

EIPS Operations Guidelines 2021-22

A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FAMILIES

NOTE: Information contained within this document reflects current best practices for preventing and controlling COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. New directives and restrictions from the province or Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health may shift how EIPS conducts its operations at any time during the school year. EIPS will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, including ongoing risks related to new variants of concern, and adjust the operating guidelines, as necessary.

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EIPS OPERATIONS GUIDELINES 2021-22

A RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FAMILIES

For the 2021-22 school year, the Government of Alberta expects school operations to return to as normal as possible, which it outlines in Alberta Education's [2021-22 School Year Plan](#). The province also developed a series of recommendations and best practices for school divisions to use, as a minimum standard, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. It also encourages, and recommends, school divisions implement additional measures when deemed appropriate.

Using the province's guidance documents, public-health data, a working-group committee, family feedback and operational data from last year, the Division developed its own operations plan entitled *EIPS Operations Guidelines 2021-22: A resource for students, staff and families*. The document outlines how EIPS schools are operating and the public-health measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses during the 2021-22 school year.

Core preventive measures:

Personal hygiene: Continue to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Screening: Daily screening for symptoms and testing for symptomatic individuals.

Stay home when sick: Anyone who feels unwell cannot attend school or work.

Personal Protective Equipment: Use of personal protective equipment—masks, face shields and gloves.

Physical Distancing: All individuals continue to physically distance whenever possible.

Immunization: Promote vaccination and work with Alberta Health Services to host temporary immunization clinics.

Enhanced cleaning: Routine and targeted cleaning and disinfection of all buildings and buses.

Ventilation: Measures in place to improve ventilation in schools and classrooms.

Rapid response plans: Strategies to deal with staff or students who become symptomatic or ill

Absentee rates: Report to AHS unusual illness absence rates—10 per cent or more.

Overall, the *EIPS Operations Guidelines 2021-22* ensures schools run smoothly, and operations take place in the safest way possible. It's essential families, and students understand and adhere to the guidelines, so the risk of illness is low, and students continue learning and working in a safe classroom setting. Through a combined effort, everyone within EIPS is safer, healthier and better prepared for success throughout this stage of the pandemic.

NOTE: Information contained within this document reflects current best practices for preventing and controlling COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. New directives and restrictions from the province or Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health may shift how EIPS conducts its operations at any time during the school year. EIPS will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, including ongoing risks related to new variants of concern, and adjust the operating guidelines, as necessary.

MINIMIZING RISK

Ensuring Safety and Academic Success

The *EIPS Operations Guidelines*, developed by a working-group committee made up of EIPS principals, directors and senior administration, is the result of ongoing consultations with Alberta Education, Alberta Health Services, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Teachers' Association, and feedback from EIPS families and staff. The document includes various measures—public health, hygiene and provincial guidelines—to ensure everyone continues to learn and work in a safe environment that supports each individual's physical, social and emotional well-being. Throughout the year, EIPS will continue to work with all five groups and adjust measures as needed.

Even with all the measures in place, COVID-19 numbers may increase or fluctuate within the region—there is no one public-health measure to stop the transmission of the virus. However, transmission is less likely to occur with more public-health measures in place. For that reason, it's imperative to have complete co-operation—from staff, students, families, partners and community members—to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

NOTE: EIPS has the authority to implement local measures that exceed provincial guidelines, when deemed appropriate.

CONTINGENCY PLANS

Currently, schools across Alberta are operating as close to normal as possible, while still incorporating good public-health practices. At EIPS, students are learning in school, senior high schools return to the two-semester system and optional courses continue under the regular programming model and following provincial guidance, as much as possible.

However, if there's a resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic that impacts the province and the education system, Alberta Education has two possible [contingency plans](#). All school divisions must be prepared to transition to either contingency plan at any given time.

CONTINGENCY PLAN 1: NEAR-NORMAL OPERATIONS, WITH HEALTH MEASURES

- Regular in-school classes for K-12 students with near-normal operations.
- Continued assessment of student learning.
- School divisions implement and follow provincial public-health measures.
- Additional public-health measures for learners and extracurricular activities for those unable to receive immunization.
- Outbreak management similar to influenza outbreak response.

CONTINGENCY PLAN 2: AT-HOME LEARNING

- In-school classes suspended.
- All school divisions offer out-of-school learning opportunities.
- School divisions follow provincial public-health measures.
- School divisions work with families to ensure student learning continues.
- Continued assessment of student learning.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All EIPS schools and departments are guided by the following health and safety principles:

- Every student, staff and visitor completes the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before entering an EIPS building or bus (see pg. 10, “Daily Screening”).
- No one is permitted in an EIPS-operated building or bus if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or another respiratory illness—unrelated to a pre-existing condition.
- Practice good hand hygiene—hand sanitizer provided by EIPS in all buildings and buses.
- Physical distancing and personal protective equipment recommended, whenever possible.
- Reduce congestion in high-traffic areas.
- Avoid shared-use items, supplies and equipment, where practical.
- Follow protocols in place for food handling and food sharing (see pg. 15, “Food Handling”).
- Provide access to mental health supports for students and families.
- Routine cleaning and disinfecting of all EIPS facilities and high-touch surfaces.
- Mandatory mask use—applicable to all staff, students in kindergarten to Grade 12, and visitors.

