

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Updated: April 29, 2021

### **\*Important Update!**

In consultation with the Department of Education and Public Health officials, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) moved to a modified Scenario 2 model to maximize in-class instruction for those high school students who have been receiving full-time online instruction. The new blended learning model came into effect on April 14, 2021. High school students attending full-time in-class instruction under Scenario 1 continued to do so, as did K-9 students. More information is available in an April 7, 2021 Department of Education news release here: [EDU News Release](#), in an April 13, 2021 NLESD news release here: [District News Release](#), and in the Frequently Asked Questions below.

### **General**

#### **What is Scenario 1?**

- Under Scenario 1, students attend in-class instruction under near normal conditions, with newly-updated health and safety protocols in effect.

#### **What are the new mask protocols in effect at schools that are open?**

- Public Health has updated recommendations to health and safety protocols for in-class instruction, including:
  - All school staff will be required to wear a Level 1 medical mask and eye protection at all times when in close contact with students or staff. This includes in instructional spaces, in common areas, and at any other time a two-metre physical distance cannot be maintained between students/other staff. A Level 1 medical mask is a disposable, non-surgical 3-ply mask.
  - All students in Grades 4-12 are expected to wear a mask (not necessarily a Level 1 medical mask) at all times on the school bus and during the school day, including when seated in classrooms, except when eating or drinking.
  - It is recommended students wear masks during physical activity, if they can tolerate it.
  - Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are expected to wear a mask at all times on the school bus and are encouraged, but not required, to wear a mask during the school day.

#### **What is the “modified Scenario 2” model?**

- Details around the initial [Scenario 2](#) are outlined in the Department of Education’s [K-12 Education Re-entry Plan](#), and operationalized through the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District’s [A Safe Return to School Reopening Plan](#), both released prior to September 2020. Both plans have been impacted by evolving Public Health recommendations, the latest of which can be viewed at: [Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) (April 7).

Under Scenario 2, students attend school on alternate days to reduce the number of students in class at one time. However, Scenario 2 has now been improved. On days when students are not physically in class, they will be able to access the classroom remotely using Google Suite

for Education (e.g., Google Classroom, Google Meet) in a manner and for a period of time as determined by the teacher. This is the 'modified' aspect of the Scenario 2 model.

This is not a new plan. It's not even a totally new Scenario 2. It's an improved Scenario 2 - an enhanced version of the model that includes a virtual component which allows for a daily connection/interaction between teachers and students - even on those days when half the students are home.

This does not mean teachers will be juggling two different education delivery models each day. There will be **one blended in-class/online education delivery model**, as outlined in professional learning resources provided to teachers. There are different blended learning options and approaches within this model and teachers will have flexibility to determine what works best for their classrooms and subject areas. Meanwhile, online instruction will not continue as it did under the full-time Scenario 3 model. Therefore, students cannot opt to attend online only. In order for the blended Scenario 2 learning model to be most effective, students must attend class when they are scheduled to do so.

For more information, see: [District News Release - April 13](#).

### **What is cohorting? How is a class cohort determined?**

- A cohort is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school year. School administrators will determine the composition of the cohorts, but in general it will be a homeroom class of students at the K-9 Level. Schools will determine the make-up of class cohorts. The purpose of cohorting is to minimize the mixing of students and staff so that if a child or employee develops infection, the number of exposures would be reduced. Where possible, subject teachers will go into the student's homeroom to teach, thereby minimizing student movement throughout the building. Certain specialist teachers will continue to receive students in alternate learning environments including the music room, gymnasium, etc.

It is much more difficult to cohort in schools with Grades 10-12, due to the nature of high school programming and the multiple courses in which students may be enrolled. It is recognized that in some schools, cohorting is not possible and therefore, as announced March 11, 2021 those students will continue their education under Scenario 3 (online instruction), as described below, until further notice.

### **Why are rules around numbers in class cohorts different than rules for the community?**

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMoH) has indicated that where cohorting can occur, it is both safe and in the best interest of students' overall well-being to return to in-class instruction, provided recommended health and safety measures are in place.

