

Northern Gateway Public Schools

2021-22 Back to School Plan

COVID-19

August 24, 2021



Northern Gateway
Public Schools

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Message from the Superintendent

Parents and Families,

Northern Gateway Public Schools looks forward to welcoming back more than 4,500 students to classrooms this September. We know there is much anticipation and excitement for the new school year, as well as varying levels of concern when it comes to addressing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Our Back to School Plan has been developed in accordance with the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Education.

On August 13, the Government of Alberta announced further details about returning to school this year, and released its [Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools](#) and [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#). The Plan is based on Stage 3 (reopening) of Alberta's Open for Summer Plan that sees the lifting of all COVID-19 related restrictions.

NGPS will continue to follow and implement provincial health requirements and measures as required. Many measures will look the same as last year:

- [Daily health screening](#) for students, staff and visitors before coming to school
- Staying home when sick
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting in schools and on yellow buses
- [Masks](#) - as per Alberta Health Services' (AHS) directive, masks are required for all students (regardless of age or grade) while on a school bus. Masks are not currently required to be used at school
- Handwashing and sanitizing
- Vaccination clinics in schools (parental consent required for students under the age of 18.)
- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) where required

Health and safety measures will continue to be evaluated throughout the year in response to changing public health information.

As always, we remain committed to providing safe, caring and inspiring learning environments for our students and staff. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to safety, learning and cooperation. I know that, together, we will continue to work to keep one another safe.

Kevin Bird
Superintendent of Schools
Northern Gateway Public Schools

Principles

Northern Gateway Public Schools is committed to the following principles:

- All schools will adhere to the standards, guidelines and direction from the Chief Medical Officer for Health (CMOH) and Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- In collaboration with education partners, Northern Gateway Public Schools may develop additional health and safety requirements for all schools to ensure consistency across the division. These additions will enhance, not duplicate, CMOH and AHS requirements.
- Psychological safety measures and trauma-informed practice will be valued and implemented alongside physical health and safety measures.
- Effective and ongoing communication with employees, parents/caregivers, students, unions and community partners is an essential aspect of successfully implementing the measures identified in our 2021-22 Back to School Plan.

Ongoing Communication with NGPS families

We are committed to providing staff and families with updates as we receive new information and direction. Please continue to check [ngps.ca](https://www.ngps.ca), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages regularly.

Section 1 - What to expect in 2021-22

On August 13, The Government of Alberta announced a near normal return to the 2021-22 school year based on Stage 3 (reopening) of Alberta's Open for Summer Plan that sees the lifting of all COVID-19 related restrictions.

Contingency Scenarios

The Government of Alberta has planned two contingency scenarios in case COVID-19 impacts the education system:

[Scenario 1: In-school classes \(near normal with enhanced health measures\)](#)

[Scenario 2: At-home learning \(in-school classes are suspended/cancelled\)](#)

More information about provincial contingency scenarios is included in the Government of Alberta's [2021-2022 School Year Plan](#).

Parent Guide

To support families, the province has released a [Parents' Guide](#) for the 2021-22 school year.

Section 2 - Safety and well-being

NGPS is committed to providing safe and caring learning environments for our students and staff. We all have a role to play in following safety protocols set out by the province and the Division.

Our 2021-22 Back to School Plan focuses on familiar safety strategies that support a safe learning environment within our school communities:

Daily health screening for illness

Before coming to school each day, families must complete the COVID-19 [Alberta Health daily checklist](#) for students and children under 18 to determine whether they can attend school or if they need to stay home.

Staff must complete the [Alberta Health daily checklist for adults](#) before coming to work. Families and staff are not required to submit the checklist to the school. It is a tool to assess wellness.

Students, staff or visitors who feel ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19 cannot enter the school. Anyone who tests positive or has symptoms must follow Alberta's isolation requirements.

Families are reminded to contact the school office if your child is staying home due to illness.

Staying home when sick

Following provincial health protocols around illness is a key strategy to slow down or stop the spread of COVID-19. We all must do our part and stay home when we are sick.

