



Frequently Asked Questions

The Ministry of Education has released [BC's Back to School Plan](#) which includes the [Five Stage Framework](#) for learning during COVID-19.

All school districts have a Restart Plan that uses the information available in [BC's K-12 Education Restart Plan](#), [Expectations for Each Stage](#), and the revised BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#), as well as [WorkSafeBC guidelines](#). Please visit our school website for [School District 47's Restart Plan](#).

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Frequently Asked Questions

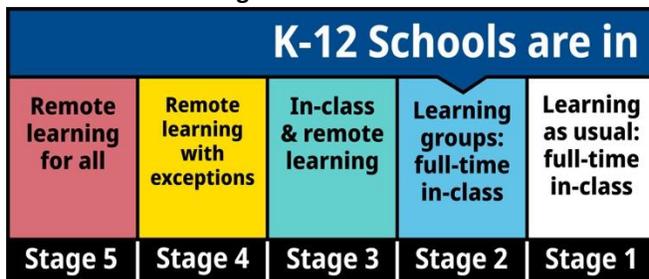
General

What is the K-12 Education Restart Plan?

The Ministry's [K-12 Education Restart Plan](#) is a five-stage approach that supports school districts in maintaining high standards of educational instruction while lowering the risk of transmission of COVID-19. The following guiding principles are used in the K-12 Education Restart Plan:

- Ensure a healthy and safe environment for all students, families, and employees.
- Provide the services needed to support children of our essential workers.
- Support vulnerable students who may need assistance.
- Provide continuity of educational opportunities for all students.

What are the five stages of the K-12 Education Restart Plan?



The five stages of the K-12 Education Restart Plan provide comprehensive COVID-19 health and safety measures and aligns with [BC's Restart Plan](#). Each stage outlines expectations for schools for the 2020/2021 school year based on public health guidance.

What is the plan for back to school in September?

On July 29, BC announced that K-12 schools are scheduled to begin the 2020/2021 school year under Stage 2 of the province's K-12 Education Restart Plan. [Stage 2](#) is a return to in-class instruction for all students. This includes the concept of learning groups, also known as cohorts.

What is a learning group?

Learning groups, also known as cohorts, are a recommended public health measure to help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Organizing students and staff into learning groups reduces the number of different interactions and potential exposure to COVID-19 and supports better contact tracing if there is a confirmed case in a school community.

A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year, and who primarily interact with each other. Within a learning group, minimized physical contact is still encouraged, but physical distancing does not need to be maintained.

Outside of a learning group, physical distancing and masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained remains the expectation for secondary school students and for all K-12 staff.

What is the rationale for learning groups?

Reducing the number of in-person, close interactions an individual has in a day with different people helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This can be accomplished in K-12 settings through learning groups and continued personal measures such as hand hygiene, reducing physical contact, and staying home when ill. Learning groups

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allow full-time attendance instead of online/remote instruction, decreases social isolation, increases peer support and connection, and decreases mental health impacts.

How big is a learning group/cohort?

The size of a learning group is dependent on which stage the province is in of the K-12 Education Restart Plan.

Maximum learning group sizes (inclusive of students and staff)				
STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: no limit Middle: no limit Secondary: no limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: 60 Middle: 60 Secondary: 120 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: 30 Middle: 30 Secondary: 60 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: 30 Middle: 30 Secondary: 30 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary: 0 Middle: 0 Secondary: 0

What will learning groups/cohorts look like?

- Elementary School:** Elementary schools will still be organized into classrooms as students' primary learning environment. The learning group of 60 during Stage 2 could be two classes that work together on shared projects, or up to three primary classes that go outside together on a regular basis. For most of the day, elementary students will be working within their own classroom setting.
- Secondary School:** Secondary school students will continue to be organized in classrooms. School timetables during Stage 2 will be organized to limit students to learning groups of no more than 120 students and staff. For example, students in a learning group might take some of their courses together, and then take separate electives outside of their learning group where they would need to practice physical distancing from other students. Secondary schools will be able to re-organize learning groups after each quarter or semester. For most of the day, secondary school students will be working with their same classmates.