The CMoH has often stated the importance of students being in school with their teachers and peers, as much as possible, for both academic reasons and their social-emotional well-being. She has also indicated the Public Health restrictions outside school environments are designed to keep the broader community healthy so that students can continue to be inside school environments. As we have seen in other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, schools are open when the rate of Covid-19 community transmission is low.

### Is there an option to access online instruction under Scenario 1?

- No. In schools where full-time in-class instruction has resumed, teachers will be engaged in face-to-face instruction, and online classes will not be available.

It should be noted that a small number of severely ill/severely immunocompromised K-9 students have been receiving remote instruction since the beginning of the school year. This is not an option for everyone. The District has developed a [Request for Access to Virtual Learning](#) application which can be completed and returned to the school, along with all the necessary supporting medical documentation. Proper medical documentation must come from a specialist doctor who is treating an individual. It must speak to the specific medical condition that would prevent a student from accessing in-class learning. High school students who fall under this category will typically be supported through the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation ([www.cdli.ca](http://www.cdli.ca)).

### What is Scenario 3?

- Under Scenario 3, virtual instruction is implemented. In-school classes are suspended based on public health advice. Teaching and assessment of curriculum outcomes will continue. See: [Protocols for Online Learning \(Scenario 3\)](#)

### How does Scenario 3 impact students at different grade levels?

- Minimum “on-screen” instructional times were outlined in the Department of Education’s [K-12 Education Re-entry Plan](#) in July 2020 and incorporated into the District’s [Safe Return to School Plan](#), released in August 2020.

The protocols for grade-level instruction, and **sample** schedules under Scenario 3, are here: [Protocols for Online Learning - Scenario 3](#). These are **minimum** ‘on screen’ instructional time protocols. Teachers are free to increase the time they spend online with students, and adjust the sample classroom schedules provided to meet student needs. It is not expected, nor encouraged, for students to sit at their computer for the entire school day and listen to teacher lectures.

### Why is there less ‘on screen’ instructional time in the younger grades under Scenario 3?

- K-6 instructional time is more limited in a virtual environment because much of the curriculum is play-based and is therefore more appropriately conducted offline. Direct instruction will concentrate on literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning through a focus on language, mathematics, and health curriculum outcomes. Schools may add additional time to be responsive to student needs in whole group, small group, or individual virtual settings. Teachers may be dividing their online instruction into morning and afternoon sessions to reduce class groupings.

### **What devices can be used to access online learning under Scenarios 2 and 3?**

- Most personal laptops, tablets, desktop computers and smartphones can be used for online learning. **You do not need a Chromebook for online learning.**

### **What if families don't have a compatible device?**

- Schools and the District have devices available for distribution to Grades 7-12 students who do not have a compatible device at home. Schools compiled lists of families in this situation last fall. If you believe you are not on these lists, but should be, alert your school administrator by email.

### **What if families don't have reliable internet at home?**

- In May 2020, NLESD distributed "MiFi" devices to the majority of homes with identified internet connectivity issues. If you haven't received a device and have connectivity issues, alert your school administrator by email.

### **How can families learn more about Google for Education?**

- The District has prepared [Google Resources for School Communities](#) to help families, students and teachers, better understand the Google tools being used throughout our schools.

### **What is the plan for students with complex needs?**

- All students with complex needs can return to school, in accordance with updated health and safety protocols.

### **Can children of rotational workers attend school under Scenarios 1 and 2?**

- Yes - if all household members adhere to federal guidelines and public health directions.

On Friday, March 12, 2021, the Chief Medical Officer of Health announced several changes to self-isolation restrictions for rotational workers. An updated link to modified self-isolation rules for rotational workers is on the Provincial Government website here: [Self-Isolation - Rotational Workers](#). That day's Provincial Government Covid briefing can be viewed here: [Covid Briefing - March 12](#).

