

Return to In-Class Instruction - January, 2022

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated February 11, 2022 - 2:45 p.m.

Public Health has issued a [Public Health Guidance for Schools](#) document (updated February 9, 2022) to guide K-12 in-class instruction.

The direction includes, but is not limited to:

- The importance of strict adherence to masking protocols;
- Changes to Covid-19 case and contact management protocols (See also:
 - [Public Health FAQs - School Reopening](#),
 - [Rapid Testing Program for Children](#) and
 - [Covid Exposure Flowchart - Feb. 24](#)); and
- Direction on the use of masks, cohorting, physical distancing, and more.

Where can I learn more about the Rapid Testing Program?

The Department of Health and Community Services has provided detailed information on its [Rapid Testing Program for Students and Staff](#) webpage.

What if students/families don't pick up their tests, or decide not to use them?

Schools will follow up with families who do not pick up test kits or contact the school to make other arrangements. The Provincial Government indicated that prior to a return to classes January 25, all students and staff were required to use the rapid test kits as outlined in the [instructions](#). It is an additional tool - an extra layer of protection - to help schools remain safe for in-class instruction. There is, however, no requirement to provide evidence of a negative test before a student can attend school. Families are being asked to do their part to keep everyone safe - and are being provided the means to do so.

So how will schools verify that students and staff have tested negative?

Schools will not be involved in verification of rapid self-test results. Parents are asked to verify the test results are negative before sending a child to school. This is an added measure, in addition to the daily [Self-Screening Questionnaire](#) and other school-based Covid-19 protocols which parents have already been following to help keep schools safe.

What if a person already had Covid-19 and has since recovered? Could traces still be picked up by the rapid tests?

Public Health advises that rapid testing is not recommended for 21 days after an individual developed Covid-19 symptoms or, if there were no symptoms, 21 days after a positive PCR test date. Meanwhile, if an individual cannot test because of these restrictions, they can still attend school by using the daily [Self-Screening Questionnaire](#).

Will there be additional tests distributed after the initial five (5) are used?

Rapid self-test kits should only be used as directed. They are a limited resource at this time. Additional tests may be provided, as the need arises, depending on availability.

Will online learning, or continuity of learning plans, be an option for all students?

Online face-to-face instruction will not be provided if schools are open to in-class instruction, as teachers will be engaged in their classes and other related duties in their schools. There are a finite number of teaching resources available. Similarly, continuity of learning plans can only be provided to students who cannot attend school due to short-term illness (e.g., testing positive for Covid-19) or because they are following Public Health guidance to self-isolate away from school. Parents should contact their school administration if their child is in this situation.

My child is severely immunocompromised. Is online learning available to them?

There is a process to apply for remote learning for students who are immunocompromised due to severe medical conditions (See application packages: [Grades K-9](#), [Levels 1-4](#)). This is a limited option designed for rare circumstances only. The process requires supporting medical documentation from a specialist doctor which indicates a specific need for remote learning.

Will breakfast and lunch programs continue?

Yes. Breakfast and lunch programs can continue in accordance with Provincial Government Vaccine/VaxPass policies and Public Health guidance. **Note:** As of December 21, 2022, any vendors, suppliers, contractors or volunteers who regularly work alongside Provincial Government employees during normal business hours must follow the same vaccination or testing/masking requirements that apply to employees. See: [Mandatory Vaccine Policy](#).

My school is changing its recess and lunch protocols? Why?

Public Health indicates the most important measure to be implemented in schools at this time is a strict adherence to masking protocols. The Chief Medical Officer of Health advises staff and students must wear their masks at all times within the school environment - except when actively eating, drinking or engaging in “vigorous” physical activity.

When masks are removed for the purpose of eating/drinking, every effort must be made to have them removed for a limited time (i.e., for less than 15 minutes, if a two-metre physical distance cannot be achieved). This guidance applies to both staff and students. Therefore, some schools may alter their recess/lunch protocols to adhere to this guidance, or to provide greater opportunity for less stringent masking during the lunch period.

