

Communicable Disease Plan COVID-19

Information for Students, Parents and Staff

January 2022

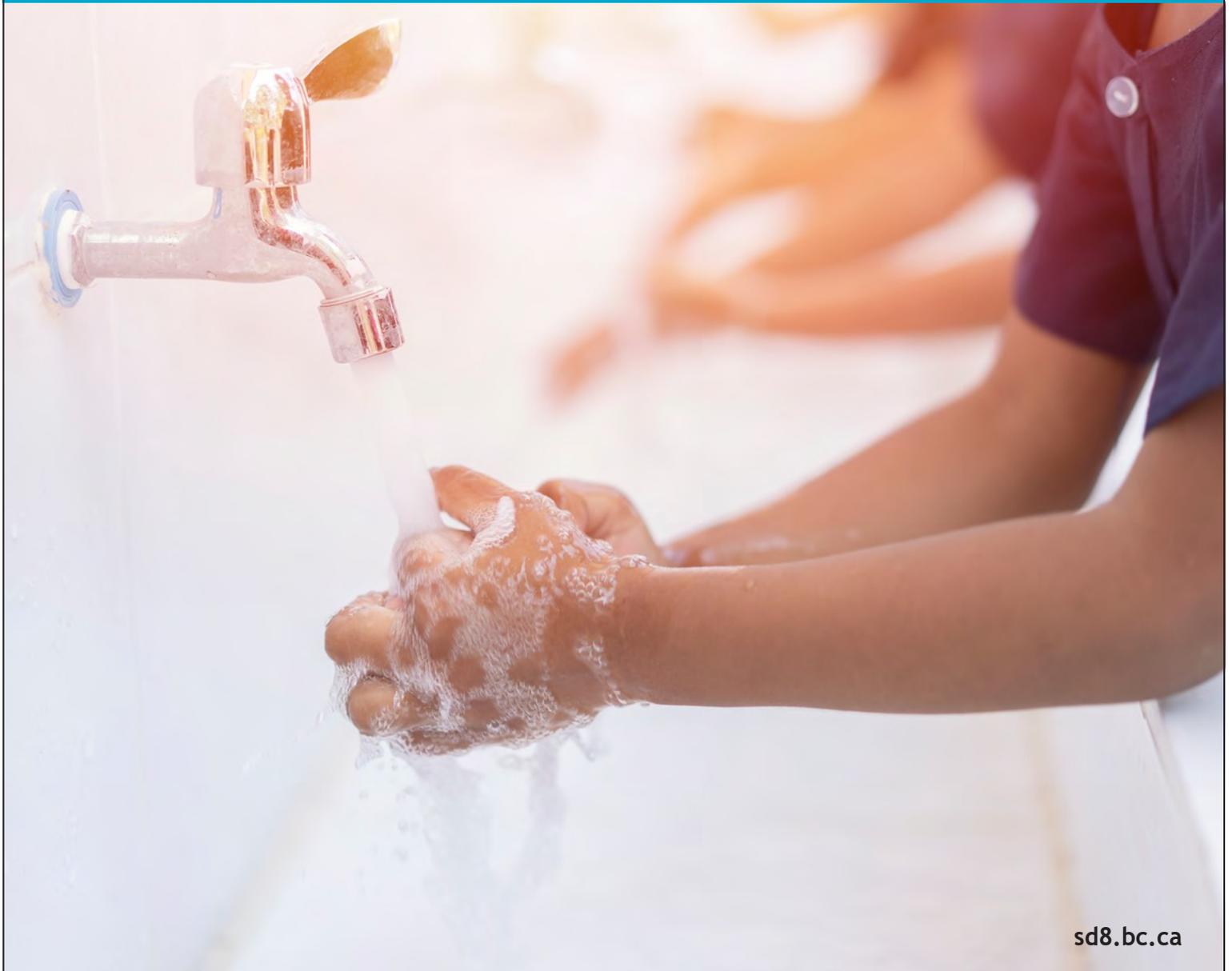


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Introduction

In October 2021, the Ministry of Education introduced the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for the K-12 Settings. Based on guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control, K-12 students can participate in full-time, in-class instruction in accordance with current public health guidelines for schools. These new guidelines outline a return to school that all school districts in British Columbia are expected to implement.

On December 29, 2021, the Ministry of Education introduced an addendum to this Guideline focused on actions and additional prevention measures B.C. public and independent K12 schools must implement in response to the recent rise of cases of COVID-19 due to the emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant.