### **If there are further changes/updates to protocols, how will schools and families know?**

- The District plan, "A Safe Return to School", was updated Nov. 2, 2020, but changes have since been made to several of the original protocols. The Appendix to the plan provides the publication date and/or the date of the most recent updates to various protocols. As adjustments are made where necessary, updates will be indicated. [Click this link to directly view the Appendix](#). Updates will also be included in this Frequently Asked Questions document.

Meanwhile, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has developed a new webpage with information for families. It can be accessed at [Information for School Communities](#) and includes a section on **School Community Resources** which may be of particular benefit to families at this time.

### **Are parents/guardians of students or other visitors permitted to enter schools?**

- Generally no, not at this time. Visitors will not be permitted inside NLESD schools during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The exception to this is parents who may have necessary transitional or programming meetings scheduled by school administration (e.g., parents who are members of their child's Individualized Education Plan team, Kinderstart programming); breakfast program volunteers as pre-arranged with administration, and others offering specific services to students, as approved by the District (e.g., approved school photography vendors).

If a parent has to pick up their child, school staff will escort the student to the exit door, where the parent will be waiting outside. When a school visit is essential, the school must screen visitors using the [School Screening Questionnaire](#) before they enter the school. If a visitor answers YES to any of the questions, the individual must not be admitted into the school. A record of all visitors and contact information must be kept.

### **Are schools organizing Graduation/Cap and Gown events this year?**

- Only at school sites, and only for members of the Class of 2021. In January 2021, the District advised schools to proceed cautiously with any plans for graduation and cap and gown events, knowing they could be impacted by Public Health restrictions. That has held true, and the guidance provided to schools at that time remains in effect. Given the current Public Health guidance for schools:
  - School-sponsored school leaving events planned for this spring can only be held at school sites. Schools should not become involved in securing alternate locations, or planning events at alternate locations (attending such events is at the discretion of individual school staff members). There is no guarantee investments made in booking venues or organizing other graduation activities can be recouped if Alert Levels change.
  - Any school leaving event held at a school this spring can only involve the Class of 2021 and appropriate school/District staff (no parents, dates, former students/graduates, or other non-essential visitors). This can, of course, include a virtual component and/or be recorded so that families and friends can witness this milestone. If a school traditionally holds a cap and gown/diploma night event the following fall, that too may be achievable, based on the public health restrictions in place at that time.

The District recognizes this is disappointing to many students, staff and families who were hoping traditional graduation/prom activities could take place at schools this year.

### **What will happen if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19? Will the school community be notified?**

- Information related to positive Covid-19 cases is Public Health information. It is not District information to withhold or disclose.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools states: “If a staff person or student in a school is confirmed by public health as positive for COVID-19, public health will work with school administration to determine what actions should be taken, including if any staff or students who have been in contact with that person need to self-isolate, and if other staff and students’ families should be notified. Specific public health measures are implemented in facilities where an outbreak occurs to prevent further transmission of COVID-19 and keep others safe. Public health will provide direction if there are concerns regarding a case in school. Schools should not provide notification to staff or students’ families if a staff member or student becomes ill at home or at school, including if they display symptoms of COVID-19, unless directed to by public health.”

As of December, 2020, the case management process related to potential exposure to Covid-19 in a school setting has been formalized by provincial public health authorities. The document, [Covid-19 Exposure, Case and Outbreak Management in School Setting](#), is available on both the District’s [School Reopening website](#) and the Provincial Government’s [Life with Covid-19 website](#).

**Are there additional mental health and well-being resources provided to schools, given many students may have been negatively impacted by pandemic restrictions?**

- Yes. The Provincial Government provided funding to deploy an additional 25 guidance counsellor units to the system earlier this school year. Feedback from NLESD teachers had previously identified the need for enhanced professional development in the area of social emotional learning (SEL) and trauma informed practice (TIP), which was provided during the first week of September. In an attempt to minimize the mental health impacts of the suspension of in-class instruction on students and staff, SEL was, and is, a core element of educational activities this year.