Will siblings be able to be placed in the same learning group/cohort?

At our elementary schools, learning groups will be formed primarily by division (grades). Learning groups at the secondary school will be based on student grade level and student course selections. This means that siblings likely will not be in the same learning groups/cohorts.

If students are taking courses in different grades will they be part of different learning groups/cohorts?

In some instances, secondary school students will be taking courses that their learning group/cohort is not. For example, a Grade 10 student may be taking both Science 10 and Science 11 in the same year. When students cannot be placed in groups that takes the exact same courses, they will have access to Brooks online courses and will practice physical distancing while outside of their learning cohort.

Will students and parents/caregivers be able to choose the learning groups/cohorts that their child is in or the teachers they have?

At our elementary schools, learning groups will be formed primarily by division (grades). Learning groups at the secondary school will be based on student grade level and student course selections. As in previous years, specific teacher requests may not be possible.

What will the transition week look like for staff and students?

The first day of school for students will be Thursday, September 10, 2020. To ensure all schools are ready to welcome students into classrooms for the week of September 8-11, 2020, there will be a gradual restart. This gives students and staff extra time to learn about the new health and safety measures in their school and classroom. Tuesday and Wednesday, staff will finalize their learning groups, as well as learn the safety protocols and updated August 27, 2020

procedures for any school where they will be working. Thursday and Friday is dedicated to student orientation. Specific details about student orientation will be given to students/families from their individual school.

How do we keep the learning groups/cohorts separate at lunch or as they arrive?

During break times (e.g. recess and lunch) students may want to socialize with peers in different learning groups. There are different considerations for elementary and secondary students when socializing outside of their learning group. Schools will make sure these considerations are clearly communicated and explained to students.

- **Elementary Students:** Students can socialize with peers in different cohorts if they can maintain physical distance. Students should maintain physical distance when socializing with peers in different cohorts. If a student is unable to physically distance, the student should socialize within their learning group or where they can be supported to physically distance.
- **Secondary Students:** Students can socialize with peers in different cohorts if they can maintain physical distance. Students should maintain physical distance when socializing with peers in different cohorts. If a student is unable to physically distance, the student should socialize within their learning group or where they can be supported to physically distance.

How will we maintain physical distancing in classrooms and other areas of the school?

Reducing the number of close, in-person interactions continues to be a key component of BC's strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The updated public health guidelines focus on encouraging younger students to minimize physical contact and continued physical distancing for school staff and older students when they are not with their learning group.

The following physical distancing strategies should be implemented in school where possible:

- Avoid close greetings (e.g. hugs, handshakes).
- Regularly remind students about keeping their hands to themselves.
- Increased spacing between students in classrooms.
- Use different classroom and learning environment configurations, like desk and table formations.
- Staggered recess/break, lunch and class transition times.
- Increased outside time for students.
- More individual activities or activities that encourage more space between students and staff.
- Manage the flow of people in common areas, including hallways and around lockers, to minimize crowding.

Will the implementation of learning groups affect timetables and courses?

At Brooks Secondary School, the Grades 8s and 9s will remain with their same peers and take all of their courses for the entire year (linear system). Teachers will be co-planning and co-teaching for a cross-curricular approach to learning areas. The Grades 10-12 students will take two courses at a time every 10 weeks (quarter system) and then continue a rotation of two courses every 10 weeks. Brooks will continue to offer online and self-directed learning options where course offerings cannot be delivered through learning groups or physical distancing.

Will students at the secondary school stay in their same classrooms with their teachers rotating?

For the most part, students in Grades 8-12 will remain in the same classroom for their courses during the day. Teachers and other staff will, instead, move to the cohorts. In some cases, students will need to move to another room for part of their educational program (e.g. Physical Health Education). Students in Grades 10-12 may need to change rooms for one of their courses; however, they will only be taking two courses a day.

Will students have access to electives?