Key Principles

- All school districts are required to have Communicable Disease Prevention plans in place, which focus on reducing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.
- Controls for Communicable Disease Prevention continue to be:
 - Hand Hygiene,
 - Ventilation,
 - Health Checks,
 - Increased Cleaning and Disinfection, and;
 - Use of Non-Medical Masks
- Schools will create and release an communicable disease plan for their site to address additional items such as strategies to:
 - Reduce crowding during transition periods
 - Maximize space between people
 - Conduct meetings and school events virtually
 - Limit visitors to those that are supporting activities that are of direct benefit to student learning and wellbeing

Regional Differences

SD8 will comply with all orders (provincial, regional and local) issued by a Medical Health Officer. These orders or guidelines may augment the Provincial COVID-19 Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings based on epidemiological data. Regional or local orders would consider:

- Increased community transmissions
- Communities with low vaccination uptake
- Local epidemiology

These orders may be issued as part of a local or regional strategy, but may also be issued to an individual school, a grouping of schools, a school district, all schools within the health authority region, or some combination thereof, during times of elevated risk.

Infection Prevention & Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures (also called communicable disease measures or health and safety measures) help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases like COVID-19. Schools provide a controlled environment in which access to the public is restricted. As such, these environments allow for greater use of administrative measures as all individuals present, are part of the school environment.

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures that should be taken to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.



Supportive School Environments

Schools can support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviors.
- Promoting safety measures in the school using visual aids like signage and posters

School District 8 will share all links to reliable COVID-19 Information on the district website to provide information to parents, families and caregivers. Additional information that School District 8 receives from our Regional Medical Health Officers or Interior Health may be distributed to parents, families and caregivers by the School District or Individual School Administrators.

School staff will utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventive practices and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature. Staff should also utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g. gatherings and events) and interacting with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others personal space.

Students and staff may choose to wear additional personal protective equipment in schools beyond the required circumstances outlined in this document, and those choices must be respected. School administrators are encouraged to review the information in this section with their school community, to increase awareness and support from staff, students and families.

Vaccines

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities. The vaccines used in B.C. remain highly effective against COVID-19, including among variants of concern (such as the Delta Variant).

Public health strongly encourages all eligible students and staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves and those around them including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated. People who are not vaccinated are at higher risk of getting and spreading COVID-19, with age the greatest factor of individual risk of severe illness. Most COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are now among unvaccinated adults.

SD8 will work with Interior Health to:

- Share evidence-based information (e.g. from BCCDC and ImmunizeBC), and details on how and where people can get vaccinated, with staff, students and families prior to the start of the school year; and
- Explore opportunities to establish school-based COVID-19 vaccination clinics to help increase community uptake. This includes provision of space within schools for public health nurses or other qualified health personnel to carry out their duties (including immunization).

While COVID-19 is present in our communities, there will continue to be COVID-19 exposures in schools involving students and staff. However, the BC Centre Disease Control reports that, with the increasing proportion of people being fully vaccinated and effective communicable disease measures continuing to be in place, exposures are unlikely to lead to further transmission. At this time vaccination is not required for K-12 staff or students.

Physical Distancing

There are a number of strategies that schools can consider to help create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach:

- Remind students and staff about respecting others' personal space. Use visual supports, signage, prompts, video modelling, etc. as necessary.
- Use available space to spread people out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, where possible.
- Avoid or limit face-to-face seating arrangements
- Implement strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times.
 - Focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather or crowd.
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch and class transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Take students outside more often, where and when possible.
- Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
 - Use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. It is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure the fire code is adhered to.

Staff Only Spaces

Transmission between adults within the school environment is also an important transmission route to control in the school environment.

In non-school workplaces (such as Board Offices and Maintenance Facilities), Communicable Disease Plans will be established in accordance with WorkSafeBC Guidelines and will be followed by School District 8 Staff who work at these locations. These plans will be reviewed by the local Joint Health and Safety Committee's regularly to ensure their continued effectiveness.

Within these spaces, WorkSafeBC Guidelines should be used to determine what measures should be in place.

Within non-student areas within schools, additional precautions should be put in place including:

- Rules and procedures to prevent crowding at gathering areas (such as the break room or photocopier)
- Occupancy limits
- Virtual options of meetings when reasonable.

School Gatherings and Events

School gatherings and events should be held virtually at this time

Examinations or assessments are not considered school gatherings; however, they must still follow all normal COVID-19 requirements.

Personal Items

Staff and students can continue to bring personal items to school, but they should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices, wind instruments).

