

BC's Restart Plan: K to 12 Return to School

Background. As a precautionary measure in the context of COVID-19, the Ministry of Education, on the advice of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), suspended in-person instruction in public and independent K-12 schools effective March 17, 2020. Public and independent K-12 schools were asked to ensure educational continuity through remote and online learning opportunities for the majority of students. In addition, schools were asked to ensure ongoing school care and in-person learning opportunities for children of essential service workers requiring school care, those in remote locations, vulnerable students requiring in person support, and learners with diverse needs.

Starting May 19, school districts are expected to gradually resume regular operations and return to in-class instruction using a staged approach. On June 1, and as part of [BC's Education Restart Plan](#), families will have the choice to bring their children back to class on a part-time basis for the remainder of the current school year.

This FAQ is intended to answer some of your questions regarding the optional return to school for K to 12 students at the North Vancouver School District (NVSD). It is informed largely by the resources listed at the end of this document and by the questions we have heard from families and employees of the NVSD.

Q: What is BC's Education Restart Plan?

A: [BC's Education Restart Plan](#) is the Ministry of Education's five-stage approach for resuming in-class instruction in a measured way to align with [BC's Restart Plan](#). Each stage will be guided by health and safety guidelines, measures, protocols and orders, as well as the principles developed for continuity of learning during COVID-19.

Q: I've heard references made to a return to in-class instruction in stages. What are the stages and where are we now?

A: The Ministry of Education has outlined five stages for K to 12 education. These are the strategies and actions needed to support educational programs and operations during COVID-19. Starting June 1st, BC will be moving from Stage 4 to Stage 3. Click [HERE](#) for an explanation of each stage and [HERE](#) for additional background information.

Q: Why restart schools on June 1st?

A: There are a number of reasons for an optional return to in-class instruction:

- It is safe to do so. The number of cases and impacts on BC's health is decreasing. BC (PHO) and international (WHO) research and science suggest children are less likely to get COVID-19 and less likely to transmit the virus.
- Schools are important community hubs. Social interaction is critical to our individual and collective well-being and mental health.
- Schools are critical to student learning.
- School closures have significant negative mental health and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable children and youth.
- Schools play a critical role in the success of BC's Restart Plan. Re-engaging our school community now will set the stage for a full school start in September 2020.

Q: Is it safe for my child to return to school? Is it safe for employees to return to school?

The PHO has recognized the following trends that reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in environments where children are present:

- There is a lower infection rate for children.
- Children who are infected with the virus and develop COVID-19 have milder symptoms, if any and very few become critically ill.
- There is no conclusive evidence that children who are asymptomatic pose a risk to other children or to adults.
- There is currently no documented evidence of child-to-adult transmission.

Please click [HERE](#) and refer to the subsection titled "COVID-19 and Children and Youth" for more information.

Q: According to the provincial government, the NVSD must have its return-to-class and safety plans approved by the Ministry of Education before moving to a gradual return on June 1st. I'd like some more information about this.

A: From May 15th to 22nd, school districts and independent schools will develop plans outlining their approach to delivering education during Stage 3. As a part of the plan, school districts and authorities will outline how:

- Measures will be put in place to meet the requirements of Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings.
- In-person instruction will be offered within the school density targets and the recommended days per week (e.g. alternate days, half-days, blended model).

- To accommodate health and safety measures including physical distancing and reducing physical contact, classes must be limited to a small number of students at any one time (e.g., be less than 50% of the normal class enrolment).
- Children of Essential Service Workers* and students requiring additional support will be supported full-time if requested.
- Remote, online and in-person learning will be delivered and balanced over the school week.
- Supports like meals and technology loans will continue.

**Teachers, administrators and support staff are considered Essential Service Workers.*

Q: What steps is the North Vancouver School District taking to ensure the health and safety of its students and employees returning to in-person instruction?

A: We have already implemented routine and enhanced environmental cleaning programs, purchased the latest technology in surface disinfection, and created several regularly updated guidance documents to support our staff. Based on the strict requirements of the PHO and WorkSafeBC, and through our Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) and Facilities teams, we are working directly with each school to ensure a safe and healthy school environment for our staff and students. Some of the measures we will be taking include:

- Routine daily screening for all staff and students entering the school. Anyone who has symptoms of a cold, flu or COVID-19 will not be permitted into the school.
- Routine and frequent environmental and high-touch cleaning.
- A strong focus on the daily routine of frequent washing of hands and other hygiene practices.
- Smaller class sizes, desk separation, rotating school attendance on a routine basis, and staggered start and end times for school days, including recess and lunch periods.

Q: What can families do to ensure a safe and healthy in-school learning environment during Stage 3?

A: There are a number of measures that you can take to ensure we all continue to protect those around us:

- Families will be asked to monitor their children daily for symptoms and not to send them to school if they are sick. People who are sick will not be allowed in school.
- Students will be asked to wash their hands frequently, including before coming to school. They will have access to hand sanitizer when hand washing is not available.
- Families will be asked to follow schedules provided regarding staggered drop-off and pick-up times and modified lunch and recess hours.
- Students will be asked to label their personal items and to not share them.
- Parents/guardians should remind children to minimize physical contact with friends.

Q: Will masks and other forms of personal protective equipment (PPE) be necessary for children and employees who will be in the classroom?

A: There is no evidence to support the use of medical grade, cloth or homemade masks in school settings at this time. Wearing a mask is a personal choice. It is important to treat people wearing masks with respect. More information about COVID-related mask use is available on the [BC Centre for Disease Control website](#).

PPE is the last and least effective of the infection prevention and exposure control measures and should only be considered after exploring all other measures (public health, environmental, administrative, personal). PPE is not effective as a stand-alone preventive measure, should be suited to the task, and must be worn and disposed of properly. Outside of healthcare settings, the effectiveness of PPE is generally limited to protecting others should you be infected. Please click [HERE](#) and refer to the section titled "Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures" for more information.

Q: What happens if I decide I don't want my child(ren) to return to school on June 1st?

A: Returning to class is optional, and families will have the choice to bring their children back to class. If you decide your child will not be returning to part-time in-class instruction, remote and online learning opportunities will continue to be available for the remainder of the school year.

Q: What will it look like for my child(ren) to return to in-class instruction on June 1st?

A: Plans are currently being made, and you can expect to hear more information directly from your school administration and class teacher. However, generally speaking, you can expect schools and classrooms to look different, with:

- increased spacing between students in classroom and smaller group activities.
- no physical contact sports, but more time outside with classmates.
- limitations on assemblies and large gatherings.
- parents/guardians being asked to not enter the school at any time.

Q: If I send my child(ren) back to school, will they be in the same class with the same teacher?

A: During the week of May 18th to 22nd, schools will be reaching out to families to provide additional information about the optional return to in-class instruction and to ask families to complete a survey about whether their children will return to in-class instruction on June 1st. Schools will use this information and their school density targets to organize daily and weekly schedules. This means that wherever possible, classes will stay with the current teacher; however, there is the possibility that children may not have their regular classroom teacher or

classmates.

Q: Are teachers expected to provide in-class instruction and remote / online learning opportunities?

A: The Ministry of Education and school districts are working on a plan to ensure that teacher and support staff workloads between in-class and online delivery are balanced and manageable. Prior to June 1, Boards of Education and local unions must facilitate a process with education partners to develop multiple suggested delivery models that do not increase current teacher workload and meet the needs of students during Stage 3. The decision regarding the model adopted by school districts will be done in collaboration with the local union.

Q: Will you be reopening school playgrounds?

A: This is currently under review by the PHO. Given the importance of maintaining safe physical distancing and cleaning protocols, it is unlikely all playgrounds will be opened. However, the PHO recognizes that outdoor learning takes place outside and where it is safe to do so, will look at reopening some parts of school playground. This determination will need to be made school to school vs province- or district-wide.

Q: What additional supports will be available to children during Stage 3?

A: Families can expect:

- Continuation of online/remote learning opportunities to supplement in-school instruction.
- Focus on mental health supports for students returning to school and to those who continue with remote/online learning.
- Meal programs, with additional health and safety, physical distancing and hygiene measures in place, will continue. Meal pick-up will continue for students not in attendance.

Q: Will meal programs continue to be made available during Stage 3?

A: Meal programs, with additional health and safety, physical distancing and hygiene measures in place, will continue. Meal pick up will continue for students not in attendance.

Q: Prior to the suspension of in-class instruction, my child(ren) attended your StrongStart program. Will the program resume on June 1st?

A: No, unfortunately, StrongStart will not resume on June 1st. However, it will resume in September for the 2020/21 school year.

Q: I am an Essential Service Worker (ESW) and my child(ren) was receiving care at one of your schools while in-class instruction was suspended. What happens on June 1st?

A: For children of Essential Service Workers*, Tiers 1 and 2, children will be able to come to school on a full-time basis, during regular school hours, if requested. For additional support, please visit the BC Government's [Information for Parents & Families](#) website concerning child care support.

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Q: Before in-class instruction was suspended on March 17, 2020, my children used before and after school-care programs. Will the NVSD be providing this care for the remainder of the school year?

A: The NVSD will not be providing before and after-school care. Please contact the care provider you were using prior to the suspension of in-class instruction to make arrangements.

Q: My child is using a tech device on loan from the NVSD. Will I need to return that device, when and how?

A: At the end of the school year, you will need to return any technology devices on loan from the NVSD. Your school principal will be in touch to make arrangements.

Do you have a question that has not been answered here?

If you have a question that has not been answered here, please reach out to your school principal. Administrators will ensure new questions are shared (while protecting your personal privacy) so that we can provide an answer that benefits all families here.

Resources:

[BC's Restart Plan](#) lays out a series of steps that will be taken by the BC government to protect people and ensure that the province can return to a "new normal".

[K - 12 Education Restart Plan](#) is the Ministry of Education's five-stage approach for resuming in-class instruction in a measured way to align with BC's Restart Plan.

[Safe & Healthy Schools > Restarting BC's Schools](#) website

[COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K – 12 School Settings](#) document

[Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K – 12 Setting](#) document

[Key Steps to Safely Operating Your Business or Organization and Reducing Covid-19 Transmission](#) document

[WorkSafeBC COVID-19 FAQ](#) answers frequently asked questions from workers and employers in BC, focusing on how to maintain a healthy and safe workplace during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[K – 12 Students to have Optional In-Class Instruction on June 1](#) [News Release] and [Backgrounder](#)

[Keep Learning](#) is a Ministry of Education website that includes suggestions for parents and guardians to keep their children learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[FAQs on Continuity of Learning in the K – 12 Education system](#)