**Is fundraising permitted in schools this year?**

- The District updated its Covid-19 related fundraising protocol earlier this school year, recognizing that there are many fundraising events which contribute to students’ personal growth and awareness of those less fortunate (e.g., Janeway Jamarama, Terry Fox Run, Coats for Kids). There are still limitations, however, and we are reminding schools to be aware that many people within their school communities could be negatively impacted by the Covid-related economic downturn. The guidelines/protocols are here: [Guidelines/Protocols for Resumption of School Fundraising](#).

**Could the school year end later than anticipated, in order to make up some lost time?**

- The beginning and end dates for the school year are set by the Minister of Education, in accordance with the Schools Act, 1997. The District has no authority to alter those dates.

**Will public exams go ahead for the 2020-2021 school year?**

- No. Decisions around public exams fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. The Minister of Education has announced that public exams scheduled for January 2021 and June 2021 are cancelled.



## **Extra-Curricular Activities/ Community Use of Schools**

### **Will indoor and outdoor extra-curricular activities be permitted?**

- Effective February 27, 2021, all indoor and outdoor extra-curricular activities are suspended until further notice.

### **Will community groups (e.g., recreational sports leagues) be able to access school facilities after hours?**

- No. In usual circumstances, many of our school facilities are used by both school and community-based organizations from the early morning hours until late at night, and over the weekend. As our focus in the 2020-21 school year must be on the continued health and safety of students and staff, the District expects to see continued suspension of the Community Use of Schools policy to prioritize student access. It is anticipated that some select usage for after-school programs which involve students will be provided with access under clearly-established guidelines.

### **What will happen to public library spaces in shared school facilities?**

- The Public Information and Library Resources Board is responsible for library spaces in consultation with the District. Public libraries in schools are not be permitted to open to the public during the regular school day.

## **Health Screening Measures**

### **How will students and staff be screened for potential COVID-19 symptoms before arriving at school? What if they show up at school displaying symptoms of illness?**

- Parents/guardians are asked to use the daily [School Screening Questionnaire](#) to determine whether their child is displaying symptoms of illness which suggest they remain home. If the screening questions result in concerns of COVID-19 infection, families should contact their medical service provider, call 811, and/or complete the Risk Assessment Screening Tool available from the Provincial Government's COVID-19 website. Similarly, teachers and staff are also required to use the questionnaire to complete routine self-screening (not testing) for symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. Staff experiencing symptoms as outlined in the questionnaire will be required to stay home, and avail of sick leave.

If a student arrives at school displaying signs of illness, they will be separated from others and accommodated in a designated health room/area, equipped with appropriate personal protective equipment for both students and staff as needed. Schools will be guided by the [School Health Room Guidelines](#) to safely determine actions and next steps. Care will be taken not to stigmatize students or cause unnecessary fear. Many COVID-19 symptoms are similar to that of colds, flus, allergic reactions and other common ailments.

### **What about students who routinely have symptoms which could be interpreted as Covid-like symptoms (e.g., allergies)? How will schools respond?**

- Schools will work with families and local health care providers to be aware of students with symptoms related to separate health care matters (e.g., allergies) which could be similar to those related to COVID19. Schools are routinely aware of each student's medical issues and work with families to ensure risks are minimized.

### **Hygiene and Cleaning Efforts**

**Will the District have an adequate supply of personal hygiene and cleaning products (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer, commercial cleaning products, disinfectant) throughout the school year?.**

- Yes. The District has a standing offer for cleaning supplies. With respect to hand sanitizer, the District awarded a standing offer to two proponents in order to mitigate the risks of scarcity/delay in the supply chain.

**Will the District provide personal protective equipment to teachers, staff and students as required, or requested?**

- Level 1 non-surgical medical masks and face shields will be made available to staff to be used in all instructional all communal areas of the school, as per the updated Public Health protocols announced February 26, 2021. Depending on the activities and responsibilities of some positions within the District, the need for other personal protective equipment has been, and will continue to be, assessed and explored in consultation with public health officials.

