

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

### **September 25, 2020**

Note: The Interlake School Division's plan for welcoming our students back 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

## A. Background

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

The return to in-class learning will look different at each of ISD's schools based on the student population and the grade levels they serve. Each school is currently creating a school-specific plan aligned with provincial and divisional expectations and will communicate their plan directly to families on August 31.

We face continued uncertainty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Understandably, many questions exist about the return to in-class learning in ISD schools in September. The purpose of this document is to share our responses to a number of frequently asked questions in hopes of better preparing students, families, and staff for school this fall. 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 additional 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](http://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: *Will students attend school five days per week?*
  - **Junior Kindergarten:** JK programming will be suspended until further notice.
  - **Kindergarten:** Students will return for alternate days of full, in-class instruction with the exception of Kindergarten students at Brant-Argyle School who will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
  - **Grades 1 to 8:** Students will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
  - **Grades 9 to 12:** Students will return for alternate days of full, in-class instruction.
    - Half of our students will attend days 1, 3 and 5. Half will attend days 2, 4 and 6.
    - While at home on alternate days, students will be expected to engage in learning activity prescribed and supported by their teachers for the full school day.
    - School timetables will be designed such that each school is prepared to have all students return for up to five days of full, in-class instruction per week as public health protocols and school resources permit.

- **Kindergarten to Grade 12:** Students with special needs in all grades will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week.
  - **Colony Schools:** All Colony Schools will 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?*
- Classroom teachers will only support learning at home for students who have been medically advised not to return to in-class learning due to COVID-related risk factors. Families who choose to homeschool their child(ren) are required to register for provincial homeschooling via [Manitoba Education](#).
4. Student Well-Being: *How will the well-being needs of students be supported?*
- Each school will communicate the local supports available and the process for accessing those supports to students and their families. School-based staff will also engage divisional student services supports and external service providers as needed.
5. Scheduling and Timetabling: *Will schools be revising their timetables and schedules?*
- Each school will define timetables and school schedules independently to meet the needs of their community and will communicate this information with families as part of their school-specific plan on August 31. School entry and exit, timing of breaks and lunch hours, and class change schedules will be staggered to limit interaction between cohorts of students.
6. Recovery Learning: *How will unfinished or incomplete learning from 2019-2020 be addressed?*
- Student assessment and transition planning for the 2020-2021 school year will emphasize and respond to recovery learning needs identified in June, 2020 report cards.
7. Cohorting: *How will cohorts be used to limit student interaction?*
- All ISD schools will plan 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. As per Manitoba Education guidelines, maximum cohort size is to be no more than 75 students. There is no limit on the number of cohorts within a school, as long as distinct cohorts of 75 can be separated to prevent contact with other groups.

8. Student Programming: *What will be the focus of instruction?*
  - Core curriculum and required courses will be prioritized for the return to in-class learning. Elective courses for K-12 students will be offered by cohort model only and as resources permit at each school. Students can expect fewer elective course offerings from K-12 in September and offerings 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 will be suspended until further notice.
  - Band and Choral classes will be suspended until further notice.
  - Foods classes will be suspended until further notice.
  - Physical education classes will continue with necessary modifications for physical distancing and will occur outside when possible.
  - Inter-school offerings (i.e. students attending another school for one or more courses) will be suspended until further notice.
10. Extracurricular Programming: *Will extracurricular programs and activities be available?*
  - Each school will assess their local ability to offer extracurricular activities. Decisions on extracurricular programming will be made in consult with ISD's Senior Administration and will be guided by the school's capacity to meet all public health recommendations with the school-based resources available. With regard to school sports, ISD will follow guidance from 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 will my child get to school?*
  - ISD school buses will be running in September for those students who are eligible for school bus transportation. Families of eligible students will be contacted by the Transportation Department with routing details by August 31. Parents of eligible students are welcome to transport their own child(ren) to school if they wish to do so. Transportation service for non-eligible students will not be available in September and availability will be revisited throughout the school year.
2. School Bus Seating: *How will seating be arranged on the school bus?*
  - Specific [guidelines for school bus transportation](#) have been developed and will continue to be updated as public health information evolves. Where possible, there will be one student per seat. Students who are seated together will be members of the same household or members of the same in-school cohort.