Physical Health and Screening

Before entering an EIPS building, students, staff and visitors must assess whether they feel well enough to attend school or work using the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#). If the person answers “YES” to any checklist question, they need to stay home, follow its instructions and use the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to determine next steps.

Any [individual who becomes symptomatic](#) during the school day or workday must leave the EIPS building immediately. Students who can’t leave right away must go to the school’s isolation room and wear a face mask until an emergency contact picks them up. Families must ensure the school has current [emergency contact information](#) on file, and those listed can respond right away. EIPS also recommends completing the online [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to determine next steps.

Students with core symptoms—fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell or taste—must isolate for 10 days, or until receiving a negative COVID-19 test result and symptoms resolve. Students with just *ONE* secondary symptom—chills, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, aches, headache, pink-eye—must stay home and monitor symptoms for 24 hours. If symptoms improve, they can return to school. If symptoms worsen, they must stay home until resolved. Students with *TWO* or more secondary symptoms must stay home until resolved.

Meanwhile, individuals, 18 years and older, with core symptoms—fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat—must isolate for 10 days, or until receiving a negative COVID-19 test result and symptoms resolve. For secondary symptoms—chills; painful swallowing; nasal congestion; fatigue; feeling unwell; nausea; diarrhea; loss of smell, taste or appetite; aches; headache; pink-eye—the person must stay home until symptoms resolve. Testing is recommended for anyone who experiences core or secondary symptoms.

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE A PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITION?

A child showing [COVID-19 symptoms](#) because of a pre-existing medical condition, such as allergies, can attend school if the symptoms stay the same. If symptoms change, or worsen, complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) for further advice. Remember to also inform the school about the pre-existing medical condition for its records.

COVID-19 Cases

The Division deals with COVID-19 cases confidentially and on a case-by-case basis. AHS no longer informs schools or school divisions about individual COVID-19 cases. So, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is asked to notify the school or Division to ensure the proper public-health protocols are followed.

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate for a minimum of 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. Proof of a negative COVID-19 test is not required to return to school or work once the isolation period is complete.

AHS also no longer requires close contacts to quarantine. That means, whole classes don't need to quarantine if there's a positive case at school—unless directed to do so by a public-health official. While quarantining isn't required, when a case is reported to the school, EIPS still provides general notification to affected staff, students and families to let them know about the case, advise to monitor for symptoms and stay home if feeling unwell. AHS recommends anyone exposed to COVID-19, who isn't fully vaccinated, avoid high-risk locations, such as continuing-care facilities and crowded indoor spaces.

ILLNESS OUTBREAK MONITORING

While AHS no longer reports individual COVID-19 cases to EIPS, the Division advises Alberta Health of unusual illness clusters or if a school's illness absentee rate is 10 per cent or higher. AHS then investigates and determines next steps. If an outbreak is declared, the province will likely recommend additional, temporary public-health measures to manage and control the outbreak—cohorts, masking, physical distancing, quarantining or at-home learning.

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take steps to protect yourself and others:

- Practice [physical distancing](#) when gathering with others.
- Wear a mask indoors and when gathering with others.
- Get vaccinated, if eligible.
- Practice good hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Monitor for symptoms related to [COVID-19](#).
- Self-isolate for 10 days if you have any [core COVID-19 symptoms](#), or until receiving a negative COVID-19 test and feeling better.
- Take the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to access health-care advice and testing.

Vaccinations

All Albertans, born in 2009 or before are now eligible to receive their first and second COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccines are safe, effective and help prevent individuals from getting infected with COVID-19 and against severe outcomes. In fact, a [single dose](#) of an approved vaccine offers 80 per cent protection against severe outcomes, such as hospitalization and death. Meanwhile, the [second dose](#) is needed for further and long-lasting protection.

EIPS encourages all eligible EIPS staff and students to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Doing so creates the safest environment possible, reduces learning and working disruptions, and allows schools to safely and quickly resume activities that were postponed last year—extracurricular activities, field trips, sports, intramurals. Unvaccinated staff may be required, under occupational health and safety requirements, to take additional precautions.

Starting in September, AHS is hosting temporary COVID-19 immunization clinics within EIPS schools to assist with vaccine accessibility. The clinics are open to all eligible students and staff—parent permission is required for anyone under the age of 18. EIPS will share more information about the immunization clinics as soon as AHS confirms dates and times. In the meantime, all eligible Albertans can [book a COVID-19 vaccine](#) appointment online.

