

Interlake School Division: Welcoming Our Students Back (2020-2021)

January 28, 2021

The Interlake School Division's plan for welcoming our students back for the 2020-2021 school year was made public on Monday, August 17. As ISD's plan is updated in response to changes in government and public health guidelines and protocols, updates will be noted and dated on this page for clarity and record-keeping.

Updated: August 21, 2020

- Section C.3: Masks on School Buses
- Section D.4: Personal Protective Equipment
- Section E.1: Personal Protective Equipment
- Section E.2: Layers of Protection

Updated: August 28, 2020

- Section E.6: Hand Hygiene

Updated: September 4, 2020

- Section B.1: Priorities for In-Class Learning
- Section C.3: Masks on School Buses

Updated: September 25, 2020

- Section B.1: Priorities for In-Class Learning

Updated: January 28, 2021

- Full Document Update to Reflect Current [Restricted Level \(Orange\)](#) Status

Important Note: Should ISD, either as a school division in full or as individual school(s), be placed in [Critical Level \(Red\)](#) status, finalized plans for teaching and learning will be dependent on guidance from public health and Manitoba Education. Critical Service Worker (CSW) data has been gathered from families and school-based staff have extensive plans in place for remote teaching and learning. Divisional and/or school-based plans for Critical Level (Red) status will be enacted and communicated as necessary.

A. Background

In-class learning for the 2020-2021 school year resumed for ISD students on September 8th, 2020 in accordance with public health protocols and Manitoba Education's K-12 guidelines. Programming and school operations within ISD continue to be guided by the contents of Manitoba Education's publication entitled, [*Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools*](#).

In-class learning looks different at each of ISD's schools based on the student population and the grade levels they serve. Each school is currently enacting a local plan aligned with provincial and divisional expectations and updates to school-based plans are communicated directly to families.

We face continued uncertainty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Understandably, questions continue to exist about the impact of the pandemic on student learning in ISD schools. The purpose of this document is to share our most current responses to a number of frequently asked questions in hopes of better preparing students, families, and staff for success at school. For clarity, questions have been organized into the following four sections:

1. **Student Learning;**
2. **Transportation & Building Operations;**
3. **Staff Preparedness; and,**
4. **Public Health**

The responses provided in the following pages are based on the most current information available to us and have been developed in consult with government, public health, and our colleagues and neighbours within and beyond the Interlake School Division. We fully acknowledge that questions will continue to arise and that the environment will continue to evolve in response to the health of our communities and the information available to us.

All members of the ISD community are encouraged to visit us online regularly at www.interlakesd.ca for updates and to view current COVID-19 information from the province at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/>.

B. Student Learning

1. Priorities for In-Class Learning: *How much in-class learning is occurring across the grades?*
 - **Junior Kindergarten:** JK programming will not be offered in 2020-2021.
 - **Kindergarten:** Students participate in alternate days of full, in-class instruction with the exception of Kindergarten students at Brant-Argyle School who attend five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
 - **Grades 1 to 8:** Students attend five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
 - **Grades 9 to 12:** Students attend alternate days of full, in-class instruction.
 - Each school defines a plan for in-class attendance based on local needs.
 - While at home on alternate days, students are expected to engage in learning designed and supported by their teachers for the full school day.
 - Students with special needs attend five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
 - **Colony Schools:** All Colony Schools offer in-class learning unless otherwise directed by Manitoba Education.

2. Attendance and Participation: *Is student attendance and participation at school mandatory?*
 - School attendance is mandatory for children aged 7 to 18 in Manitoba. All students are expected to participate fully in learning, even if/when remote learning is required.
3. Learning at Home: *Is learning at home an option for those who choose not to attend?*
 - Remote learning is an option for students who have been medically advised against in-class learning due to COVID-related risk factors. These students are eligible to participate in ISD's medically-advised remote learning program.
 - Families who choose to homeschool their child(ren) for reasons other than a need for medical accommodation are required to register for provincial homeschooling via [Manitoba Education](#).
4. Student Well-Being: *How are the well-being needs of students being supported?*
 - Each school continues to communicate the local supports available and the process for accessing those supports to students and their families. School-based staff also engage divisional student services supports and external service providers as needed.
5. Scheduling and Timetabling: *Have schools revised their timetables and schedules?*
 - Each school defines timetables and school schedules independently to meet the needs of their community. School entry and exit, timing of breaks and lunch hours, and class change schedules are staggered to limit interaction between cohorts of students where possible.
6. Recovery Learning: *How has unfinished or incomplete learning from 2019-2020 been addressed?*
 - Student assessment and transition planning for the 2020-2021 school year has emphasized and responded to recovery learning needs identified in June, 2020 report cards.
7. Cohorting: *How are cohorts being used to limit student interaction?*
 - All schools have planned for student programming using a cohort model. Cohorts involve keeping groups of students (e.g. classes or grades) together and avoiding interactions with other groups of students.
 - Grade 9-12 schools that have obtained 2m of space between students when seated may not require a cohort model for students in semester two.
8. Student Programming: *What is the focus of instruction?*
 - Core curriculum and required courses have been prioritized for in-class learning. Elective courses for K-12 students are offered as resources permit at each school. Elective course offerings from K-12 will be re-assessed throughout the school year as public health permits.

9. Specialty Programming: *What about other courses, both compulsory and elective?*
- Singing in K-8 Music classes is suspended until further notice.
 - Band and Choral classes are suspended until further notice.
 - Foods classes will be offered as resources permit at each school.
 - Physical education classes continue with necessary modifications for physical distancing and occur outside when possible.
 - Inter-school offerings (i.e. students attending another school for one or more courses) are suspended for the 2020-2021 school year.
10. Extracurricular Programming: *Are extracurricular programs and activities available?*
- Each school assesses their local ability to offer extracurricular activities. Decisions on extracurricular programming are made in consult with ISD's Senior Administration and guided by the school's capacity to meet all public health recommendations with the school-based resources available. With regard to school sports, ISD follows guidance from the Manitoba High School Athletics Association's [Return to School Sport Plan](#) as well as the [sports guidelines](#) from government in decision-making.

C. Transportation & Building Operations

1. Student Transportation: *How are transport-eligible children getting to school?*
- ISD school buses are running for those students who are eligible for school bus transportation. Parents of eligible students are welcome to transport their own child(ren) to school if they wish to do so. School bus transportation for non-eligible students is not currently available and capacity to do so will be revisited throughout the school year.
2. School Bus Seating: *How is seating arranged on the school bus?*
- Specific [guidelines for school bus transportation](#) are in place and continue to be updated as public health information evolves.
3. Masks on School Buses: *Are bus drivers and students wearing masks on the bus?*
- Yes. Masks are required for bus drivers, students and any other passenger on the bus. Masks should be put on before loading and taken off after offloading, if removal is appropriate for the setting. A mask will be provided for students if they do not have one.
4. Cleaning: *How are schools addressing enhanced cleaning needs?*
- Increased frequency of cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing, particularly for high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, is in place at all schools. Schedules of custodial staff have been adjusted to ensure compliance with cleaning protocols.

5. Physical Distancing: *Have class sizes been reduced to allow for physical distancing?*

- Class sizes have not been reduced nor capped by enrollment. All ISD classrooms have been measured to determine capacity in accordance with public health directives and each school has placed classes in appropriate classroom spaces.
- Physical distancing is required in classrooms, to the greatest extent possible. However, it is recognized that strict physical distancing at all times, particularly with young children, is not practical in the school setting. When physical distancing is not possible, students remain within their cohort to reduce exposure to others with at least one metre of space between students when they are seated.
- ISD schools have repurposed non-traditional classroom spaces (e.g. gymnasiums, specialist areas, meeting rooms) as temporary classroom spaces to achieve additional physical distancing where possible.

6. Common Spaces: *How are common spaces in school buildings being used?*

- Schools monitor common spaces to avoid congestion and ensure cohorts maintain at least 4 metres of space between them. Travel within the school is limited as much as possible throughout the school day and enhanced cleaning/disinfection of common areas is a priority for custodial staff. Students are encouraged to keep personal belongings with them and schools have determined their local capacity to provide student access to lockers.

7. Libraries and Cafeterias: *Are libraries and cafeteria services available for students?*

- School libraries are accessible where these spaces are not needed for instruction and where custodial staff can provide increased frequency of cleaning and sanitizing high-touch surfaces. Cafeteria services in ISD schools are suspended until further notice.

8. Visitors and Volunteers: *Who is allowed inside of school buildings?*

- Visitors or volunteers are permitted inside of school buildings, but in-person visits are minimized to the greatest extent possible. All visitors and volunteers must adhere to self-screening, physical distancing and recommended hygiene practices. Schools keep a list of all visitors. Community use of schools remains suspended until further notice, with the exception of child care centres operating in schools.

D. Staff Preparedness

1. Employee Groups: *How are ISD's employee groups involved in planning?*

- ISD's Superintendent's Department meets regularly with the leadership team from each employee group to discuss roles and responsibilities, to gather feedback, and to respond to questions.

