

EIPS FAQs

SCHOOL RE-LAUNCH

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FAQS – SCHOOL RE-LAUNCH

Attending school

Q: Do students have to return to school full-time, or can they attend a few days a week, and work at home the other days?

A: On July 21, Alberta Education announced students would return to school based on Scenario 1— that is, full-time in-person attendance with health measures in place. There is no option for students to return part-time. For those families who are not comfortable sending their child back to school in person, the Division offers an out-of-school learning option.

Q: If my child is attending in-school classes, but then we change our mind, can they register for the out-of-school option instead? Can they transfer back to the in-school classes option from the out-of-school option?

A: Families are asked to decide what option they prefer for the beginning of the school year— attending classes at school or continuing their learning out-of-school. It allows schools to determine the number of students, arrange classroom seating to accommodate those who are returning, and make plans for those pursuing the out-of-school learning option.

If, at some point during the school year, families feel in-school classes are no longer safe, they can—after consultation with school administration—switch to out-of-school learning.

If a student wishes to return from out-of-school learning to in-school classes, they can transition between terms by advising the principal at least two weeks in advance—on specific dates in the school calendar. The term start dates are posted on each school website.

Q: Could my child register with another school division for out-of-school learning and then return to their designated EIPS school if I want them to attend in-school classes later?

A: No. If your child registers with another school division, they will remain a student of that division for the remainder of the school year.

Q: If my child attends school in a different division for the 2020-21 school year, does that impact future funding for EIPS?

A: Yes. Because education funding is based on a three-year weighted average—past, current and projected enrolment—EIPS won't receive the same amount of funding for the next two years, even if your child returns in 2021-22.

Q: How are in-school classes and out-of-school learning different?

A: In-school classes require regular attendance by the student. Learning is led by teachers, who conducts classes, provides assignments and assessments, and oversees student progress.

Students who choose the out-of-school learning option are using an online platform known as Brightspace. Elementary and junior high students can access teacher-directed lesson plans, instructional videos, written instructions, digital and print materials and various learning resources. They also receive scheduled online instruction from an EIPS educational consultant or teacher. The lessons, where possible, align with subject matter taught in the classroom and ensure students achieve core competencies needed to progress in their learning.

Similarly, students in grades 10 to 12 can access lesson plans, instructional material and learning resources through Brightspace. They also receive assistance through email correspondence and online teacher support. In addition, students enrolled in the out-of-school option are part of an online learning group and remain connected to the school, with their school-based teacher assessing and providing feedback on assignments submitted through the system.

Overall, the out-of-school learning option aligns with the in-school option—allowing students across the Division to learn key themes or units of the curriculum at the same time during the school year. The goal of the out-of-school learning option is to facilitate learning continuity for students who shift between the in-school option and the out-of-school option. It also helps students stay on track if they need to miss school because of illness or self-isolating requirements.

Q: How many hours of work are students expected to complete in the out-of-school learning?

- Kindergarten to Grade 3: An average of five hours of work per week.
- Grades 4 to 6: An average of six to eight hours of work per week.
- Grades 7 to 9: An average of 12 to 16 hours of work per week.
- Grades 10 to 12: Five-credit courses average 12 hours of work per week. Three-credit courses average six hours of work per week.

Q: Why can't my child participate in class remotely using a Google Meet or some other video platform while enrolled in the out-of-school program?

A: To protect the privacy of students and staff, we can't broadcast either live or pre-recorded classes. As well, classroom teachers aren't able to provide remote support at the same time as focusing on more complex day-to-day classroom learning. Out-of-school students in kindergarten to Grade 9 will receive scheduled online instruction from an EIPS educational consultant or teacher. Students in grades 10 to 12 will receive assistance through email and online teacher support.

Q: If I'm leading my child's learning with the out-of-school option, what happens to the education funding provided by the Government of Alberta?

A: Education funding will pay for both learning options being offered.

Teachers are still responsible for all students registered in their class, whether they are taking in-school classes or out-of-school classes. As such, teachers are still required to mark all submitted assignments, provide feedback on what is submitted and assess overall achievement. Out-of-school students in kindergarten to Grade 9 will receive scheduled online instruction from an EIPS educational consultant or teacher. Students in grades 10 to 12 will receive assistance through email correspondence and online EIPS teacher support.

Q: Do I still have to pay school fees if my child is enrolled in out-of-school learning?

A: If your child isn't attending in-school classes, fees for lunch-hour supervision, student union and any of the supplementary fees associated with school activities and events will not be assessed. Should your child return for in-school classes after one of the school reporting periods, EIPS will charge fees accordingly.

Regular fees for student transportation apply if your child attends school. Families can withdraw from student transportation services and receive a prorated refund if they choose out-of-school learning. The deadline to withdraw is Sept. 30, 2020

Q: Will out-of-school care and preschool programs in EIPS buildings still operate?

A: Yes, if they are run entirely by staff as no volunteers are permitted in schools at this time. As well, the programs must adhere to Alberta Health Service's standards for childcare operations and EIPS protocols.

Q: For junior high and senior high students, will there be options offered through out-of-school learning?

A: Yes. Options will vary by school.

Preventative health measures

Q: The new orders from the Chief Medical Officer of Health indicate schools do not need to ensure students, staff members and visitors can maintain a minimum of two-metres distance from every other person when seated at a desk or table. Does that mean masks are no longer required in classrooms when students are closer than two metres?

A: Our understanding is the new orders set a *minimum* expectation for school divisions. To protect everyone's health and well-being within our schools, EIPS continues to require masks in all situations where physical distancing, of at least two metres, isn't possible. Teachers will determine if masks are necessary in the classroom based on the number of students in the room and how far apart desks are spaced.

Q: The Government of Alberta mandated students in grades 4 to 12 wear masks. Why does EIPS require students in kindergarten to Grade 3 also wear masks?

A: EIPS is extending that requirement to all grades, kindergarten to Grade 12 because it cannot guarantee all individuals will always maintain physical distancing.

Masks are mandatory for all staff and students when physical distancing cannot be maintained. That means in common areas such as hallways and bathrooms, on buses, when arriving and departing school, and whenever staff and students must work in close proximity to one another, masks must be worn. In situations where physical distancing is easily maintained—during physical education in a large space, outside at recess and in the classroom where students remain in their desks and can maintain physical distancing—masks are optional.

Q: How do you expect younger kids to wear a mask for so long?

A: The first week of school, we are bringing students to school on a staggered basis. Doing so allows teachers to educate students about the new processes and practices around physical distancing, hand hygiene and the safe use of reusable masks. While we understand it may take some time to get used to the new rules, we are confident with patience and positive reinforcement, students will get used to wearing their masks and know how to handle them safely. We also encourage families to have their children practise putting on, wearing and taking off masks before the first day of school, so they feel comfortable doing so. Learn more about [mask-use guidelines](#). The following [video](#) by Health Canada is also helpful.

There are points during the day, when physical distancing is easily maintained, where masks are optional—when students remain in their desks and aren't moving around the room; during physical education and recess; and snack and lunch breaks.

EIPS encourages you to [practice](#) mask-wearing with your child in preparation for school start.

Q: Do I have to provide masks for my children?

A: The Government of Alberta is providing two reusable masks for each student. These can be taken home and washed nightly, and then returned with the student the following school day. If you prefer your children wear masks you provide instead, ensure you are using a type [recommended by Alberta Health](#). Masks should be labelled or marked with your child's initials to prevent loss.

Ensure personal cloth face masks fit close to, and cover, the nose and chin, and has at least two layers of fabric. Face-coverings not permitted: Neck gators, bandanas and masks with one-way valves or vents—air is exhaled through the hole and shouldn't be worn to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others.

Q: What happens if my child forgets the masks?

A: A small number of disposable masks are kept in stock at the school should this occur. If the child frequently forgets or doesn't bring masks, school administration will touch base with the family to request they ensure their child's masks are sent with them.

Q: Masks alone won't prevent the spread of COVID-19. What other measures are you taking?

A: Schools are using a combination of physical distancing, good hand hygiene, cohorting and mask use to help avoid potential spread. As well, enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces, controlled movement of students in common areas such as hallways and around lockers, and vigilant monitoring for potential symptoms among students and staff members. Recesses and lunch breaks are also staggered.

First and foremost, parents are asked to sign a form indicating that if their child has symptoms attributed to COVID-19 or has come into close contact with someone who has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, they will not come to school. Parents should complete a verbal screening every morning before bringing the child to school, dropping them off at daycare or putting them on the school bus.

Any student exhibiting symptoms will be immediately isolated and the school will make arrangements for immediate pick up.

Q: Could my child wear a face shield instead of a mask?

A: A face shield may provide additional protection for the person wearing it against droplets exhaled by another person, but droplets could still be inhaled from around or under the shield. As well, when someone wearing a face shield exhales, they can escape around the edge of the shield, which therefore provides less protection for others. Those who have a diagnosed medical condition preventing them from wearing a mask may consider using a face shield for some degree of protection, but masks will still be required for all other students and staff.

Q: How will my child learn properly if teachers are wearing masks? Children won't be able to read the teacher's expressions or see how to pronounce words, and they might be scared.

A: When physical distancing is possible—for instance, in a classroom where the teacher stands at the front of the room and the students remain in their seats—masking is optional. Depending on the teacher's comfort level, they may choose to use a transparent mask or shield so students can clearly see their face as they speak. If physical distances cannot be maintained between teachers and students, the mask is necessary for the health and safety of everyone in the classroom.

Q: What if my child has a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask?

A: You will be required to sign a formal medical declaration indicating your child is prevented from wearing a mask because of a diagnosed medical condition. In those cases, it's recommended students wear a face shield to provide some protection. Physical distancing requirements will be strictly enforced to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19.

Q: What happens if a student repeatedly refuses to wear a mask?

A: Unless a student has a formal signed declaration on file, masks are mandatory when physical distancing isn't possible. If a student won't wear a mask despite administration attempts to address the issue, the student will be required to move to out-of-school learning instead.

Q: If one child in my house is sick, but our other children are healthy, can the ones who feel fine still come to school?

A: EIPS requires families to verbally review the [daily screening questionnaire](#) with each child before school every day. The decision about whether or not to send the other children would depend on the answers to this questionnaire, and more specifically, the advice given following your use of the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) if they answer "yes" to any of the questions.

According to Alberta Health, if after using the tool, you're told your sick child must legally self-isolate, and testing is recommended, you can send your other children to school so long as they are asymptomatic. If your sick child tests positive for COVID-19, then you should **not** send your other children to school. Here is [additional information](#) about isolation requirements. As always, Alberta Health has the experts qualified to speak to this. If you have additional questions or require clarification, we recommend you contact [Health Link 811](#).

Q: Can I send hand sanitizer to school with my children?

A: The Division has secured adequate amounts of safe, approved hand sanitizer—both with and without alcohol—for use by staff and students, and will have it available in classrooms and throughout the school. We ask students to refrain from bringing their own as we have no way to confirm whether it's effective or safe.

Other questions

Q: Why aren't sports teams and intramurals being allowed?

A: While sports can provide both physical and emotional benefits for students, we cannot run school athletics in a way that respects current physical distancing and masking requirements. Athletes are often physically close to teammates, both on the playing surface and in change rooms. As well, the very nature of many sports results in athletes breathing heavily with no chance to keep physically distant from one another, their opponents and team staff.

Students may choose to take part in club sports outside of school. It's also true that these same children may potentially be exposed to COVID-19 while participating as part of sports cohorts in the community. That makes it even more important that when students are at school, we ensure they maintain physical distance from one another, use a mask when physical distancing isn't possible, minimize contact with multiple cohorts and practice proper hand hygiene.

Our priority for the start of the 2020-21 school year is to ensure we have a smooth startup and focus on the educational needs of students. We will re-evaluate our decision as the school year progresses.

Q: Will I be able to come into the school to volunteer, drop off items for my child or pick up my child if necessary? Can I walk my child to class if I want?

A: As limiting opportunities for contact is an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19, we are suspending volunteer opportunities and non-essential visits until further notice.

If you need to come to the school to drop off lunch, items or any other essential business for your child, you will need to first call the school. Visitors who have called will first need to complete a COVID-19 screening questionnaire. Anyone answering "yes" to the questions cannot enter the building.

Those who have contacted the school will be required to sanitize their hands, sign the visitor log in the office, practice physical distancing and wear a mask. Items being dropped off can be left in the office. If you are picking up your child, you will be asked to wait in a designated area until your child arrives.

Except where necessary and confirmed ahead of time with school administration, parents cannot escort their children to their class.

Q: What happens if there is a case of COVID-19 in my child's school?

A: The Chief Medical Officer of Health has provided schools with a [guide](#) to managing confirmed cases and outbreaks.

The Division deals with confirmed cases of COVID-19 confidentially and on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with Alberta Health Services. EIPS also contacts those potentially impacted and cleans and disinfects all affected areas. Should Alberta Health Services direct us to do so, EIPS may decide to close the school or implement more stringent cohorting, physical distancing and personal protective equipment strategies.