“The most important thing that adults and older children can do to protect themselves and others is to be fully immunized. Together we are building a protective shield around those for whom the vaccine is not yet available”
— Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health

Physical Distancing

Whenever possible, students, staff and visitors are encouraged to physically distance—maintaining a two-metre space between two or more people—masks aren’t necessary when physical distancing is possible. As much as possible, schools have rearranged classrooms to encourage space between students. That said, physical distancing is challenging, particularly in the lower grades. Like last year, some schools may stagger breaks, recesses and transition times, designate entrances and exits, and post foot-flow traffic markings to limit close contact between students while at school. They may also maintain occupancy limits for common areas, such as washrooms, meeting rooms and lunchrooms.

Cohorts

A cohort is a group whose members are always the same and stay together throughout the school day. Last year, schools used cohorting in all schools for contact-tracing purposes and to limit the number of close contacts needing to quarantine. The province no longer requires schools to contact trace and close contacts no longer need to quarantine. However, some schools may choose to continue to use this strategy for operational purposes. If an illness outbreak is declared at a school, it’s possible, Alberta Health Services will require cohorting as a temporary enhanced measure to prevent widespread transmission.

Masks and Use of Personal Protective Equipment

Globally, governments and medical experts [recommend wearing masks](#) when gathering indoors as a tool to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. For the 2021-22 school year, EIPS' goal is to ensure everyone's health and safety and transmission rates stay low. Given the Division can't guarantee physical distancing indoors at all times, the absence of COVID-19 vaccines for elementary students, the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant and the growing number of COVID-19 cases, EIPS requires all individuals—staff, visitors and students from kindergarten to Grade 12—to wear a mask in all indoor shared areas, when physical distancing isn't possible.

Masks remain mandatory in the following circumstances:

- on all EIPS school buses—provincially mandated until at least Sept. 27, 2021;
- for all staff working with medically fragile students;
- in all EIPS elementary schools;
- in all junior high school; and
- all senior high school.

Masking in these circumstances helps ensure students and staff are protected and allow schools to safely and quickly resume activities that were suspended last year—extracurricular activities, field trips, sports, intramurals. All masks must fit close to the face and cover the nose and chin. Face coverings not permitted: Neck gators, bandanas, and masks with one-way valves or vents.

Masks are not mandatory when physical distancing is possible and eating, during heavy physical activity and outside (see pg. 15, "Gymnasiums"). As well, mask breaks are encouraged and teachers will advise students to change their mask two or three times a day—make sure your child has spare masks, reusable or disposable, with them at school every day. EIPS will review its mask protocol on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The next review will take place on or before Jan. 20, 2022.

Masks aren't required when physical distancing and eating, during physical activity and outside

WHO IS EXEMPT FROM WEARING A MASK?

Children in pre-kindergarten or certain specialized programs: They may not understand the reason behind wearing a mask, and have a hard time putting it on, removing it, keeping it on and not touching it.

Those with underlying physical or mental conditions: A note is required from a medical practitioner indicating the individual's condition inhibits their ability to wear a mask—if an exception was made last year the individual doesn't need to provide another exemption note in 2021-22.

Administrators work with staff and families to accommodate mask exemptions. While the school will do everything possible to maintain the dignity of the mask-exempt person, some compromises and additional preventative controls, such as physical distancing, may be required, depending on the program and activity.

FACE SHIELDS

Face shields are a form of eye protection for the person wearing it. They do not prevent the spread of droplets from the wearer. As such, face shields are not considered masks. When used, a mask is also required. A – a

Cleaning and Hygiene

To ensure the health and safety of all students and staff, enhanced cleaning and hygiene protocols are in place at each EIPS building—all of which follow public-health best practices for illness infection control. Cleaning supplies are readily available in each classroom and office area.

CLEANING PROTOCOLS

- use of Health Canada’s approved cleaning and disinfection products;
- ongoing cleaning and disinfection of common surfaces;
- ongoing cleaning and disinfection of buses;
- frequent day-time cleaning of high-touch areas;
- frequent cleaning and disinfection of washrooms and sink faucets; and
- removal of items that are difficult to clean.

HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

- ongoing hand-hygiene breaks (see pg. 8, “Hand Hygiene”);
- hand-sanitizing stations placed within or near every classroom and building entrance;
- hand sanitizer on every bus;
- ongoing refilling of soap and hand-sanitizer stations; and
- ongoing reinforcement of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

HAND HYGIENE

One of the most reliable measures to prevent illness is regular hand hygiene. As such, students, staff and EIPS visitors should practice good hand hygiene throughout the school day or workday—washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer. Learn more about [proper hand-hygiene practices](#).

PRACTICING PROPER HAND HYGIENE

Throughout the day EIPS recommends students and staff practice ongoing hand washing, including when:

- entering and exiting a school or building
- entering and exiting a classroom
- before and after using personal protective equipment—masks and face shields
- after using the washroom or a tissue
- after coughing or sneezing
- before and after eating
- after a physical education class or outdoor play
- after using a shared-use or high-touch surface

Ventilation

Proper ventilation and airflow are other strategies EIPS uses to maintain safe and healthy learning and working environments for students and staff. Ongoing best practices include:

- regular preventative maintenance on all heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) equipment to enhance building filtration;
- quarterly filter inspections and replacements;
- bi-annual boiler inspections;
- annual gas-fired furnace, exhaust-fan, air-handling unit, air-conditioning unit, startup, and shutdown inspections; and
- upgrades to the HVAC equipment to meet or exceed the recommended American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards for respiratory illnesses.

As well, EIPS exchanges the air in its buildings three times an hour and encourages schools to open windows and doors to assist with airflow and fresh-air circulation, when possible.

Mental Health and Well-Being

A virus such as COVID-19 can create anxiety and fear about the present and future. It becomes especially difficult if someone you know is sick or hears troubling messages on the radio, internet or television. Changes in routines and the continued precautions in place to limit the spread of the virus can also give rise to unexpected emotions and exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression or substance abuse. Therefore, mental health and wellness are critical aspects of the *EIPS Operations Guidelines 2021-22*.

Key Mental Health and Well-Being Strategies

- Counsellors and school-based support teams continue to reach out to staff, students and families to share mental health resources, information and academic support.
- EIPS staff have access to resources and supports—Family and Community Services and AHS—for students who require intensive assessment and intervention services.
- EIPS staff continue with professional learning focused on self-care, wellness and supporting students.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

EIPS Students and Families – Counsellors and school-based support teams continue to reach out to students and families to share mental health resources and information. For more information visit [EIPS Mental Health Resources for Students, Staff and Families](#).

EIPS Staff – EIPS employees can access a variety of supports, including access to information, resources and professional services. For more information visit StaffConnect's [COVID-19 Mental Health Support web page](#), [Homewood Health](#), or contact EIPS Central Services at 780-464-3477.

Community Supports – Students, staff and EIPS families can also access various community-specific supports: [Strathcona County: Mental Health Supports](#), [Strathcona County: Choose Kind](#), [Family and Community Services Contact Line](#), [Strathcona County: Staying Active and Healthy](#), [Fort Saskatchewan Supports](#), [Lamont County Supports](#), [Vegreville Supports](#).

For more information and support visit AHS's [Help in Tough Times](#) website.

DAILY SCREENING

COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist: For students

To ensure schools are safe, all students, pre-kindergarten to Grade 12, must complete the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before going to school every day.

1.	Does the child have any new onset, or worsening, of the following core symptoms:		
	Fever – temperature of 38 C or higher	YES	NO
	Cough – continuous, more than usual, unrelated to known causes such as asthma	YES	NO
	Shortness of breath – continuous and unable to breathe deeply, unrelated to known causes such as asthma	YES	NO
	Loss of sense of smell or taste – unrelated to known causes such as allergies or neurological disorders	YES	NO
<p>If the child answered “YES” to any symptom in Question 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms OR until receiving a negative COVID-19 test and symptoms resolve. Use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool to arrange for testing and additional information. <p>If the child answered “NO” to all core symptoms, proceed to Question 2.</p>			
2.	Does the child have any new onset, or worsening, of the following other symptoms:		
	Chills – without fever, not related to being outside in cold weather	YES	NO
	Sore throat or painful swallowing – unrelated to known causes such as seasonal allergies or reflux	YES	NO
	Runny nose or congestion – unrelated to known causes such as seasonal allergies or being in cold weather	YES	NO
	Feeling unwell or fatigued – lack of energy unrelated to known causes such as depression or sudden injury	YES	NO
	Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea – unrelated to known causes such as anxiety, or irritable bowel syndrome	YES	NO
	Unexplained loss of appetite – unrelated to known causes such as anxiety or medication	YES	NO
	Muscle or joint aches – unrelated to known causes such as arthritis or injury	YES	NO
	Headache – unrelated to known causes such as tension-type headaches or chronic migraines	YES	NO
	conjunctivitis (pink-eye)	YES	NO
	<p>If the child answered “YES” to <i>ONE</i> symptom in Question 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child must stay home and monitor for symptoms for 24 hours. The child can return to school if symptoms improve after 24 hours—testing isn’t necessary. If symptom doesn’t improve, or worsens, after 24 hours—or, if additional symptoms emerge—use the COVID-19 assessment tool for further health-care advice. <p>If the child answered “YES” to <i>TWO OR MORE</i> symptoms in question 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child must stay home. Use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool to determine if testing is recommended. The child can return to school once symptoms resolve and 24 hours pass since symptoms started. <p>If the child answers “No” to all the above questions, they can attend school.</p>		

NOTE: If your child has travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days, follow the [Government of Canada Travel, Testing, Quarantine and Borders](#) instructions, including any requirements for exempt travellers related to attending high-risk environments.

COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist: For adults

To ensure schools and Division offices are safe, all EIPS employees and families must complete the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before entering an EIPS building.

1.	Do you have any new onset, or worsening, of the following symptoms:		
	fever	YES	NO
	cough	YES	NO
	shortness of breath	YES	NO
	runny nose	YES	NO
	sore throat	YES	NO
	chills	YES	NO
	painful swallowing	YES	NO
	nasal congestion	YES	NO
	feeling unwell or fatigued	YES	NO
	nausea, vomiting or diarrhea	YES	NO
	unexplained loss of appetite	YES	NO
	loss of sense of taste or smell	YES	NO
	muscle or joint aches	YES	NO
	headache	YES	NO
conjunctivitis (pink-eye)	YES	NO	
If you answer “Yes” to any symptom in Questions 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO NOT enter the school or an EIPS building at this time. • Stay home and use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to determine whether you need to be tested for COVID-19 and for further advice. • Individuals with fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat are required to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms OR until receiving a negative COVID-19 test and symptoms resolve. 			
If you answer “No” to all the above symptoms, you can attend work and enter an EIPS building or bus.			

NOTE 1: If you’ve travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days, follow the [Government of Canada Travel, Testing, Quarantine and Borders](#) instructions, including any requirements for exempt travellers related to attending high-risk environments.

NOTE 2: The COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) continually changes as the situation in Alberta evolves. Regularly refer to the online questionnaire to ensure you’re using the most up-to-date version.

OPERATIONS

Classrooms

PRE-KINDERGARTEN (PALS)

Children are assigned to a classroom with a teacher to support their learning. Children enrolled in an EIPS Play And Learn at School program aren't required to wear a mask or physically distance. However, all classrooms are organized to encourage physical distancing.

General classroom protocols

- All individuals practice good hygiene (see pg. 8, "Cleaning and Hygiene").
- The classroom is organized to encourage maximum space between children.
- Personal bins provided for supplies.
- Personal materials stored on a hook or in a locker.
- No sharing of food and utensils.
- All eating takes place in a designated classroom.
- Avoid toys and items difficult to clean and disinfect.
- Regular cleaning of classrooms, desks, play centres and shared-use items.
- Mandatory mask use for staff when physical distancing isn't possible.

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 6

Students are assigned to a classroom with a teacher to support their learning. Maintaining physical distance is often challenging, given the age of the students and the number of students in a classroom. As such, students aren't required to physically distance, but masks are mandatory when physical distancing isn't possible. All classrooms are organized to encourage physical distancing.

General classroom protocols

- All individuals practice good hygiene (see pg. 8, "Cleaning and Hygiene").
- The classroom is organized to encourage maximum space between students.
- Personal materials stored on a hook or in a locker.
- No sharing of food and utensils.
- Eating takes place in a designated classroom.
- Some schools have staggered break times.
- Regular cleaning of classrooms, desks, play centres and shared-use items.
- Avoid toys and items difficult to clean and disinfect.
- Mandatory mask use for students and staff when physical distancing isn't possible.

STORING PERSONAL ITEMS AND SUPPLIES

Storing items: Students can access a hook or locker to store personal materials. Students should try to maintain physical distancing whenever possible.

Personal items: Students and staff can continue to bring essential personal items to school. However, they sharing items is still discouraged—food, drinks, utensils, wind instruments.

GRADES 7 TO 12

For each course, students are assigned to a classroom with a teacher to support their learning. Unlike last year, students aren't cohorting in specific groups. However, masks are mandatory and, whenever feasible, students are encouraged to physically distance.

General classroom

- Classrooms are organized to encourage maximum space between individuals.
- All individuals practice good hygiene (see pg. 8, "Cleaning and Hygiene").
- Personal materials stored in a locker.
- No sharing of food and utensils.
- Eating only takes place in designated areas.
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of classrooms and desks before and after use.
- Some schools have staggered break times and transitions.
- Mandatory mask use for students and staff when physical distancing isn't possible.

SYSTEM PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

While EIPS schools are operating as close to normal as possible, unique challenges remain for students within system special-education programs. As such, school staff continue to consult with families to ensure operations take place smoothly and accommodate more individualized needs. All classrooms are also organized to encourage maximum distance between students and have protocols to reinforce good hygiene practices (see pg. 7, "Who is Exempt from Wearing a Mask?").

SHARE-USE EQUIPMENT

What's in operation and what's not

- ~~✗~~ **water fountains:** out of operation
- ~~✗~~ **microwaves:** out of operation, in student settings
- ✓ **locker rooms and dressing rooms:** in operation
- ✓ **bottle-filling stations:** in operation
- ✓ **vending machines:** in operation
- ✓ **photocopiers:** in operation
- ✓ **cafeterias:** in operation, using public-health guidelines
- ✓ **elevators:** in operation

Washrooms

All EIPS washrooms are regularly cleaned and disinfected throughout the day. Depending on the size of the school and the location of washrooms, schools may limit occupancy and assign specific student groups to designated restrooms.

Breaks and Recess

Some schools are staggering breaks, recesses and transition times to minimize the number of people using the outside grounds at any one time. All students can use the playground and school equipment provided they clean their hands before and after use. Additionally, students are encouraged to gather in small groups outside and physically distance whenever possible. In both scenarios, students practice proper hand hygiene when entering and exiting an EIPS building.

Large-Group Gatherings

For 2021-22, EIPS operations return to as normal as possible, including resuming large-group gatherings—assemblies, convocations, banquets, performances and concerts with audiences, team activities, field trips and other social get-togethers. The Division reviews restrictions on all large-group gatherings on an ongoing basis. If there's an outbreak reported at a school or the province introduces new public-health measures to control or manage COVID-19 cases, the Division may need to suspend large-group gatherings temporarily.

EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS AND SCHOOL SPORTS TEAMS

Extracurricular sports and school sports teams—elementary, junior high and senior high—resume in 2021-22. All activities must follow the province's public-health [guidance documents](#), Alberta Schools' Athletic Association's [COVID-19 guidelines](#), and any external facility's protocols. Masks are mandatory at all times, except during heavy physical activity—such as when playing basketball or soccer. As well, each school's responsible for determining the timing, frequency and what these activities look like based on curriculum needs and staff resources.

SPECTATORS: NOT PERMITTED AT THIS TIME

- To limit potential spread of COVID-19 at EIPS athletic events, spectators are not permitted at indoor practices and games.
- When dropping off or picking up student athletes stay outside the school and maintain physical distance.
- EIPS reviews its protocols for extracurricular sports and sports-teams on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

PERFORMING ARTS, BAND AND CHOIR

Performing arts, band, music and choral activities continue with almost normal operations, using public-health best practices. Unlike last year, live audiences and shared dressing rooms are permitted—occupancy limits, physical distancing and masking required. Masks aren't mandatory for educational activities that can't be done using a mask, such as playing wind instruments. Masks are mandatory for all singing and acting activities.

FIELD TRIPS

Class and school field trips resume in the 2021-22 school year. Each school's responsible for ensuring the proper public-health best practices are followed and co-ordinating the proper safety protocols with the host venue. Additionally, school administration's responsible for determining the timing, frequency and activities based on curriculum needs and staff resources. National and international field trips are still prohibited for the 2021-22 school year.

CELEBRATORY EVENTS

Celebratory events—assemblies and graduations—are permitted, with public-health measures in place. In some cases, occupancy limits, physical distancing and masking may be required.

SCHOOL-BASED MEETINGS

School-based meetings return to in-person, as long as all public-health protocols are followed—schools have the discretion to hold meetings in-person or online. School staff are responsible for communicating details and facilitating the meetings.

High-Traffic Areas

Schools may have controls in place to promote physical distancing in high-traffic areas—main office, hallways, washrooms, staff room, common areas. These can include: staggered breaks and recesses; mandatory mask use; physical-distancing signs, floor markings and educational posters; organizing seating to promote physical distancing; occupancy limits for elevators, staff rooms and meeting rooms; and directional traffic flows.

LIBRARIES AND LEARNING COMMONS

For the 2021-22 school year, all learning commons and libraries are open and operations return to as close to normal as possible. Schools are required to follow all public-health best practices, including mandatory mask use if applicable to the school, physical distancing whenever possible, and regular cleaning and disinfection of the space.

RECESS

Playgrounds are open for use and masks are not required while outside. Before and after recess, students must wash or sanitize their hands.

GYMNASIUMS

Gymnasiums remain open for use for physical education programming. Schools are required to follow all public-health best practices and, when possible, hold activities outside. During heavy physical education—basketball, soccer—de-masking is permitted. However, during low-intensity physical education—sitting, standing, yoga—masks are mandatory. Before and after all physical activity, students must wash or sanitize their hands.

FITNESS CENTRES

School fitness centres are open for programming purposes. Schools operating one must follow EIPS' guidelines for [Fitness Centre Cleaning](#) and masks are mandatory.

WHY ARE MASKS NOT REQUIRED DURING HEAVY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

During heavy physical activity, respiration rates increase, resulting in a wet mask. That makes it more difficult to breathe for the wearer and more likely to touch the face to adjust the mask frequently—lessening the protective value a mask may offer.

Food Handling

EIPS follows the below food-handling protocols—consistent with public-health best practices.

- No sharing of food, utensils, dishes or drink containers.
- Mask use, if applicable to the school.
- Practice physical distancing, whenever possible.
- Practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (see pg.8, “Cleaning and Hygiene”).
- Consume snacks and lunches in designated areas.
- Clean desks before eating, or use a disposable towel or napkin.
- Place snacks and lunches with belongings.
- Everyone properly disposes of their own recycling, wrappers and food waste.
- Designated staff or student to serve provided food.
- All buffet-style or potluck meals are prohibited.

