



Health and Seniors Care
Chief Provincial Public Health Officer
Population and Public Health Branch
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Education
Deputy Minister
Room 162, Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 0V8

September 22, 2021

To: Parents and caregivers

Re: Public health measures in schools

It has been almost 18 months since the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Manitoba. As a province, we have faced many challenges during that time. Having a vaccine approved and available for every Manitoban born in 2009 or earlier has fundamentally changed the context for the return to school. We share a common goal of supporting a safe return to school for students, but safety is not just about not catching COVID-19; it is about children being healthy in all areas of their lives.

In response to this evolving context, changes have been made to the way cases of COVID-19 are managed in schools that focus on keeping students in school to the greatest extent possible. Schools continue to take a layered approach to health and safety. We know that vaccines are effective at reducing disease transmission and reducing the chance that someone will require hospitalization or intensive care if they do become infected with COVID-19. We also know that masks help reduce the risk of transmission.

This year, when a case is identified in a classroom, public health officials will take both non-medical mask use and vaccination status of students and teachers into account when risk is assessed. Use of non-medical masks in the classroom may prevent students and staff from being required to self-isolate. Fully vaccinated individuals may be exempt from self-isolation requirements if identified as a close contact.

We have heard concerns that public health measures are not applicable in schools and we want to reinforce that school divisions and schools have an obligation to follow the direction of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and the Minister of Education. Public health measures, such as mask usage, screening for symptoms, isolation, and hand washing requirements, are not optional and are in place to protect the health and safety of students, school staff, and their families. Your continued cooperation with helping schools implement them is appreciated.

In addition, all unvaccinated staff, practicum students, and volunteers that are in direct contact with students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools are required to provide proof of a negative test completed within the past 48 hours. These designated individuals will have access to antigen-based rapid testing kits through their employers. Related guidance has been developed by the Manitoba School Boards Association, in partnership with school divisions, public health officials, and Manitoba Education.

For more information on cases associated with schools and current public health measures for schools in Manitoba, please visit the Manitoba COVID-19 website at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/schools/index.html.

Thank you for your efforts in following public health measures and supporting your school community in order to keep schools safe and open throughout this school year.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brent Roussin, MD, JD, MPH, FRCPC
Manitoba Chief Provincial Public Health Officer
Manitoba Health and Seniors Care



Dana Rudy
Deputy Minister
Manitoba Education

- c. Honourable Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health and Seniors Care
- Honourable Cliff Cullen, Minister of Education
- Karen Herd, Deputy Minister of Health and Seniors Care
- Christina Moody, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement and Inclusion
- Manitoba School Boards Association
- Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
- Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools