

Back to School 2021-2022 Plan



**Grande Prairie
Public School Division**

www.gppsd.ab.ca



GPPSD2357



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Superintendent's Message

Parents, families and guardians,

I am pleased to welcome you back to a new school year with the Grande Prairie Public School Division. I know our staff are excited to see our students returning again to in-person learning and we remain committed this year to supporting the health and safety of our school communities to support the success of our students. The priorities in our Division's 3-Year Education Plan, available online [2021-2024 GPPSD 3-Year Education Plan.pdf](#), remain the focus of our work and this fall each school will be updating their specific plans to identify the specific priorities identified at each school based on student achievement results and feedback from staff, students and parents.

On August 13, Alberta Education released updated guidelines for the return to school and shared direction from Alberta Health for managing respiratory illnesses in schools this fall. The following three documents are available online to provide additional information:

1. [Alberta Education's Updated 2021-2022 School Year Plan](#)
2. [A Parent Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year](#)
3. [Guidance for Schools \(K-12\) and School Buses](#)

The documents linked above explain the province's direction to proceed with a normal return to school this fall. Application of the guidance and advice from the province, combined with our experience in schools last year, has informed the development of guidelines for the return of GPPSD students to school this year that are included in this document. Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 virus on our communities is a responsibility shared by all Albertans and this document represents our efforts to support our school communities.

The underlying principle for informing our decision making this year is to continue to prioritize the safety of our staff and students and to also support the overall wellbeing and learning of our students. It is excellent to have students back in schools again, and it is good for their overall wellness to begin to return to more normal operations. Our return to school is intended to balance safety with enhanced opportunities for our students compared to last year.

Included in this plan are some of the strategies from last year, included the COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist and the provision of additional staff to provide enhanced cleaning during the school day, remain in place. Some strategies employed last year, such as working with Alberta Health to isolate entire classes, are not included in this plan. And schools will be transitioning back to some traditional operations, local field trips and inter-school sports, early in the school year. In short, this plan has been created based on the best advice provided to our jurisdiction by public health professionals and Alberta Education, and our staff will continue to monitor the advice issued by the province and the local situation. Our planning will be updated throughout the school year should it be required.

I remain proud of the significant efforts of our staff to provide inclusive learning environments and quality education for all of our 8000+ students. We are excited for the return to school this year to provide fun and engaging learning opportunities for students as we help them to succeed. We also remain committed to safe practices and following the advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health and to honoring and respecting the individual choices of our staff and the families of our students as they relate to personal decisions regarding the virus.

Alexander (Sandy) McDonald
Superintendent of Schools



Overview and Purpose

The Government of Alberta has announced the lifting of many health restrictions and is shifting to public health management that reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Grande Prairie Public School Division's planning will incorporate recommendations that support good public health practices into operations for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

This year, Grande Prairie Public School Division will continue to make decisions that prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students to support student learning. We will balance safety with a measured return to routine school activities and services.

Guiding Principles

- The well-being of students and staff is our priority.
- The Division will follow all health measures and guidelines established by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education.
- Students will experience optimal learning.

The purpose of this **Back to School 2021-2022 Plan** is to provide guidance that supports a safe and successful start to the school year. Questions about details specific to school practices and individual students should be directed to the administration of the school. The Division will continue to monitor this plan throughout the year.

Guiding Resources

[COVID-19: Education and Child Care](#)

[COVID-19 info for Albertans](#)

[AHS' Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#)

[Alberta Education's Updated 2021-2022 School Year Plan](#)

[A Parent Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year](#)

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

Supporting Safety and Wellness

Staying Home When Sick & COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist

Before leaving home, staff, students, visitors, and volunteers who will access the school must use the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) to assess whether they feel well enough to attend.

- If an individual is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they must stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g., call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner), and fill out the [AHS Online Self-Assessment](#) tool to determine if they should be tested.
- For information on isolation for staff and students with symptoms, or for confirmed COVID-19 cases, please see Appendix B.
- Anyone who feels unwell with other symptoms should stay at home until they are well.
- Schools may continue with active health checks for special circumstances.

Chronic symptoms that can be explained by a pre-existing medical condition (e.g. allergies) may be considered part of an individual's baseline health status. As long as these symptoms do not change, the individual can continue to attend school/work.



Responding to Illness (updated 15-10-2021)

Schools will have a plan in place if a student or staff member develops any symptoms of illness while at school.

- Parents/guardians will be notified to pick up the student immediately.
- Individuals with a cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose not related to other conditions such as allergies or cold weather may be provided with a mask to wear while waiting to go home.

Notification to Exposed Individuals (new 15-10-2021)

- Staff and students who attended the same class, extra-curricular activity where 2 meters of physical distancing was not maintained, or who sat within 3 rows on the bus of a COVID-19 case, while the individual was infectious, will be notified via email.

Exclusion for Exposed Individuals (Pre-School – Grade 6 Only) (new 15-10-2021)

- If a school identifies three COVID-19 cases in one class (pre-school through grade 6) who attended school while infectious within a five-day period, exposed individuals will be excluded from attending school in-person.
- Exclusion will last for 10 days from the last date they were exposed to an infectious COVID-19 case.
- Exclusions are applicable only for classroom cohorts.
- Staff members who are fully vaccinated are exempt from the ten-day exclusion.

Non-Medical Mask Use (updated 16-09-2021)

Grades 4 through grade 12 students and all staff members must wear a non-medical face mask that covers their mouth and nose while attending an indoor location within the school unless the student or staff member:

- is seated at a desk or table within a classroom where the desks, tables and chairs are arranged in a manner to prevent persons who are seated from facing each other and to allow the greatest possible distance between seated persons (may be less than 2m);
- is consuming food or drink in a designated area;
- is engaged in physical exercise;
- is separated from every other person by a physical barrier;
- is unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a medical concern or limitation and has worked with school administration for an exemption.

ECS through grade 3 students while at school do not have to wear a non-medical face mask, however we are asking those who are able to wear a mask, to do so. Grade 3 students in a combined grade 3-4 class will be required to wear a mask.

ECS through grade 12 students are required to wear a mask when they ride the school bus.

Staff members in a designated area at the front of the class with at least two meters of physical distance from the closest student or those providing care or assistance where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance do not have to wear a mask. The teacher/staff member will explain to students why this practice is safe while modeling/reinforcing behaviors.

Visitors are required to wear masks.



Everyone must sanitize hands when they put on or remove a face mask. Students will be taught how to properly put on and remove a reusable mask. Reusable masks that are not damp or dirty that will be re-worn prior to washing should be stored in a clean, breathable bag or container.

Exemptions to the mask requirement for all staff and students in grades 4-12, in all school settings, is outlined in GPPSD Non-Medical Face Mask Protocol.

Cohorting (updated 23-09-2021)

A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together and who are not always able to maintain 2 metres physical distancing.

- Pre-school to grade 6 students will be cohorted.
- Grade 7 -12 students will be cohorted to the greatest extent they can, balancing student instruction with safe operations during instructional and non-instructional activities.
- Staff should not be in a cohort with each other unless it is required for operational purposes.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures

The Division has hired additional staff to maintain enhanced daytime cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces by custodial staff in all its schools. All cleaning and disinfecting will follow [AHS' Guidelines for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#).

Environmental Measures (updated 01-09-2021)

Part of the Division's COVID-19 response is ensuring schools have proper ventilation and airflow.

- All facilities have a mechanical system that allows for air to be circulated and brings in fresh air from the outside. Fresh air is exchanged at the start of the school day and throughout the day to ensure a safe environment is maintained for students and staff.
- Mechanical systems are maintained on a regular basis, as per the manufacturers operating guidelines, to ensure they are functioning per specifications.
- To supplement our mechanical systems, it is beneficial to open classroom windows to assist in ventilation and fresh air exchange, weather permitting.

School Immunization Program (updated 01-09-2021)

Alberta Health Services (AHS), Public Health School Immunization Program is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible students in Grades 7 to 12, who are born in 2009 or earlier.

With **parental written consent**, children can receive the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine in school if they:

- have never had a COVID-19 vaccine (this will be their first dose)
- had their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at least 3 weeks ago (this will be their second dose)

Your child's school will let you know when the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered at their school. They will share COVID-19 vaccine information and the AHS consent form.

Shared Use of Materials

Shared use of materials will be limited to the greatest extent possible, balancing student instruction with safe operations.



Student Drop off and Pick up

Schools will share site procedures for drop-off/pick-up that support student safety. This may include staggered drop-off/pick-up locations, assigned doors and bus loading/unloading procedures.

School Bus Transportation

- Only registered students will be allowed on buses.
- It is mandatory for students to scan their bus pass when they enter and exit the bus.
- Students cannot use the bus if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- The driver and all students are required to wear masks on the bus.
- Students on direct routes will be assigned seats. Students living in the same household should be seated together.
- Cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, window areas, and rails.

