible, students must remain within cohorts to reduce exposure to others. Cohorts will distance themselves from other groups to limit exposure. In these instances, there must be at least one metre between students as they sit at their desks in classrooms.
- Entry and exits to schools will be managed to avoid congestion.
- Lunch and recess breaks will be staggered.
- Protocols will be in place to safely move students through schools to reduce congestion in hallways and common areas. To the greatest extent possible, teachers will move across classrooms instead of students.
- Students and staff are required to self-screen and stay home when they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
- Parents and caregivers will be expected to screen their children before boarding the bus or entering a school.
- There will be screening protocols for all people entering a school and limitations regarding visitors.
- Students will be reminded of the importance of physical distancing and hand washing.
- There will be enhanced cleaning protocols in schools and on buses.
- Regional public health officials will monitor the situation closely and will provide direction and information to school communities. Public health will be responsible for responding to cases of COVID-19 and overseeing outbreak management protocols.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- The Province has strongly recommended that students in grades 5 to 12, school staff, and others in schools wear non-medical masks in common areas and where physical distancing of two metres is not possible.
- Students in Grades K-4 can also use non-medical masks if they or their parents or caregivers so choose.
- All students in Grades 5 and up, and bus drivers, will be required to wear non-medical masks on school buses. Masks should be put on before loading and taken off after unloading.
- The province will provide masks to school divisions for distribution to students and staff, as well as other personal protective equipment to ensure safe and healthy schools.

Transportation

Based upon provincial guidelines, Park West school buses will be operating at reduced capacity due to physical distancing requirements.

- Bus drivers will not be screening students for COVID-19. Parents are responsible to monitor their children for COVID-19 symptoms and drivers are responsible to monitor themselves – no one with COVID-19 symptoms should enter the school bus.
- Students and staff are expected to perform hand hygiene before entering and after leaving the bus.
- While on school buses, mask use is mandatory for drivers and students in Grades 5-12.
- Seating plans have been created by the Division for each bus route, and will be enforced by the bus driver. Seats have been assigned with one student (or 2 students if from the same family) in a seat. Students will not be permitted to move between seats or change seats at any time, even if other seats have not been used.
- Students will load from the back of the bus to the front, regardless of age.
- Transfer bus students will not be permitted to use a seat that another student has used on the rural route. It is expected that 2 transfer buses will be required from Binscarth, Inglis, and Miniota to high schools in Russell and Birtle.
- Only students on the route passenger lists (and daycare students on the passenger lists) will be permitted to ride the school buses.
- Enhanced cleaning of seats and other high-touch surfaces (e.g., windows, railings) is required after each run.

Preparing for the Return to In-Class Learning

Schools and school divisions will need to meet conditions for preparation related to operations, learning and classrooms, staff, students and families before resuming in-class learning. Re-opening plans will need to address these four conditions of preparedness.

<i>Institutional (Operations)</i>	<p>Prepare school facilities to accommodate physical distancing, including increased sanitation, hand hygiene and other public health provisions. Follow the guidelines for re-opening school facilities. These will be updated regularly to reflect new public health orders and guidance.</p> <p>Post information about physical distancing, cleaning and other public health measures to help schools prepare for in-class learning.</p> <p>Plan for adjustments to transportation routes and schedules for all stages of re-opening, including asking parents to transport their own children where possible.</p>
<i>Learning</i>	<p>Plan for recovery learning. Develop action plans to address students' recovery learning needs identified in the June 2020 report card.</p> <p>Refer to the Learning Recovery Guidelines to inform this planning (https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/support/recovery_learning.html)</p> <p>Adapt schedules to facilitate levels of physical distancing (outdoor classrooms, frequent and staggered hand-washing breaks, staggered recesses and lunch breaks, physical distancing measures in place in classrooms and bathrooms).</p> <p>Plan for blended in-class and remote learning models. To support planning, refer to the list of learning resources for educators provided on the Manitoba Education website (https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/teachers/index.html)</p>
<i>School staff</i>	<p>Orient staff to new public health protocols that must be followed in the school, before resuming in-class learning. Include all staff in orientation, including bus drivers, custodial staff, etc. If volunteers are on site in a limited way, ensure they receive orientation when they begin.</p> <p>The online COVID-19 screening tool can be used to inform staff orientation and include information on self-monitoring, managing a suspected case of COVID-19, managing shared spaces, etc. (https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/)</p> <p>Identify staff who may have underlying health concerns that make them more vulnerable to exposure to COVID-19, and make any necessary adjustments based on risk factors.</p> <p>Plan for health and safety training that may be required, and also ensure that professional learning focuses on COVID-19 pandemic priority areas, including recovery learning, collaborative planning, mental health and well-being and remote learning strategies.</p>