Government requirements - symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19

I have symptoms and

a positive test result	<p>Isolate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For at least 10 days or until symptoms have improved, and • Until you have no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications whichever is longer.
a negative test result	Stay home until your symptoms are gone.
I am a student who has not been tested	<p>If you are a student and your symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of taste/smell, isolate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For at least 10 days or until symptoms have improved, and • Until you have no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications whichever is longer. <hr/> <p>A student may have other symptoms (such as chills, sore throat/painful swallowing, runny nose/congestion, nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, unexplained loss of appetite, muscle/joint aches, headache or conjunctivitis (pink eye)).</p> <p>If you have one of these other symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay home and monitor for 24 hours. If your symptom improves, return to school when you feel well enough. (Testing is not necessary). <p>If you have two symptoms or one symptom that persists or worsens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay home until symptom(s) are gone. (Testing is recommended.)
I am an adult who has not been tested	<p>If you are an adults and symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat or runny nose, isolate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for at least 10 days or until symptoms have improved, and • until you have no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications whichever is longer. <p>Adults who have other symptoms should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay home until symptoms are gone
<i>I do not have symptoms and</i>	
have a positive test result	Isolate for at least 10 days from the date that you were tested.
Have a negative test result	You do not need to isolate.

Chart: Edmonton Public Schools. Reference: *Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools*, [Appendix B: Management of Symptomatic Individuals and Individuals Tested for COVID-19](#).

Students with pre-existing conditions

Families should talk to their school about any pre-existing conditions their child has and any related symptoms. This helps school staff recognize the difference between these symptoms and symptoms that are a sign of illness.

Showing signs of illness while at school

If a student or staff member becomes ill while at school, they will need to leave school immediately or move to the school's sickroom.

When a student is sick, they will be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able to. School staff who supervise the student will also wear a mask and will:

- bring the student to the school sickroom
Contact parents or guardians to pick up their child immediately, and
- follow Division safety strategies around personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning and disinfecting the area and school sickroom.

If there is a case of COVID-19 at school

As the school year begins, the province has indicated that schools will not be informed about individual cases of COVID-19.

Staff and students may choose to notify a school about a positive COVID-19, but it is not required.

If we receive notification about a positive case from Alberta Health Services in a school, we will communicate with the school community.

Quarantine is not required for close contacts under current provincial direction. This means classes will not be required to quarantine if there is a case of COVID-19 at school. Individuals who test positive will be expected to quarantine based on the provincial requirements in place at that time.

If there is an outbreak of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19, at a school, NGPS will work with AHS to share information with the school community.

Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of schools and school buses

Schools and school buses will receive extra cleaning with increasing measures as necessary.

Masks

As per AHS' directive, masks are required on school buses for all students, regardless of age or grade.

Northern Gateway Public Schools will not be immediately applying restrictions beyond those put in place by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education. Students and staff will not be required to mask while in school. This could change as health and safety measures will continue to be evaluated throughout the year in response to changing public health information and in the event circumstances and required health measures for schools across the province, schools in a particular region, or individual schools and classrooms, change, based on provincial direction and the COVID-19 situation in Alberta.

Handwashing and sanitizing

Schools will promote and facilitate frequent and proper hand hygiene for all students, staff and visitors, including before and after activities i.e. before and after using shared equipment, eating/serving food, entering/leaving school/classroom.

Schools will provide hand sanitizer throughout the building to support these requirements. Families are also encouraged to send their children to school with personal hand sanitizer.

Cohorts

Cohorting is not required for the 2021-22 school year, but may be recommended temporarily to prevent the spread of infection if there is a respiratory illness outbreak at school.

Vaccination clinics in schools (parental consent required for students under the age of 18)

Immunizations will be available through temporary clinics in schools selected by AHS, for students in Grades 7 - 12 as well as for school staff. Students under 18 will not be vaccinated in schools without parent or guardian consent. Further information will be shared when it becomes available from AHS.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE is not required for all staff, but additional PPE is important in different scenarios and will be utilized as needed to support students with different needs.

Section 3 - What school will look like

The first day of school

The first day of school for most NGPS students is Wednesday, September 1. Some schools may choose to use a staggered start schedule. Please watch for information from your school on the school's website and social media pages.

Arriving and leaving school

Each school will develop procedures for arriving and leaving school to minimize contact and promote social distancing where possible. These procedures will be communicated on the school websites.

School staff will be outside to remind students of these requirements, and to help students line up and keep an appropriate distance from each other.

During extreme weather, such as severe cold or rain, schools will have a plan in place so students can enter the school early.

Adults bringing students to school will be asked to maintain a safe physical distance between themselves and others.

Parents and guardians of children who have complex needs and require support to enter the building should contact their school office. Staff will work with them to develop a plan that is safe for both students and staff.

Lockers

Each school is considering the most effective way for students to store their personal belongings. Further information is available from each school.

Student supplies and learning materials

Students will have their own personal supplies to use that are stored separately. Teachers will plan learning activities to reduce or minimize the need to share equipment, textbooks or materials. If items are shared, they must be cleaned and disinfected after use. Students will wash or sanitize their hands both before and after using the shared items.

Washrooms and water fountains

Schools will have safety conscious and developmentally appropriate procedures that are reflective of their school populations for the use of washrooms and water fountains.

Common areas

Schools will have measures in place to promote physical distancing in space where students often gather, such as foyers, learning commons or T-intersections in hallways. Measures will include:

- limiting the number of students allowed in certain areas at certain times
- requiring students to walk straight through some areas so they don't crowd together in groups
- Reminding to students to allow for physical distancing

Recess and playground equipment

Schools will develop procedures to reasonably minimize contacts during recess and lunch periods.

Open- or closed-campus school communities

Junior/Senior high schools will work with their school community to decide if students will be allowed to leave campus during lunch breaks. If students are permitted to leave the school building, they must:

- exit through their assigned door
- respect physical distancing and all other COVID-19 health protocols when off campus
- assess whether they have any symptoms of illness before they re-enter the school—students with newly developed symptoms will not be permitted to return to school
- re-enter the school through their assigned door

Additionally, high schools will need to determine if students may leave campus and return to the school building during a spare period. Schools will also need to identify a space or spaces in the school where students during spare periods can be accommodated while physical distancing.

Lunch

Students will store lunches with their other personal belongings. All students must wash/disinfect their hands before eating, and eat only their own food. Elementary students will remain in their cohort to eat lunch. Multiple cohorts will not gather together to eat.

Junior and senior high school students who stay at school at lunch will be assigned to an area of the school for lunch.

If the school is using a common lunch area, they will develop a plan for the space to be cleaned and disinfected after students use the space.

School cafeterias and canteens must follow Alberta Government's [COVID-19 health guidelines](#).

Food in schools

At this time,

- treats cannot be sent from home for birthdays or other special days;
- Events involving food require increased planning and permission from the Superintendent or designate
- schools can allow delivery service of food from food establishments, provided that such orders are pre-ordered and pre-arranged through school administration/designate (School Council/Parent Fundraising Council~Society is likely going to be the designate. This Council~Society must still abide by the Principal's guidelines.)

School nutrition programs

Schools that offer school nutrition programs will continue to follow the processes put in place for the 2020-21 school year.

Volunteers and visitors

NGPS looks forward to having visitors and volunteers back in schools. As we initially come back into school with health guidelines, schools will explore ways to safely bring volunteers, visitors and parents back into their buildings this year.

This will look different from school to school based on the unique circumstances of each school community. When visitors are invited back into schools, all individuals are required to:

- Make an appointment by contacting the school office by phone or email
- [Screen for illness](#)
- Sign in at the school's visitor log
- handwash/sanitize upon entering the building

NGPS staff entering school buildings

At this time, Division staff are permitted to enter school buildings as required. This includes substitute staff, facilities maintenance personnel, transportation personnel, delivery personnel, teaching and learning staff and Division Office staff. These staff will only enter the school if the [COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist \(for children and adults\)](#) indicates they are safe to do so and if they have no symptoms. They must also sign the school's COVID-19 visitor log.

Family and school communication

Families can stay in contact with their schools through email and over the phone. Families who need to go into the school must book an appointment in advance.

Family members attending the school for any reason will be asked to complete the school's visitor log and complete the [COVID-19 Alberta Health Daily Checklist \(for children and adults\)](#).

Community use of schools and joint use agreements

All community use of indoor school space is currently suspended - this is required to support the proper cleaning and disinfecting of the school facility and to limit access to the school by individuals who are not regular members of the school community.

All indoor joint use of schools for community members is currently suspended. School fields, tennis courts and ball diamonds will remain available for community use through the joint use agreement in the evenings and on weekends.

The Division will work with joint use partners on an ongoing basis to work toward safely reopening school spaces for community use.

School bus transportation

Students with COVID-19 symptoms or who are experiencing illness will not be permitted on the bus.

As mandated by the Alberta Government, all students are required to wear a mask while on a school bus.

- students will be assigned a seat on the bus
- there will be a protective zone between the driver and student passengers
- school buses will receive extra cleaning with increasing measures as necessary

Families are encouraged to consider getting their children to and from school if they are not comfortable with their child riding with other children on the yellow bus.

School council meetings

School council meetings may resume in person with social distancing, cleaning and sanitizing.

Social emotional supports

In supporting resilience within this environment, the existing wellness structures will continue to focus on shared leadership and Positive Behaviour Supports.

Shared leadership

Shared leadership across schools and sites is focused on creating the conditions for the following:

- **Collaboration:** student and staff engagement, school based collaboration, division based collaboration, parent engagement and outside partner collaboration
- **Assessment:** determine student mental health and well-being status. We are currently working with our community partners to review the process to ensure early identification for those in need of further support.
- **Continuum of Supports:** an inclusive learning environment where students can access integrated and/or specialized supports and services as required.

Positive behaviour supports

Positive Behaviour Supports is a well-rounded approach to support the mental health and wellness of students, staff and families. Positive Behaviour Supports include:

- A trauma informed lens focusing on voice and choice, predictability and consistency, and positive relationships
- Psychological First Aid, and the Traumatic Event Systems (TES) principles considered in addressing challenges during and following a challenging event, e.g., COVID-19
- [Guidelines for Re-Entry into the School Setting During the Pandemic](#) from North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response and,
- A focus on fostering the conditions that support mental health and wellness. The following resources may be of support for leaders in this regard:

[Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools](#)

[The Heart of Recovery: Creating Supportive School Environments Following a Natural Disaster](#)

The following resources contain evidence-based approaches that support mental health and wellness.

- [Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools](#)
- [Government of Alberta K–12 Instructional Supports](#)

- [Government of Alberta: Children's Mental Health](#)
- [Alberta Health Services: Information for Teachers](#)
- [Alberta Health Services: Healthy Together](#)
- [Mental Health Online Resources for Educators \(MORE\)](#)
- [Mental Health Literacy](#)
- [Mental Health Promotion and Illness Prevention: Self Care in Disaster Times and Beyond Toolkit](#)
- [Joint Consortium for School Health](#)
- [Schools Healthier Together](#)
- [Alberta COVID-19 Youth Mental Health Resource Hub](#)
- [Alberta Student Learning Hub Mental Health Supports for Parents, Guardians and Families](#)
- Alberta Education: [Positive Behaviour Supports](#)
- Alberta Education: [Trauma Informed Practices](#)
- [Métis Nation of Alberta COVID-19 Mental Health Information](#)
- [Alberta Community and Social Services](#)
- [Supporting Learning at Home \(Mental Health\)](#)
- [Resilience - Tipping the Balance Towards Good Health](#) (article): Alberta Family Wellness
- [Brains Journey to Resilience](#) (video): Alberta Family Wellness
- [Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource](#)
- [ATA Creating a Compassionate Classroom](#)
- [ASEBP: The Sandbox, a regular publication promotes a healthy school workplace](#)

COVID-19 signage on entrances

Appropriate School Procedures will be posted at each door.

COVID-19 visitor log

Division staff not regularly assigned to the school, authorized visitors and family members attending the school must fill out the school's COVID-19 visitor log to:

- confirm they are not ill and do not have COVID-19 symptoms
- provide their name
- indicate with whom they are meeting
- note the time they arrived at the school
- note the time they left the school
- provide a signature confirming that the information is true and accurate

Section 4 - Teaching and Learning

We look forward to welcoming students and staff back into our classrooms in September.

The first day of school

The first day of school for most NGPS students is September 1, 2021; however, some schools may choose to use a staggered start schedule where different grades start on different days. Families should watch for information from their schools via school websites and social media.

Online learning

Northern Gateway Public Schools will not be providing an online learning format; however, online learning options are available. Please see the [Online Learning Directory](#) and speak with your local school principal.

Home education

As per Alberta's [Education Act](#), Section 20(1), *a parent of a student may provide, at home or elsewhere, a home education program for the student...* For further information, please see the [Home Education Regulation, September 2019](#). Students who are registered in a home education program for the current school year must remain in that program for the entire school year.

Supporting students with special needs

Specific strategies related to COVID-19 will be added as required to meet the student's needs.

The dispensing of medication will follow *Administrative Procedure 714 Medical Assistance for Students* and any applicable COVID-19 guidelines.

Division contract service supports (occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and/or psychologists) will provide service following their professional association guidelines and will wear personal protective equipment as needed/required.

Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs)

Grade 6 and 9 provincial achievement tests will resume and participation is mandatory for all schools not piloting the new draft Kindergarten to Grade 6 curriculum

Diploma examinations

Grade 12 diploma exams are mandatory in the 2021-22 school year.

Diploma exams will be offered for every diploma exam course in November, January, April, June and August administrations.

Section 5: School based activities

There are no specific restrictions or requirements for school activities and services. However, masks are required on school buses. Schools may continue with activities providing there is consideration given to safety factors such as reducing contacts and social distancing. These activities may include:

- Field trips
- Music, singing, dancing, theatre
- Sports
- Visitors to the school
- Food services
- Student transportation
- Work experience
- Ceremonies
- Graduations

Section 6: Appendices

[Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)

[Government of Alberta 2021-22 School Year Plan](#)

[Government of Alberta Contingency Plans \(see page 14\)](#)

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

[2021-22 Parent Guide](#)

[CMOH Order 31-2021](#)