Parents, Visitors, and Volunteers Entering the school (updated 16-09-2021)

Parents, visitors, and volunteers are asked to book appointments. Our schools are open for parents to access the office for inquiries and to book appointments. All parents, visitors, and volunteers:

- must self-screen using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before they enter the school.
- are required to follow the school policies and practices.
- must wear a non-medical face mask.

A record of all visitors, volunteers and service providers must be kept using the Division Sign-In Form.

Student Teachers

The Division will continue to support the placement of student teachers. Student teachers will be expected to follow all safety and health protocols in place for Division staff and students.

Food Services

- Individuals should not share food.
- All students must wash their hands before and after eating.
- If a school is using a common lunchroom all surfaces of the tables and chairs must be cleaned and disinfected.
- Nutrition Programs, Cafeterias & Canteens will continue to provide service.

Teaching and Learning

Provincial Assessments

Diploma Exams and Provincial Achievement Tests (grade 6 & 9) are scheduled for 2021/2022.

Online Programming

With the return to in-person classes some families have requested online learning. For more information visit: [GPPSD Online Programming](#).

- Families with students in grades 1 – 9 have until **August 31, 2021** to register for online programming, or if registered in online programming to transfer to in person learning.
- Families registered for online programming are committed for the duration of the 2021/2022 school year.



School Based Activities

Field Trips

Local and provincial field trips and activities can proceed with principal approval and must meet all Division and sector-specific guidelines. National field trips are suspended at this time and international field trips are suspended for the 2021/2022 school year.

School Gatherings (updated 01-09-2021)

Schools will not have large in-person gatherings, such as school assemblies.

Extra-Curricular Club and Sports (updated 01-09-2021)

Schools can continue extra-curricular opportunities.

Graduation

Schools may begin to plan celebrations for the class of 2022. Plans must include a COVID-19 contingency plan.

School Council Meetings

School council meetings for 2021-2022 school year will follow the safety protocols and expectations.



Appendix

Appendix A: Mental Health Resources

COVID-19 is causing uncertainty for families and our communities. Understanding, responding to, and supporting this impact alongside our partner agencies is important.

To support our students, our Division has provided staff learning opportunities to foster an understanding of trauma and the potential impact so they can respond with understanding and informed practice.

There are resources available on our webpage [Positive Mental Health](#).

Parents or guardians who are concerned for their child's well-being can contact these community resources:

Alberta Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642 -

- Provides 24/7: confidential, anonymous service, information about mental health programs and services, referrals to other agencies if needed

Grande Prairie Addictions and Mental Health:

In Person: Aberdeen Centre - 9 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday. Aberdeen Centre's address is 9728 - 101 Avenue, Grande Prairie, AB

By Phone: (587)259-5513 - 7 days a week - 9 am to 7 pm

- Services for the treatment of mental health or substance abuse problems. Tell them if it is urgent (e.g., suicide risk). They can connect you to counselling, treatment, groups, etc.

Alberta Health Services Addictions Help Line 1-866-332-2322

- For anyone with concerns about alcohol, drug, gambling or tobacco problems.

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 (up to age 20), text 686868 or live chat at www.kidshelphone.ca

Health Link : 811

Indigenous Hope for Wellness Help Line

- Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week; online chat at <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

Online Resources are available if you need advice on handling stressful situations or ways to talk to children.

- [Help in Tough Times](#) (AHS)
- [Talking with children about COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [COVID-19 information for young kids and students](#) (PDF, 122 KB)



Appendix B: Management of Symptomatic Individuals and Individuals Tested for COVID-19 ([23-09-2021](#))

Symptoms	COVID-19 Test Result:	Management of Individual:
Symptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND no fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.
	Negative	Stay home until symptoms resolve.
	Not tested	<p>Student: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of taste/smell: Isolate for a minimum for 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND afebrile for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.</p> <p>Adult: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste/smell or runny nose: Isolate for a minimum for 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND afebrile for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.</p> <p>Student: If other symptoms (chills, sore throat/painful swallowing, runny nose/congestion, feeling unwell/fatigued, nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, unexplained loss of appetite, muscle/joint aches, headache or conjunctivitis):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONE symptom: stay home, monitor for 24h. If improves, return when well enough to go (testing not necessary). • TWO symptoms OR ONE symptom that persists or worsens: Stay home until symptom(s) resolve (testing recommended but not required). <p>Adult: If other symptoms, stay home until symptoms resolve.</p>
Asymptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the collection date of the swab.
	Negative	No isolation required.