FOOD-RELATED COURSES:

- operational using [public-health recommendations](#) and best practices;
- clean kitchen utensils and appliances between users;
- no sharing of food or cutlery;
- consume food in a designated area;
- proper mask use if applicable to the school, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; and
- regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas.

CAFETERIAS AND CANTEENS:

- operational using [public-health recommendations](#) and best practices;
- designated staff or students to serve food;
- designated staff or students to distribute utensils, napkins and condiments;
- mandatory mask use, if applicable to the school;
- all food consumed in designated areas;
- regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas;
- all individuals practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; and
- staggered lunch times and additional dining spaces—determined by schools.

PERMITTED FOOD SERVICE: 2021-22

- ✓ cafeterias and canteens
- ✓ family or vendor-provided snacks or treats on special occasions—designated server required
- ✓ lunch drop-off—if entering the school, ensure to follow protocols for visitors (see pg. 18, “Visitors, Volunteers and Service Providers Entering EIPS”)
- ✓ staff lunches and hot-lunch service—designated server required
- ✗ activities involving food sharing—such as serving food buffet or potluck style

Assessment and Student Supports

DIPLOMA EXAMINATIONS

Diploma examinations are required by the province and continue to count for 30 per cent of a student’s final diploma course mark. For the 2021-22 school year, diploma examinations take place, in all relevant subject areas, in November, January, April and June.

PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TESTS (PATS)

Schools throughout EIPS are administering Provincial Achievement Tests to students in grades 6 and 9. In Grade 6, the tests occur in May and June. In Grade 9, the tests occur in January, May and June.

OFF-CAMPUS EDUCATION

The Registered Apprenticeship Program and work-experience programs are operational, with public-health best practices in place. Students are expected to follow the health and safety protocols set out by the employer. EIPS also inspects all worksites to ensure they meet the appropriate public-health measures.

CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATIONS AND CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES

Career and Technology Foundations classes and Career and Technology Studies classes continue, using public-health best practices. When masks aren't a requirement, students and staff are encouraged to physically distance, as much as possible. Shared-use items, such as lab equipment, are cleaned and disinfected before the next class and after each use. And, as always, ongoing hand hygiene is mandatory—before, during and after.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND FITNESS PROGRAMS

Physical education and fitness programs are operational, using provincial [public-health guidelines](#) and best practices. Activities and sports support physical distancing, as much as possible. During heavy physical education—basketball, soccer—de-masking is permitted. However, during low-intensity physical education—sitting, standing, yoga—masks are mandatory. Before and after all physical activity, students must wash or sanitize their hands. As always, students are encouraged to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (see pg. 8, “Cleaning and Hygiene”). Schools also continue to conduct enhanced cleaning and disinfection of these areas.

SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS

All schools and staff have detailed plans in place to ensure specialized supports and services continue for children and students in system programs and with individual needs. Teachers who have students with Instructional Support Plans (ISPs) continue to differentiate their lessons and have protocols in place to work around physical-distancing limitations, including enhanced cleaning measures and personal protective equipment.

SPECIALIZED SUPPORT PROTOCOLS

For speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, audiologists and specialized support consultants

- practice good hand hygiene before and after working with a student;
- practice physical distancing, whenever possible;
- use a face mask—clear masks available;
- use physical barriers, when possible;
- clean and disinfect assessment and treatment surfaces;
- clean and disinfect assessment and treatment supplies between user;
- practice respiratory etiquette; and
- follow all additional requirements mandated by the profession.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International student programs and international education programs are still prohibited for the 2021-22 school year.

STUDENT TEACHERS

Student teachers are permitted to work within EIPS—provided the completion of the health-and-safety orientation and public-health best practices are followed.

Busing

EIPS has various protocols in place for Student Transportation, which adhere to public-health best practices. Throughout the year, riders have assigned routes, assigned seating and are expected to scan their bus pass when they enter and exit a bus. Each bus also has hand sanitizer, which riders must use when boarding.

As mandated by the province, all riders and bus operators must wear a mask at all times. Students who choose not to wear a mask have two options: not board the bus or wear a disposable mask supplied by EIPS. Individuals who do not wear a mask are prohibited from boarding until a mask is worn. Riders who have a face-mask exemption must wear a face shield instead (see pg. 8, “Masks and Use of Personal Protective Equipment”).

After every morning and afternoon route, the bus is thoroughly cleaned—high-touch areas are cleaned at transfer sites—and disinfected with electrostatic sprayers after each morning run.

HEALTH AND SAFETY: ON EIPS BUSES

Before sending a rider to the bus stop, families are required to complete the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) (see pg. 10, “Daily Screening”). If the rider answers “Yes” to any checklist question, they CAN’T board an EIPS bus. Instead, they need to stay home and complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) for further advice. EIPS encourages riders to notify Student Transportation if they test positive for COVID-19 to ensure the proper public-health measures are followed.