Students will still be taking electives from a variety of learning areas. As much as possible, students will take electives with their learning group/cohort. Teachers who move between learning groups/cohorts or students taking electives with members of different cohorts will practice physical distance. Masks are required for staff and
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secondary students when they are outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Will students be able to take specialty or dual credit programs?

Specialty programs like Hockey Academy, Coast Mountain Academy, Digital Film School and our dual credit programs will go ahead as scheduled at this time with some minor adjustments. They will follow the Ministry of Education's and the Ministry of Advanced Education's guidelines for their respective settings.

Will there be a mask requirement?

Under the updated health and safety guidelines, masks will be required for staff and secondary students in high traffic areas such as buses and in common areas such as hallways whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Masks are also required outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Exceptions will be made for students who cannot wear masks for medical reasons. Students and staff will have the choice to wear a mask in the classroom. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing masks with respect.

Will any elementary school students need to wear a mask?

Elementary students are not required to wear masks. Non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (requiring increased close personal contact from school staff). However, students will have the choice to wear a mask if they wish. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing masks with respect.

Masks will be required for Grades 5-12 students on buses.

Are staff required to wear a mask?

Under the updated health and safety guidelines, masks will be required for staff in high traffic areas such as buses and in common areas such as hallways whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Masks are also required for staff outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Staff will have the choice to wear a mask when interacting with their learning group. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing masks with respect.

Will masks be provided by the district?

Masks will be available to all staff and students. The Ministry of Education provided additional funding to school districts to purchase up to two masks for each staff member and student.

Who will monitor that students are wearing masks when they need to be?

If a staff member notices that a student is not wearing a mask when they should be, they should remind that student and explain why they need to be wearing a mask. Like other school conduct behaviour issues students who do not meet expectations will be dealt with on the spot through discussion and reminders of expectations, or the possibility of logical consequences. Ongoing defiance will be handled the same way as other code of conduct issues.

What about masks on the bus?

Under the updated health and safety guidelines, masks will be required for Grades 5-12 students and staff on buses. Current public health guidance does not recommended masks for younger students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (requiring increased close personal contact from others). However, students will have the choice to wear a mask if they wish. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing masks with respect.

Why are masks not required for Grades 5-7 students in schools like they are on the school buses?

After seeking feedback from stakeholders and reviewing the guidance from public health, the board decided to require masks for intermediate students on the bus, but not at their elementary schools. However, students will have the choice to wear a mask if they wish. Everyone must treat each other and those wearing masks with respect.

How will school bus transportation be handled?

The BCCDC issues public health guidelines for schools, including the recommendation for student transportation on school buses:

- Buses will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with BCCDC guidelines.
- Consideration for the order students typically load and offload to support buses being loaded from back to front and offloaded from front to back.
- If space is available, each student will have their own seat unless sharing with a member of their household.
- Grades 5-12 students will wear non-medical masks.
- Bus drivers are required to wear a non-medical mask or be behind a physical barrier when they cannot maintain physical distance.
- Where possible, bus line up areas will be set up to prevent crowding and allow for physical distancing.
- Schools and the school district will use consistent and assigned seating where possible.
- Schools and the school district will keep up-to-date passenger lists to share with public health if contact tracing needs to occur.

Will students with diverse abilities still be provided transportation?

The school district will continue to offer a bus service for students with diverse abilities. If your child has accessed the bus in the past, you can expect someone to reach out to you soon to discuss transportation.

What if a student or staff member feels unwell?

The BCCDC guidelines for schools are firm. If a student or staff member or any adult has any symptoms of a cold, influenza, COVID-19, or any other infectious respiratory disease they should stay home and be assessed by a health care provider. Testing is recommended for anyone with these symptoms, even mild ones. Parents and caregivers have a responsibility to assess their children daily for symptoms before they go to school. If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school, they will be given a non-medical mask and be separated from their classmates or colleagues and follow the BCCDC guidelines.

What if a student or staff member has allergies?

Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies, or other COVID-19 like symptoms, which are related to an existing condition can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any change in symptoms, they should seek advice from a health-care provider.

In the case of self-isolation/quarantine, how will my child's learning be supported?

Students who are ill or who need to self-isolate/quarantine will continue to be supported with classroom materials to ensure continuity of learning.

What if there is a confirmed case in my child's cohort/school?

If a student or staff is confirmed to have COVID-19, public health will work with school administration to determine what actions should be taken. This will include identifying any potential cases, getting in touch with close contacts, recommending 14-day isolation if necessary, and providing follow-up recommendations if necessary.

How will cleaning and sanitizing be managed?

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-10 from contaminated objects and surfaces. Schools will be cleaned in accordance with the BCCDC's guidelines for cleaning and disinfectants for public settings. This includes increased cleaning of high-contact surfaces like doorknobs, shared appliances, toilet handles, faucet handles, keyboards, and desks and an increased number of hand-hygiene stations, among other safety measures.

How will area rugs, pillows, or cloth furniture be sanitized?

Any area rugs, pillows, or cloth furniture that cannot be washed and sanitized will be removed from classrooms and stored.

Will there be extra hand sanitizer stations put at outside entrances, library, gym, music room, and/or other shared spaces?

Schools will be equipped with hand hygiene stations and sanitizer at various locations throughout the school.

Will students access the music room, gym, and library? If so, how will sanitization be maintained?

Outdoor activities or activities in students' classrooms will be encouraged as much as possible. If an additional room is used, students must practice hand hygiene before entering the room and upon leaving. Teachers will avoid using shared equipment as much as possible. If equipment is used, it will be cleaned and disinfected using the guidelines for [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#).

Have the ventilations systems in all our schools been updated?

Many of our systems have been updated in recent years with all systems being well maintained. We are currently reviewing recommendations with respect to school start up and ventilation; however, we don't anticipate any issues with meeting safety guidelines and requirements. We have the resources to make improvements if deemed necessary.

When will we know about possible staggered start times and bell schedules for learning groups/cohorts?

Specific bell schedules and any staggered start times will be communicated to families by school principals. At the elementary level there will be no staggered start times needed to follow the safety protocols. They will be using different entrances for learning groups, instead. At Brooks Secondary School, the Junior Program (Grades 8-9) will start at the regular time. The Graduation Program (Grades 10-12) will start at 10:30 am.

Within learning groups/cohorts, can students share/play board games, read to one another, etc.?

In the attempt to minimize physical contact and reduce shared items, board games and other shared activities will be put away. Individual items such as books and manipulatives can be used and cleaned to reduce hand-to-hand contact and cross-contamination. Students can still read and play together while minimizing their physical contact.

Will the after-school program be available?

In an effort to minimize interactions between different learning groups/cohorts, the after-school program will not be available at this time.

How will we keep the playground safe?

There is no current evidence of COVID-19 transmission in playground environments. Playgrounds are a safe environment. The following measures will be taken when using playgrounds:

- Ensure appropriate hand hygiene practices before and after outdoor play.
- Physical distance and minimize direct contact between students.
- Sand and water can be used for play if children wash their hands before and after play. COVID-19 does not survive well on surfaces, other than hard surfaces. There is no evidence showing that the virus survives on sand, in water or on playdough.
- More information on playgrounds is available on the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) website.

Can parents still volunteer in the schools?

Volunteers can still be in schools during school hours but will be prioritized to those supporting activities that benefit student learning and well-being (e.g. teacher candidates, public health nurses, meal program volunteers, etc.). All volunteers will be provided safety orientation. If parents wish to enter the school as a volunteer or a visitor, they should make an appointment with the school office.

Will school meal programs continue?

Schools with existing meal programs will continue to provide meal support to students in need, in alignment with current public health guidelines.

What mental health supports will be available for staff and students?

For Staff:

It is important to remember that mental health is just as important as physical health, and to take measures to support mental well-being. Here are some resources that can assist with maintaining mental health in the workplace during this time.