SD8 schools will implement strategies to manage the flow of students around lockers to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through. These can include:

- Uni-directional hallways.
- Staggered release times where feasible
- Encouraging students to not loiter at lockers

Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities

Most students with disabilities/diverse abilities or medical complexity are not considered at greater risk of experiencing severe illness from COVID-19. Refer to the [K-12 Recovery Plan](#) for students who have immune suppression.

SD8 is committed to accommodating our students with disabilities or diverse abilities and will work with families to ensure that students have access to learning supports.

Parents/Caregivers of students with disabilities/diverse abilities are encouraged to contact their school administrator to discuss available options for their child (including ensuring appropriate preventative measures are in place).

Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities Where Physical Contact may be required

Supporting students with disabilities/diverse abilities may require staff providing support services to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a student. When staff are working with a student indoors, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, staff are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) Additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used as part of the personal care routine normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g., gloves for toileting).

When working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, and the service cannot be provided from behind a barrier, options include having the staff member wear a mask with a transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth.

Student Transportation

Buses

All bus drivers will be provided non-medical masks which they are required to wear, except when driving. Bus drivers have received instruction on SD8 cleaning and disinfecting procedures. All touch points will be disinfected after scheduled bus runs. In addition, hand sanitizer dispensers are mounted in the stairwell of every bus for student use upon entry to the bus.

Transportation assistance for students requiring accommodations are in place. All students riding the bus will be assigned a seat. Students will spread out within the bus when empty spaces are available. Whenever weather permits, windows will be open to allow for increased ventilation of the bus.

Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending them to school. If a child has any symptoms, they must not take the bus or go to school.

Students are required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings when they are on the bus.

Students should clean their hands before they leave home to take the bus, when they leave school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home. Where possible, bus line up areas should be set up to prevent crowding and students should put on their masks prior to boarding the bus.

Carpooling

When staff, students or others carpool as part of SD8 activities, the following protocols should be followed:

- Weather permitting, all windows should be opened.
- If the weather is poor, the vehicle's ventilation should be turned on and set to bring in fresh outside air. Do not use air recirculation.
- Travel with the same people whenever possible.
- Spread out within the vehicle as much as possible.
- All staff and students are required to wear non-medical masks or face coverings in the vehicle.
- All vehicle occupants should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after trips
- Clean frequently touched surfaces within the vehicle regularly.

SD8 encourages families and staff who carpool outside of school hours to follow the same protocols where possible.

Other Methods of Transportation

Staff, students or visitors who take mass transit (such as BC Transit buses or any of the inland ferries within SD8) should wash their hands following trips and ensure they are following any other safety guidance issued by the transit operator.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces.

Frequency of Cleaning and Disinfecting

SD8 will continue to perform daily general cleaning of all sites. Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least once in a 24-hour period. These frequently touched surfaces include:

- Items used by larger numbers of students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for science labs, kitchen equipment for culinary programs, sewing machines and sewing equipment for home economic programs, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.)
- Appliances (staff and students can share the use of appliances and other objects, but treat items like microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers or laminators as frequently touched surfaces)
- Service counters (e.g., office service window, library circulation desk)

Areas that are not used in a day will not require cleaning.

Cleaning of Teaching Materials, Fabrics and Other Materials

When using teaching materials, toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.), may be used if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use. Carpets and rugs (e.g. in Kindergarten and StrongStart classes) can also be used.

No cleaning or additional hand washing is required when handling:

- Textbooks, papers or other paper-based products;
- Laminated or Glossy Paper-based products (e.g. Children's books or magazines) and;
- Items with plastic covers (DVDs)

Cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids will be conducted in accordance with SD8 procedures for universal precautions and bodily fluid cleanup.

Staff or students doing laundry should ensure hand washing is practiced after loading a laundry machine. Dirty items should not be shaken, and plastic liners should be used in the laundry basket when collecting items to be washed.

Visitor Access

At this time, schools should limit visitors to those that are supporting activities that are of direct benefit to student learning and wellbeing. This includes individuals such as teacher candidates, and meal program volunteers.

Any individual wishing to meet on site should make an appointment directly with the Principal of the school in advance of any meeting. All meetings with non-school individuals will be virtual unless the Principal determines an in person meeting is required.

When entering a SD8 site, visitors must complete a sign in sheet that indicates requirements for communicable disease protocol and completion of a daily health check prior to continuing into the school. Schools must keep these records for 45 days.

Visitors to SD8 sites will be required to wear a mask.

Parents and caregivers will need to drop and pick up students outside of the building and should avoid crowding in outside areas such as the playground during pickup times.

Community Use

After hours community use of facilities is currently limited to after school programs with existing agreements such as daycares and pre-approved after school programs.

Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols

Daily Health Checks

Parents and caregivers should assess their children daily for illness before sending them to school. Parents, caregivers and students can utilize the provincial K-12 Health Check app (<https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca/>) for daily assessment of symptoms.

Staff and other adults should review the [posted list of symptoms](#) and perform an active daily health check prior to entering the school. If there are any doubts, please use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (<https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>).

If a student, staff or other adult is required to self-isolate they must stay home and should not enter any SD8 site. If as a SD8 staff member you are required by Interior Health to self-isolate, please contact your supervisor by phone immediately.

School Staff Responsibilities

- Ensure staff and other adults (e.g. parents, caregivers, visitors) entering the school/worksites are aware of their responsibility to complete a daily health check prior to entering the school/worksites (e.g. emails/letters to parents and staff, orientation video, signage on doors) and to stay home if they are sick.
- Clearly communicate with parents/caregivers their responsibility to complete a daily health check with their child, and keep them home from school if they are sick.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work to be sent home as soon as possible.
 - Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools should have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and is separated from others (at least 2M), and provide the student or staff with a non-medical mask if (unless they are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms and are at risk of vomiting).
 - Schools must provide supervision for younger children. Supervising staff should wear a non-medical mask and face shield if they are unable to maintain physical distance, avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
 - Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the ill fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others. Cleaning/disinfecting in these circumstances.

Schools and districts should not require a health-care provider note (e.g. a status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practices).

Symptoms of Illness and Return to School

Students, staff or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of COVID-19 in schools.

Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g. seasonal allergies) can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a healthcare provider.

Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household develops new symptoms of illness, provided the student/staff has no symptoms themselves. If the household member tests positive for COVID-19, public health will advise the asymptomatic student/staff on self-isolation and when they may return to school.

A health-care provider notes (i.e. a doctor's note) is not be required to confirm the health status of any individual.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Rigorous handwashing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness (antibacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). School District 8 schools will encourage students to make use of handwashing facilities and will promote the importance of this activity with signage and posters.

To be effective, hand should be washed for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Staff and students should make frequent use of handwashing facilities where available. Hand sanitizer should only be used in areas where hand washing is not readily available. Hand Sanitizer should not be used when hands are visibly dirty.

When to Perform Hand Hygiene

When Students Should Perform Hand Hygiene:	When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they arrive at school and before they go home. • Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch). • Between different learning environments (e.g. outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom). • Before and after eating and drinking. • After using the bathroom. • After handling common resources/equipment/supplies or pets. • After sneezing or coughing into hands. • Whenever hands are visibly dirty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they arrive at school and before they go home. • Before and after any breaks (e.g. recess, lunch). • Between different learning environments (e.g. outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom). • Before and after eating and drinking. • Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating. • Before and after giving medication to a student or self. • After using the bathroom. • After contact with body fluids (i.e. runny noses, spit, vomit, blood). • After cleaning tasks. • After removing gloves. • After handling garbage. • Whenever hands are visibly dirty.

Respiratory Etiquette

Control of coughs and sneezes is also an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Staff and students should cough or sneeze into their elbow, sleeve or tissue and direct coughs and sneezes away from individuals wherever possible. Following a sneeze or cough, any tissue should be thrown away and hands should be washed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (including masks) can provide an additional layer of protection. Non-medical masks and face coverings (hereafter referred to collectively as “masks”) have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They provide some protection to the wearer and to those around them. Medical grade masks are not required within school settings for general use. Face shields should not be worn in place of non-medical masks.

In the event of a Public Health Order that requires stricter non-medical mask use than is indicated in the Ministry of Education guidelines, SD8 will follow the public health order.

Masks should not be used in the place of other safety protocols and individuals should still respect others personal space. Masks do not replace the need to conduct personal health checks, perform cleaning/disinfection activities or for individuals to wash their hands.

Staff should utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in the use of masks and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature. Posters will be put up to direct students and staff in how to wear masks.

K-12 Staff: All K-12 Staff are required to wear a mask indoors and on school buses.

K-12 Students: All Students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 are required to wear a mask indoors and on school buses.

Exemptions for Staff, Students and Visitors

Mask requirements do not apply in the following circumstances

- to a person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for health or behavioral reasons;
- to a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person;
- if the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it;
- if the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g. playing a wind instrument, engaging in high-intensity physical activity, etc.);
- if a person is eating or drinking;
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements is important

If a staff, student or visitor is unable to wear a mask, other controls should remain in place.