2. Professional Development: *What COVID-19 related training is provided to ISD staff?*
 - All ISD staff participate in professional learning opportunities specific to their roles and responsibilities in pandemic-related planning, programming, and operations.
3. Staff Well-Being: *How are the well-being needs of staff being supported?*
 - The ISD Student Services Department has communicated the supports available and the process for accessing those supports to all staff. Staff who require access to the supports available communicate their needs directly to their supervisor.
4. Personal Protective Equipment: *Are staff required to wear a mask in schools?*
 - Yes. Non-medical masks are required for all staff when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Masks are provided at the school if needed. Each staff member has also been provided with a face shield should they choose to wear one.
5. Individuals with Symptoms: *What happens if staff are required to care for a child who develops symptoms at school?*
 - If the student is young and requires close contact and care while isolated, staff continue to care for the child until the parent is able to pick the child up. Caregivers are mindful of hand hygiene and avoid contact with the respiratory secretions of the student. A medical mask is worn by the staff member caring for the child.
6. Staff with Symptoms: *What happens if a staff member becomes symptomatic while at work?*
 - If a staff member becomes symptomatic while at work, they immediately isolate themselves from other staff and students, notify their supervisor, and go home to isolate. Staff are advised to contact [Health Links – Info Santé](#) (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or their health care provider for direction.
7. Sick Staff Members: *What is the guidance for staff members who are sick?*
 - Staff members who are away sick or who are self-isolating will follow divisional Human Resources direction and collective agreement provisions. Medical notes are not currently required for staff who have COVID-19 or flu-related symptoms, or for those caring for individuals in this situation. A sick staff member can return to work once it has been determined that it is safe to do so by their health care provider or public health.
8. Supporting Students: *How will staff safely support students with complex needs?*
 - For information about keeping students and staff safe in situations where students require interventions or supports that cannot be provided from a distance of two metres, staff are to consult with their direct supervisor and visit Manitoba Education’s [Guidelines on Supporting Students Who Require Interventions or Supports that Cannot be Delivered at a Distance](#).

E. Public Health

1. Personal Protective Equipment: *Are students required to wear a mask during all hours of the school day?*
 - Non-medical masks are required for students in Grades 4 to 12 when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Parents and caregivers are responsible for deciding whether their child(ren) in Kindergarten – Grade 3 wear a mask.
 - There may be times throughout the day that students will have sufficient space to be physically distanced so that masks can be removed, such as during lunch breaks or mask-free play outdoors at recess.
 - Masks are provided at the school for students if needed.

2. Layers of Protection: *Does wearing a mask mean that other public health measures can be reduced?*
 - No. Wearing non-medical masks is an additional layer of protection that can help to prevent the infectious respiratory droplets of an unknowingly infected person (the wearer) from coming into contact with other people. This follows public health advice that a mask may be a helpful tool to reduce the risk of infection or transmission when an individual cannot be two metres from others.

3. Personal Risk Factors: *How are students and staff with personal risk factors being supported?*
 - Arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis for students and staff who may be at higher risk of COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions or other risk factors.

4. Symptom Screening: *How is symptom screening being addressed?*
 - Students and staff are required to [self-screen](#) at home before going to school. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their own child's self-screening. An up-to-date list of symptoms can be found online at government's [About COVID-19](#) page. Screening protocols are in place for all people entering schools and screening information is posted at all entrances and provided to families.

5. Individuals with Symptoms: *What happens when a child develops symptoms while at school?*
 - The child is isolated in a predetermined space in the school and provided with a medical mask to be worn. The child remains under the care of school staff and parents or caregivers are notified to pick up their child immediately. Schools require each family to have a plan in place for urgent student pick-up.

6. Hand Hygiene: *Is there be a focus on hand hygiene for students and staff?*

- Yes. Students and staff perform hand hygiene often, with soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at the following times: at the start of the day and before going home, after going to the washroom, before and after eating, after getting hands dirty, after wiping noses or handling dirty tissues, after coughing/sneezing/blowing nose, and after cleaning tasks (staff). Hand sanitizer, hand soap, and necessary cleaning supplies are provided at the school. Hand sanitizing stations are set up at all school entrances and all students, staff, and visitors are expected to hand sanitize upon entry and exit.

7. Contact Tracing: *What happens if there is a positive case identified in the school?*

- Manitoba Education has recently released a [Toolkit for Notification of Cases in Schools](#) to support schools in intervening as quickly as possible to mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission and to keep schools safe.
- Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis with public health leading the response and providing guidance. In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 impacting a school, public health will advise staff and students if they have been in close contact, if they need to self-isolate or self-monitor, and when they can return to school.

F. Summary

The contents of this document are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, our objective is to complement Manitoba Education’s guidance for the operation of schools during the 2020-2021 school year. As mentioned previously, each school has enacted a localized plan aligned with provincial and divisional expectations. Though schools are in regular communication with families, parents/guardians are asked to contact their child’s school directly with questions and feedback.

The ISD team continues to plan collaboratively with our school communities and adjust plans throughout the school year in response to current public health protocols. ISD is working closely with Manitoba Education and with public health to do all that we can to ensure safety, health, and well-being for students, staff, and families.

G. Additional Resources

- Interlake School Division updates can be found [here](#).
- Current information from government about COVID-19 in Manitoba can be found [here](#).
- More information on Manitoba Education’s COVID-19 response can be found [here](#).
- Email inquiries about ISD’s divisional plan can be directed to: isd@isd21.mb.ca