- [COVID-19: Staying Well In Uncertain Times \(Canadian Mental Health Association – B.C.\)](#) – Tips and information on how to reduce and manage anxiety in the workplace due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- [Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression \(Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions\)](#) - Tips and resources on things we can do as individuals and collectively to deal with stress and support one another during these challenging times.
- [Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak \(World Health Organization\)](#)– These mental health considerations were developed by the WHO’s Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as messages targeting different groups to support for mental and psychosocial well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.
- [Taking Care of Your Mental Health \(COVID-19\) \(Public Health Agency of Canada\)](#) – Tips and resources for taking care of your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Staff should also visit the Mental Health resource page on the [District Portal](#) which has more information about resources such as EFAP and counselling.

For Students:

SD47 recognizes that students may need additional supports as they transition back to school. We strive to create engaging learning environments that are safe and welcoming. As students and families adjust to transitions between in-class instruction and remote learning, schools will ensure that families and students will have access to resources that support well-being and mental health. If you are concerned about your child’s mental well-being, please reach out to your child’s teacher, school counsellor, or principal.

Some additional resources to explore:

- [erase](#) (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) hosts a range of mental health and well-being resources for students and families.
- Keeping Healthy on the [Keep Learning](#) website contains regularly updated free mental health and wellness resources for families and students, including specific resources for immediate help supports, LGBTQ2S+ supports, Indigenous supports, and resources available in various languages.
- [Mental Well-Being Information and Resources for Students, Families and Caring Adults](#) contains a variety of mental health resources and supports for school districts to share with educators, students, and families.
- Information on [Stigma, Prejudice and COVID-19](#) from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- SD47’s Mental Health resource page has been created for staff and families which is available on the District website: [SD47 Powell River COVID-19 Mental Health Resources](#)

Will technology be available for staff/students if changes to the stages occur?

The process followed in the Spring for disbursing technology to staff and students will be considered again if there are changes to the stages where remote learning increases.

Family**What are all of the options available to families for the 2020/2021 school year?**

Our school district has many education options available to students and families. Please visit our Restart Plan for those details under [Family Options](#). This outlines the various educational scenarios anticipated this school year. If these options don't work for your child or family please contact your principal.

What if parents/caregivers do not want their children to return to school?

Parents/caregivers who do not want their child to attend in-person classes in SD47 have the option to register their child for online and distributed learning (based on program availability) or homeschooling. It will be important for parents to understand that the hybrid model of in-class instruction and remote learning that was so prevalent in the spring will not be available to most students this fall. If these options don't work for your child or family, please contact your principal.

What is the difference between distributed learning and homeschooling?

Distributed learning and online courses are supervised by a qualified BC teacher. Students taking online/DL courses have flexibility in the pace and place of their learning. Many distributed learning programs also offer opportunities for face-to-face interaction and support. Homeschooling, on the other hand, is not supervised by a BC teacher. Families who homeschool provide and supervise their child's entire educational program, including curriculum and learning materials. Homeschoolers do not receive a BC Dogwood Graduation Certificate.

Is Partners in Education (PIE) a distributed learning program, a homeschooling program, or a hybrid program?

Partners in Education (PIE) is a distributed learning (DL) program. DL programs look different across our province with some being completely online and others using blended learning components. PIE uses both paper and electronic resources for K-12 students and builds in on-going opportunities for face to face interaction and support.

What are the options for French Immersion students who want to participate in distributed learning?

There is currently not a distributed learning (DL) program for French Immersion. Given the unique challenges of French Immersion students, if they choose to enroll with SD47's PIE program, the district will provide virtual French language support to those students to supplement their program.

If we select DL or homeschooling will we still maintain a spot at our school if we want to change throughout the year?

If students wish to return to their home school later in the year, they can sign up if there is a spot available. If there is not a spot available, students can stay in the program they are in or they will be offered a spot at the next closest school. As always, at the beginning of each school year students are given a guaranteed spot in their catchment area school upon registration before the deadline.

When will students know their learning group/cohorts and schedules?

Information about the student orientation and instructions for their learning group/cohort will be provided by school principals prior the student orientation days. Secondary students can access their student portal to view their scheduled courses prior to first day. Please know that schedules will be in flux as we make adjustments for learning groups and graduation program requests right up until the start of that week.

Will secondary students be given lockers?