Any rider who develops COVID-19 symptoms or feels unwell in any way while on the bus is separated from the rest of the passengers. The student is then seated by themselves until either arriving at the school or their bus stop. If on route to school, staff will contact the family to make arrangements for pickup. Families must ensure the Division has current emergency contact information on file who can respond immediately. To review or update the contact information visit the [EIPS PowerSchool Parent Portal](#) and complete the Correction and Verification Form.

Visitors, Volunteers and Service Providers Entering EIPS

Visitors, volunteers and contractors are permitted in the school or workplace as long as they have a specific reason for being there and follow the site-visitor protocol—appointments are recommended. As well, anyone entering an EIPS school or building must complete the COVID-19 [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#), sign the visitor log and sanitize hands. Masks are mandatory in all schools, on all EIPS buses and all EIPS-operated building. For deliveries, offload at the designated location.

School Councils

School councils continue with near-normal operations, using public-health best practices. Unlike last year, school council meetings can take place in-person. However, if case counts increase, or there’s an outbreak at a school, the meetings may transition to an online platform. For information about specific times and details contact the school directly.

Emergency and Evacuation Drills

All EIPS schools continue to practice emergency procedures. These include conducting lock-down drills and six school fire evacuations drills—an annual requirement. Some drills are modified to follow public-health best practices.

Communication

EIPS will continue to keep families informed as information becomes available, evolves and influences operations. In addition, eips.ca is continually updated with the most up-to-date information about school operations for the 2021-22 school year. The website includes details about Division operations, protocols, busing, health screening, best practices, and much more. The No. 1 priority: To ensure operations run smoothly and take place in the safest way possible. For more information about the *EIPS Operations Guidelines* contact [Communications Services](#).

LEARNING WHILE ISOLATING

To ensure students successfully transition to the next grade level, the following protocols are in place for learners who miss school relating to isolation requirements.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISOLATING

- The student stays at home for the legally required time.
- The student learns at home—if a student can't access the internet, a computer, a Chromebook or an iPad, school staff will provide an alternative to meet the child's needs.
- During this time, the student uses [Brightspace](#), an online learning platform. Brightspace is compatible with Google and includes teacher updates, calendar information and various learning materials. It also allows students to submit assignments, conduct quizzes, and see grades and teacher feedback.
- The student returns to in-school classes following the required isolation time.

WHOLE-CLASS QUARANTINE OR AT-HOME LEARNING

- If an illness outbreak's declared at a school, AHS may instruct a whole class to quarantine or learn from home as a temporary measure to prevent widespread transmission.
- If this happens, the class will collectively transition to a temporary online learning, under the teacher's guidance, for the quarantine or at-home learning period—similar to temporary online learning in 2020-21.
- Students will transition to online learning using [Brightspace](#), an online learning platform. Brightspace is compatible with Google and includes teacher updates, calendar information and various learning materials. It also allows students to submit assignments, conduct quizzes, and see grades and teacher feedback.
- Junior high or senior high students follow their regular bell schedule.
- Elementary students follow a school schedule focused on literacy and numeracy.

Out-of-School Learning

EIPS believes strongly students learn best in school. As such, it no longer offers the out-of-school learning program. However, [Next Step](#) offers an outreach program for students in grades 10-12. It's a supportive, alternative senior high option for students who require non-traditional, individualized programming. As well, students, kindergarten to Grade 9, do have the option to enrol in Next Step's Home Education program—a parent-directed programming option—in the 2021-22 school year only. To learn more contact Next Step at 780-464-1899.

EIPS FACILITIES

Out-of-School and Preschool Programs

Out-of-school and preschool programs continue to operate within EIPS facilities. All programs must adhere to Alberta's [health standards for childcare operations](#) and EIPS protocols. Unlike last year, families can enter an EIPS building when picking up or dropping off a child—screening, mask use and hand sanitization are mandatory.

After-Hours Rentals

EIPS after-hours facility rentals resume in mid-September. To book a facility, complete and submit the [Rental Request Form](#). For more information visit [EIPS after-hours rentals](#).

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AND STAFF

GENERAL INFORMATION:

[Alberta Education: 2021-22 School Year Plan](#)

[Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)

[COVID-19 Information for Albertans](#)

[EIPS Mental Health Resources for Families](#)

[Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools](#)

[Guidance for Schools \(K-12\)](#)

[Homewood Health](#)

[Mask Wearing for Kids Guide](#)

[Parent Guide: 2021-22 School Year](#)

[Public Health Management of Respiratory Illness in Schools: Q&A School Administrator](#)

[Stay-at-Home Guide for Parents](#)

POSTERS:

[Cover Your Cough](#)

[Do Not Enter](#)

[Healthy Distance](#)

[Personal Items](#)

[Stay Safe](#)

[Wash Your Hands](#)

[Wash and Sanitize Your Hands](#)