Are visitors permitted in schools during the school day?

As per regular, pre-Covid protocols, external visitors should be limited to only those who are required to enter a school (as determined by the school administration). At this time, a mask is required and, in accordance with the Provincial Government VaxPass/VaxVerify policy and District directives, visitors (including parents) are required to show proof of full vaccination in order to enter the school, unless their presence in the school is deemed essential, or part of an essential service.

Essential school-based activities, for which a VaxPass is encouraged, but not required, include, but are not limited to:

- Parent teacher interviews (recognizing virtual meetings are an option);
- Scheduled meetings, which take place after the school day, with administration/teachers/parents to discuss student programming;

- Kinderstart sessions;
- Vaccination of children aged 5-11;

Non-essential activities for which VaxPass/VaxVerify measures are required include, but are not limited to:

- Cap and Gown events involving former students and parents/guests
- School-based graduation events involving parents/guests
- External presenters (e.g., D.A.R.E., Roots of Empathy)
- Fundraisers, art shows, book fairs, etc.
- Any other activity which, while worthwhile, is not an essential part of the prescribed curriculum or school day.

Are extracurricular activities taking place? Community use of schools?

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District will permit the community use of schools and school-based extracurricular activities for students (sports, music, arts, and other clubs) in accordance with Public Health recommendations and directives, beginning Monday, February 14, 2022. There will be limitations - as noted during the Provincial Government's February 8, 2022 briefing, and certain Covid-19 measures will be in place. See: [Protocol for Extracurricular Activities](#).

Why must students wear masks? What kind of masks are they supposed to wear?

The District is currently operating in compliance with a Public Health [Special Measures Order](#) which requires that masks be worn by all K-12 students within the school environment. The District is required, by law, to implement that Special Measures Order until it is rescinded by Public Health.

Masks with three layers are recommended. This could be a three-layer cloth mask or three-ply disposable non-medical mask. Whichever mask you choose should be comfortable and completely cover your mouth and nose with no gaps. Neck gaiters (also known as neck warmers or buffs), scarves and bandanas are not recommended. See: [Public Health Recommendation - Masking](#).

Do staff and students have to wear masks in physical education class?

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has indicated that staff and students must wear their masks at all times within the school environment - except when actively eating, drinking or engaging in "vigorous" physical activity. Mask wearing is still encouraged, but not required if the physical activity makes the mask wearing intolerable.

Will there be additional changes to Public Health protocols in schools?

As evidenced throughout the pandemic, Public Health guidance and direction can change at any time. Meanwhile, for example, strict masking protocols will be in place; cohorting protocols remain in place; restrictions around extra-curricular activities and public access to school are still in place, and air filtration/purification units are in place in all classrooms throughout the province.

Will in-class instruction be suspended again if staff are ordered to isolate?

There are no guarantees. There may be staffing challenges in some areas as the pandemic evolves, but we cannot predict that with any certainty.

There are a number of contingencies at a school administrator's disposal should they run into issues where staff have tested positive, or have been directed by Public Health to self-isolate. For example:

- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) recognizes that Covid-19 may impact the duties of Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs) and that adjustments may need to be made to schedules and assignments;
- Changes have allowed retired teachers to be more available in emergency circumstances - without impacting their pensions;
- Memorial University education students can apply for teacher certification prior to their official graduation, and they can be approved for District substitute lists; and
- The District is also continuously recruiting for casual support staff.

How much time have students spent online since the pandemic began in 2020?

That would differ for each of our more than 250 school communities, depending on grade levels, Public Health guidance and Covid-19 circumstances in those communities at any given time.

Schools were closed to in-class instruction from mid-March 2020 to the end of June 2020 during the 2019-20 school year. At-home learning resources were provided to all grade levels at that time. Since then, Covid-related news and notifications sent to individual schools, the regions, or province-wide, have been posted publicly through the District's Information for School Communities pages (See: [School Year 2020-21](#) and [School Year 2021-22](#)).