General Ventilation and Air Circulation

At this time, there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of the virus. Good indoor air ventilation alone cannot protect people from exposure to COVID-19; however, it may reduce risk when used in addition to other preventive measures.

SD8's Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating in compliance with Part 4 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. These HVAC systems are maintained in accordance with best industry practice. SD8 is working to identify areas where systems can be upgraded or run at increased capacity to increase the number of air exchanges.

Staff and students should not use portable air conditioners or fans in unventilated spaces.

Emergency and Evacuation Drills

It is critical that emergency and evacuation drills continue even during the COVID-19 pandemic. School administrators will continue to conduct fire drills and other emergency drills. School administrators will ensure that muster points for emergency drills are also spaced to ensure that classes make use of the space available to them to muster.

Communication and Training/Orientation

SD8 is committed to assisting Interior Health Regional Medical Health Officers and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) in communicating out guidance, recommendations and orders. SD8 will also continue to communicate to staff and parents about changes to COVID-19 protocols using various means including:

- Emails,
- Letters,
- School and district websites,
- Staff meetings,
- Memos, and
- Orientations

All staff will need to view the updated COVID-19 orientation prior to the return of students in September 2021. School administrators should ensure all staff know how to report health and safety concerns and understand the protocols in place to keep them safe.

School Based Joint Health and Safety Committees will need to discuss COVID-19 procedures monthly and ensure that procedures remain effective at their sites.

Curriculum, Programs and Activities

All curriculum, programs and activities should operate in alignment with [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#), including school-led activities held off campus (e.g. sports academies, community-based programs/courses).

Schools should continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (e.g. cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

In general, these practices should include:

- cleaning/disinfecting equipment,
- hand hygiene practices specific to the activity,

For more information on course specific guidelines please see the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)

Contractor Safety

All Operations Contractors hired by SD8 will be required to complete a contractor orientation form prior to working at a SD8 site. This form will outline the controls in place to keep students safe and will outline the expectations for contractors within schools during the school year.

Isolation of Ill Students

Purpose: This safe work procedure establishes how to safely move a student to the designated sick area if they become ill.

Steps:

1. If a student becomes ill, request that they don their mask.
2. Escort the student to the isolation room. Ensure the student is supervised until picked up.
3. Inform the Principal on site.
4. Collect the student's personal items.
5. The Principal on site will phone the parent/guardian or emergency contact and have them pick up their child. Note the time the child was picked up.
6. After the child has left, close the door to the isolation room, and do not allow anyone entrance to the room. Post a sign indicating that the room requires modified cleaning procedures. Inform the custodian as soon as possible.
7. The Principal on site will phone the SD8's Health and Safety Officer and Superintendent and inform them of what has occurred.
8. A cleaning protocol under the direction of the Health and Safety Officer will be implemented.

Procedure of Ill Staff

Purpose: This safe work procedure establishes how staff should leave the school/site if they begin to develop symptoms while at work.

Steps:

1. Inform/text the Principal/your Supervisor immediately and put on a non-medical mask.
2. If unable to immediately leave site, Symptomatic staff should separate themselves into an area away from others to wait until they are able to leave the site. Otherwise, staff should leave the site and head home.
3. Once symptomatic staff leave site, the area they waited in should be cleaned and disinfected.
4. Once the staff member leaves the site, clean and disinfect any areas they were in.
5. The Principal or Supervisor on site will phone the SD8's Health and Safety Officer and Superintendent and inform them of what has occurred.

Washing Masks

Purpose: This safe work procedure is to direct staff in how to wash their reusable non-medical masks.

Steps:

Masks should be washed after each use at the end of the day. The two primary methods of washing are:

A) Washing Machine/Dryer

1. You can include your mask with your regular laundry.
2. Use regular laundry detergent and the cold water setting to avoid shrinking cotton masks.

B) Tumble dry on the low heat setting.

1. Handwashing
2. Wash the mask thoroughly using soap and cold water.
3. Allow the mask to dry completely before reusing it. If possible, place the mask in direct sunlight to dry.

Sign In/Out Procedure for Itinerant Staff (Anyone Who Moves from Site to Site)

Purpose: This safe work procedure is to direct non-school based staff in how to arrive and depart a school site.

Steps:

1. The main entrance is to be used by all non-school based staff when first entering the building (even if other doors may need to be used to move equipment or material).
2. When at the site make use of the non-medical mask and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff and students.
3. Follow sign-in and hand washing instructions posted at the main entrance.
4. Report to the office and sign in.
5. Read through any posted site rules.
6. When finished at the site please sign out.