3. Masks on School Buses: *Will bus drivers and students wear 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 will school buildings address enhanced cleaning needs?*
  - Increased frequency of cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing, particularly high-touch surfaces and common/shared areas, will be required. Schedules of custodial staff will be adjusted as needed to ensure compliance with cleaning protocols.
5. Physical Distancing: *Will class sizes be reduced to allow for physical distancing?*
  - Class sizes have not been capped, but all ISD classrooms have been measured to determine capacity in accordance with public health directives. And, each school will place 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 must remain within their cohort to reduce exposure to others and there must be at least one metre of space between students when they are seated.
6. Common Spaces: *How will common spaces in school buildings be used?*
  - Schools will monitor common spaces to avoid congestion and will ensure cohorts maintain at least 4 metres of space between them. Travel within the school will be limited as much as possible throughout the school day and enhanced cleaning/disinfection of common areas will be a priority for custodial staff. Students will be encouraged to keep personal belongings with them and schools will determine their capacity to provide student access to lockers.
7. Libraries and Cafeterias: *Will libraries and cafeteria services be available for students?*
  - Schools are able to operate libraries as long as these spaces are not needed for instructional space and where custodial staff are able to undertake increased frequency of cleaning and sanitizing high-touch surfaces. Cafeteria services in ISD schools will be suspended until further notice.
8. Visitors and Volunteers: *Who will be allowed inside of school buildings in September?*
  - Visitors or volunteers are permitted at schools, but visits should be minimized to the greatest extent possible. All visitors and volunteers must adhere to self-screening, physical distancing and recommended hygiene practices. Schools are required to keep a list of all visitors. Community use of schools will be suspended until further notice, with the exception of child care centres operating in schools.

## D. Staff Preparedness

1. Employee Groups: *How will ISD's employee groups be involved in planning?*
  - ISD's Superintendent's Department will meet 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 training will be provided to ISD staff related to COVID-19?*
  - All ISD staff will participate in professional learning opportunities specific to their roles and responsibilities in pandemic-related planning, programming, and operations.
3. Staff Well-Being: *How will the well-being needs of staff be supported?*
  - The ISD Student Services Department will communicate the supports available and the process for accessing those supports to all staff. Staff who require access to the supports available will communicate their needs directly to their supervisor.
4. Personal Protective Equipment: *Will staff be required to wear a mask?*
  - Yes. Non-medical masks are required for all staff when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Masks will be provided at the school if needed. Each staff member will also be 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 can continue to care for the child until the parent is able to pick the child up. Caregivers are to be mindful of hand hygiene and avoid contact with the respiratory secretions of the student. A medical mask is to be worn by the staff member caring for the child.
6. Staff with Symptoms: *What if a staff member becomes symptomatic while at work?*
  - If a staff member becomes symptomatic while at work, they should 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 advised to consult with their direct supervisor and to 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?*
- Yes. Non-medical masks are required for students in Grades 4 to 12, teachers, staff, visitors, and volunteers when physical distancing of two metres is not possible. Parents and caregivers will continue to choose whether younger students 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 will be provided at the school if needed. Non-medical masks will be added on the school supply list as well.
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 will students and staff with personal risk factors be supported?*
- Arrangements will be 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 will symptom screening be addressed?*
- Students and staff will need 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 must be in place for all people entering schools and screening information will be posted at all entrances and provided to families.

5. Individuals with Symptoms: *What happens if a child develops symptoms while at school?*
  - The child will be isolated in a predetermined space in the school and provided with a medical mask to be worn. Parents or caregivers will be notified to come and pick up their child immediately. Schools will require each family to have a plan in place for urgent student pick-up.
6. Hand Hygiene: *Will there be a focus on hand hygiene for students and staff?*
  - Staff and students will 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 will be provided at the school. Hand sanitizing stations will be 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?*
  - There is no single answer to this question and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis with public health leading the response and providing guidance. In the event of confirmation of a case of COVID-19 connected with a class, 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 recent and ongoing publications about reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year. As mentioned previously, each school will create a school-specific plan aligned with provincial and divisional expectations and will communicate their plan directly to families on August 31. We invite families to contact their child's school directly after receiving the school-specific plan if they have additional questions.

The ISD team looks forward to welcoming our students back in September and to working collaboratively with our communities. And, we will be prepared to adjust our plan on short notice throughout the school year in response to public health protocols. ISD will continue to work closely with Manitoba Education and with public health to do all that we can to ensure the safety, health, and well-being for all 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](mailto:isd@isd21.mb.ca)