At the beginning of the school year, the District provided two non-medical masks to all staff, one to each student, and - through the Department of Education - approximately one face shield per staff member was provided to schools.

**What is the plan for appropriate hand washing facilities and protocols, particularly for small children?**

- Age appropriate information for students related to hand hygiene will be available at the school. See: [Hand Washing Poster](#). Classroom teachers and school staff will model and reinforce regular handwashing and sanitizing procedures with students.

### **Student Transportation/Busing**

**Are there changes to student transportation as the result of recent Public Health advice?**

- No. The measures put in place in September to limit the number of students on a bus to a maximum of 46, along with assigned seating and masking protocols, remain in effect. Meanwhile, it is anticipated that with many schools in Central, Western and Labrador regions moving to Scenario 2 (blended in-school/at-home learning) as of March 3, 2021, there will be inherently fewer students on some bus routes.

**Will students be required to wear a mask on the bus?**

- As indicated through Public Health guidance to schools, all passengers on the bus are required to wear non-medical masks, regardless of age. All students will be required to wear



their masks from the bus through the school's hallways to their classrooms. Students in Grades 4-12, must continue to wear their masks throughout the school day other than to eat and engage in physical activity. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged to wear masks in their classrooms, but will not be required to do so.

### **What kind of cleaning/disinfection will be occurring on school buses?**

- During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, enhanced cleaning and disinfection has been initiated to reduce the risk of exposure. Coronavirus can survive on different surfaces but can be killed by most cleaners and disinfectants. The District relies on bus cleaning guidance contained in the following documents:
  - Provincial Government [K-12 Re-entry Plan](#)
  - [Federal Guidance for School Bus Operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

High touch surfaces that will be regularly cleaned and disinfected include, but are not limited to: seats; inside hand railing; floors; interior windows and wall section below passenger windows; inside and outside door handles (including manual control for service door); inside door grab handles, pads and armrests; keys; steering wheel; mobile device; shift lever and console; dashboard; turn signal and wiper stalks; seat and seat adjuster, and any other parts that are commonly used and that may have been touched.

Seat tops and rails will be disinfected in between each run with an additional two (2) cleans/disinfections occurring daily. School bus cleaning logs will be kept for monitoring purposes. Operators are expected to reduce the number of drivers per vehicle and ensure that the same drivers use the same vehicle and keep the same work schedules in order to limit contacts as much as possible.

### **Will there be hand sanitizer dispensers installed on school buses?**

- School bus design and manufacturing is highly regulated to maximize student safety and, as a result, there is limited space available to install a dispenser in a location that is accessible to students upon boarding the bus. Additionally, the inevitable residue on the ground by having a dispenser along the steps or in the aisle would create a slipping hazard for students and the driver. Students and parents are expected to wash their hands with soap and water, or apply hand sanitizer, before arriving at the bus stop.

### **What is the District doing to ensure bus drivers are safe?**

- The Provincial Government's [K-12 Re-entry Plan](#) states a bus driver should be provided with a protective zone, which may include:
  - two-metre physical distance;
  - physical barrier; or
  - Non-medical mask)

In line with current guidelines for staff and students, announced February 26, 2021, the District has elected to require all drivers to wear a Level 1 medical mask and eye covering as well as prohibiting the use of the seat directly behind the driver as methods to create a protective zone for the driver. The [Joint Guidance Document Transport Canada and CSA D250 Bus Technical Committee](#) outlines implications related to installing a physical barrier or shield. Drivers can help keep students safe, as well as help keep themselves and their co-workers safe, by following the General Student Transportation Health Measures contained in the District's

[COVID-19 Student Transportation Procedures](#) document. Additional methods to enhance the driver's protective zone include, but are not limited to:

- Requiring masks for all students riding the bus;
- Requiring drivers to wear Level 1 medical masks and eye protection; and
- Providing drivers with hand sanitizer on the bus.