Locker locations will be grouped based on learning groups/cohorts. Students who would like access to a locker will be assigned one.

What provisions are being made for children or families at risk from COVID-19?

Parents of children with complex medical conditions, or underlying risk factors, are being directed to consult with their health care provider to determine their child's level of risk regarding a return to school. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised, on a case-by-case basis.

Parents/caregivers of severely immunocompromised children or parents/caregivers who are immunocompromised themselves, are to consult with their medical health provider to determine the level of risk. Parents/caregivers seeking an alternative to in-class instruction, and who do not wish to register their child in a distributed learning program or homeschooling, should obtain medical documentation indicating the need for accommodations due to health-related risks and contact the school principal. We will work with these families to ensure continuity of learning and supports.

Will extracurricular activities be curtailed or cancelled?

To reduce contact between learning groups, extracurricular activities will not be offered at this time unless they have an approved safety plan submitted to address the health and safety guidelines outlined by the province.

What about school supplies?

Please send the recommended [school supplies](#) for your child's grade marked with their name. Supplies will be provided by the school for those who do not bring them. School supplies will not be shared between children and will be stored separately. We also recommend your child brings a water bottle labelled with their name to use at the fill up station as the water fountains will not be turned on.

Staff

Will teachers be following regular curriculum and assessment?

Teachers are expected to work with their students to cover all required learning standards of the curriculum and complete regular assessments. If there are changes in stages, teachers will be responsive and flexible in meeting individual student needs in the learning opportunities while still ensuring that prioritized learning standards are being met.

What are the guidelines for teachers/staff who are part of more than one learning group/cohort?

Staff outside of a learning group must practice physical distancing when interacting with staff and students. For example, a learning assistance teacher or a school counsellor can work with students from multiple learning groups, but they should maintain physical distance from students and other staff. In situations where staff outside of a learning group cannot maintain physical distancing, masks will be required. Other measures can be explored, such as reconfiguring rooms, securing an alternate space to allow for physical distancing, or installing a physical barrier made of transparent materials.

What are the guidelines for the number of people allowed in small spaces?

There should not be more people in a space than can safely physically distance. Schools will set occupancy limits and post reminders for smaller rooms or spaces where people will be outside of their learning groups/cohorts.

Will team and staff meetings be held in person or remotely?

Team and/or staff meetings could be held in person with physical distancing or remotely.

If furniture needs to be moved or items stored, what is the process?

If the item is personal, please take it home. School principals, in collaboration with the district, will arrange to have other items stored. Please contact your school principal if you have any questions regarding specific items.

Will there be daily or weekly updates for staff to receive updated information and discuss concerns?

The district will communicate updates as needed and continue to seek feedback from key stakeholders. Schools will continue to communicate on a regular basis through newsletters, emails, staff and other committee meetings, and school websites. Concerns should be brought forward at any time to your school principal and health and safety committee and/or other committees to help identify issues.

How will TTOC/replacement coverage be managed?

Regular protocols for TTOC coverage will continue to be followed, and the district and unions are working together to explore further options. TTOCs and replacements will also use physical distancing and masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained in school buildings and other school areas.

How will EAs be assigned and managed?

CUPE and the school district are working together to assign and make plans for EAs. EAs when outside of their learning group/cohort will use physical distancing and masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Can I choose to wear a mask?

Wearing a non-medical mask, face covering, or face shield in schools outside of the circumstances outlined in the BCCDC guidelines for K-12 School Settings is a personal choice for students and adults. It is important to treat people wearing masks with respect.

What provisions are in place for staff for illness/self-isolation/quarantine?

Staff should check their collective agreements for leave provisions and talk to your union representatives.

Can staff who must self-isolate and/or quarantine work remotely during that time?

Staff who are unable to perform their job due to illness/self-isolation/quarantine must follow their collective agreement and follow the processes in place for a replacement.

What if I don't feel safe returning to work?

Contact your union representative and/or human resources for guidance. Staff who are immunocompromised or have underlying medical conditions are encouraged to consult with their health care provider and discuss available options and supports with their school or school district administrator.