<p><i>Students and families</i></p>	<p>Identify students with disabilities and those who are vulnerable to disengage from school, develop and implement strategies to re-engage them and prioritize these students for five days a week in-class learning, where possible.</p> <p>Refer to Resources Supporting Students with Special Needs for principles and practical resources to assist with planning (https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/support/rsssn.html)</p> <p>Communicate expectations for in-class attendance and participation in remote learning.</p> <p>Students are expected to attend in-class learning. If remote learning is included as part of their learning plan, students will be expected to participate.</p> <p>Students who are unable to return to school due to personal or family health risks factors related to COVID-19 will be supported in remote learning.</p> <p>Develop comprehensive strategies for regular communication with families to raise awareness of the health and safety measures implemented at the school, and ensure the understanding that students may not attend school when sick or exhibiting symptoms of illness.</p> <p>Refer to the online COVID-19 screening tool to develop materials (https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/)</p> <p>Signal that in-class learning may be increased or suspended on short notice in response to changing public health advice</p>
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Mental Health and Wellbeing

Student mental health and wellness is a core element of the return to school plan. It can be anticipated that children and youth may experience increased stress and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, children and youth may have mental wellness challenges, such as anxiety, depression and substance abuse, which may have been exacerbated by physical distancing, including school closures, and may experience symptom escalation on return to school.

School division leaders and school leaders are encouraged to implement trauma-informed practices to support students, staff and families. Trauma-informed practices include:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments
- Understanding coping strategies
- Supporting independence
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual student needs

School Day Structure and Learning Plan for September

<i>Public health advice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This re-opening plan is based on current direction from public health.
<i>Physical distancing measures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical distancing is required. ▪ Create more space for children in the classroom with desks spaced two metres apart (minimum one metre). This may require smaller class groupings. ▪ In classrooms, on buses and during activities when a full two metres physical distancing may not be possible, extra emphasis is put on other public health measures, with an emphasis on limiting interaction between groups. ▪ Single classes should stay together to avoid interactions with other groups/classes. Where smaller groups/classes are not feasible due to a range of electives, physical distancing is required. ▪ Reduce the amount of interaction between different cohorts of students. Locations of classrooms (e.g. same wing of school), movement of teachers instead of students, use of additional space (e.g. gyms, libraries, multipurpose spaces), and alternate day attendance can all be considered to reduce mixing. ▪ Timetable in-class students by cohorts to avoid mixing of groups. ▪ Field trips must be cancelled if physical distancing cannot be accommodated. Outdoor venues are lower risk of transmission of COVID-19. Crowded venues and exposure to other groups should be avoided. Out-of-province and international travel will remain subject to ongoing guidance from public health.
<i>Areas of focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limit gatherings in common areas, such as lobbies and lunchrooms. ▪ Prioritize core curriculum and required courses. ▪ Electives may be limited where feasible, if they are not affecting educational requirements. Consideration may be given to offering some electives remotely/via distance.

Remote Teaching and Learning

Manitoba Education has stated that the upcoming school year will require school systems to continue to refine their blended or hybrid strategy. Blended or hybrid learning is an instructional mindset in which online learning tools are leveraged to enhance the face-to-face learning that occurs in a classroom.

If school closures occur or if some students are medically advised not to return to in-class learning, Park West School Division will employ remote teaching and learning.

Park West is developing strategies to ensure that students and staff have access to technology should broader remote learning be required.

- Acquiring additional hardware to establish a one-to-one device ratio for students in Grades 7 -12
- Making devices available to students who require it for remote learning
- Expanding hardware for teachers and staff use
- Exploring options for improving connectivity in communities who are lacking
- Developing options for asynchronous (working independently on their own) and synchronous (working with a teacher in real-time) remote learning
- Establishing remote learning plans for students with underlying health conditions that prohibit them from returning to in-class learning (before broad access to a vaccine) and students in 14-day quarantine or isolation
- Prioritizing online delivery of remote education to the greatest extent possible
- Following provincial direction regarding minimum expectations for students to have direct synchronous contact with their teacher on a regular basis
- Promoting the use of Google classroom and other online teaching and learning tools
- Providing professional development for teachers on remote teaching and learning



Instructional Expectations for the Suspension of In-Class Learning (Level 3)

Expectations for Grades K-12:

- At-home learning will be facilitated by teachers who will support their students via online platforms and print-based materials, with outreach for students who are at-risk.
- Small groups of students will be scheduled to meet with their teachers at the school if permitted by Public Health measures and the provisions of the provincial Limited Use of Schools guidelines.
- Regular personal connections will be made with students and families via phone, email or other online platforms.
- For Grades K-8, teacher-directed learning will focus on literacy and numeracy with opportunities for science and social studies, physical education/health education and the arts through cross-curricular planning.
- For Grades 9-12, teachers will prioritize learning outcomes/expectations and plan specific curriculum-related tasks for students.
- It is recommended that teachers plan an average of 5 hours per week of curriculum-based learning for students in K-4 and 10 hours per week for students in Grade 5-8.
- It is recommended that Grade 9 - 12 teachers plan for 3 hours of curriculum-based learning per course per week for semester courses, and 1.5 hour of learning per course per week for non-semestered courses.

Responsibilities of Teachers:

- Collaborate with school administration to implement the plans for teaching and learning.
- Prioritize learning outcomes based on what is manageable for students primarily working from home.
- Provide equitable learning opportunities for all students.
- Work closely with families to implement learning opportunities that support grade level outcomes. Provide ongoing support for student learning, including support for families for learning at home. Monitor and assess student learning.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians:

- Support teachers to ensure that learning continues.
- Encourage students to continue their school learning plans at home.
- Look for opportunities to promote learning within the context of daily life.
- Maintain ongoing communication with teachers.

Responsibilities of Students:

- Establish daily routines for engaging in learning experiences.
- Actively participate in learning and complete assigned work. Reflect on progress, set goals for learning and identify next steps.
- Talk to parents / guardians and teachers about any concerns or difficulties.

Student Assessment

The provincial data collection associated with the Grade 3 Assessment in Reading, Lecture and Numeracy will be suspended for the 2020-2021 school year.

A decision regarding the status of the Divisional Common Exams and Grade 12 provincial tests will be made as more information becomes available regarding the return to school in the fall.

Communication with Stakeholders

Park West School Division recognizes that the success of the school re-opening plan will depend in part on parents being informed about new protocols and having confidence that the approach will keep their children safe. To that end, we will clearly communicate expectations for students, staff, and families and provide ongoing information to parents and students throughout the school year.

Final Thoughts

The COVID-19 pandemic is a dynamic situation and plans may need to change as new information or public health and workplace safety requirements are identified. Park West School Division recognizes the likelihood that next school year will bring continued uncertainty. While our planning will take a flexible approach, learning and teaching will continue to be a priority whether at school, at home or a hybrid of both.

It is important to remember that there is not a reliance on one single public health measure to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the school setting. The risk of a COVID-19 outbreak is less likely the more public health measures are implemented and followed. Reducing the risk of COVID-19 outbreaks in schools will require the dedication and support of schools and divisional staff, students, and parents/guardians.