2021-22 MHPSD
Back-to-School Plan

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

Updated January 9, 2022

We are **MHPSDfamilySTRONG**

Contents

With the availability of vaccines, Alberta lifted many restrictions and have eliminated many supports for schools. When school resumes on 10 January 2022 we will not have access to the data that once supported our decision-making. Nor will those requiring mandatory isolation be communicated to school divisions. Now, more than ever, we are "on our own".

The province has given individual school authorities the ability to put additional health measures in place, such as physical distancing, cohorts and masking. Our strategy follows provincial requirements and may exceed those requirements where we feel extra precautions are necessary to reduce risk in our school communities. In circumstances where our strategy exceeds provincial requirements, schools will adhere to the guidelines in this document.- On almost every occasion where the term "suggested" or "strongly suggested" appears in Alberta Education's plan, we have adopted the recommendation as a local mandate. This aligns with the principles we have applied since the start of the pandemic.

We will continue to monitor and update our plan throughout the year, based on provincial direction and the COVID-19 situation in Alberta and our community.

PROTECTING HEALTH AND SAFETY

VACCINATION
Vaccines provide a significant level of protection against severe outcomes from COVID-19. All Albertans aged 5 and older are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. The province does not require proof of vaccination to attend school in Alberta, however vaccination is an important way that students and staff can keep each other safe.

POLICY 546
Effective November 30, 2021, Policy 546: COVID-19 Harm Reduction Policy requires that all staff be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide proof of a negative rapid-test taken within 72 hours.

DAILY HEALTH SCREENING
Staff must complete the Alberta Health daily checklist for adults before coming to work. Staff are not required to submit the checklist to the school.

SICKNESS WHILE ONSITE
Staff that have symptoms of COVID-19 cannot enter the school. Staff who become ill while at work must notify their supervisor and immediately put on a mask and go home, and must follow Alberta's isolation requirements.

IF THERE IS A CASE OF COVID-19 AT SCHOOL
AHS is no longer monitoring positive COVID-19 cases in schools. Individuals who test positive are expected to isolate based on Alberta's isolation requirements. Quarantine is not required for close contacts and classes will not be required to quarantine if there is a case of COVID-19 at school.

Staff and students may choose to notify a school about a positive COVID-19 test but are not required to.

Schools will continue to report absence rates due to illness of 10 per cent or higher to Alberta Health Services. The Division will work with Alberta Health Services if there is an outbreak of any notifiable illness, including COVID-19.

COHORTS
A cohort is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school day. Division schools will group Kindergarten to Grade 6 students together in cohorts as a safety strategy. Cohorting should be maintained during activities outside the classroom, such as recess and lunch breaks. Grade 7 – 12 students are not cohorted.

Staff are NOT cohorted. Staff are only in a cohort with each other when it is required for operational purposes (i.e., a teacher and a teacher's assistant who work with exclusively with the same classroom cohort).

MASKS
All staff and students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 will be required to wear a mask while in school.

CMOH Order 55-2021 requires that masks are worn at all times while in common spaces in a school building. The order "strongly encourages" greater attention to masking as a strategy. Therefore, MHPSD has determined that masks must be properly worn in all indoor settings except for personal spaces (such as private offices), where a physical barrier is in place.

Masks may be removed during physical education, when eating, and when outside. If the space allows for distance, masks may be removed during performance classes (band, music, etc.). Teachers whose students need to see their teachers' and peers' mouths to support their learning, may permit unmasking for limited periods of time and with the implementation of other mitigation strategies. (face shields, distancing, plexiglass barriers). For clarity, except for the instances noted above, all who enter schools are to wear a properly fitted mask at all times.

Staff should continue to physically distance as much as possible even when wearing a mask. A face shield is not a substitute for a face mask. A mask must still be worn while wearing a face shield.

Anyone unable to wear a mask must inform the school principal/manager as soon as possible so that feasible alternative accommodations or arrangements can be considered. All exemptions require a completed medical certificate from an authorized health professional (physician or psychologist).

Note: Mask exemption requests for staff must be addressed in consultation with HR, Occupational Health and Safety.

Note: All staff will be required to wear a mask if they become symptomatic at school.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING
Schools will continue to promote physical distancing including in classrooms, hallways, washrooms, and common areas. This may include:

- removing and rearranging seating in common areas
- staggering the times that classes start and end to prevent crowded hallways

- assigning specific doors to students for entry and exit
- managing hallways to promote the flow of foot traffic and physical distancing

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Daily cleaning and disinfecting practices continue to follow AHS guidelines using Health Canada approved products. Teachers should remove excess furniture or items that cannot be cleaned easily on a regular basis and plan learning activities that reduce or minimize the need to share equipment, textbooks or materials.

Enhanced cleaning measures include:

- more frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces such as water fountains and door handles
- more frequent cleaning and disinfecting throughout the school, with specific attention to washrooms, shared spaces, and high-traffic areas

STAFF ROOMS/WORKROOM

Staff will practice physical distancing and appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene while utilizing these spaces. Staff are expected to mask at all times in staff rooms, work room and shared spaces, except when actively eating and drinking. For clarity, once staff have eaten, they are to don their mask even if they intend to stay and visit.

STAFF MEETINGS, TRAINING AND EVENTS

Staff events must be virtual whenever possible. Staff meeting in person are expected to mask and distance. Food may be provided but must be commercially prepared and single serving. Potlucks and buffet style are not permitted.

STAFF ABSENCES RELATED TO COVID-19

Staff experiencing any symptom(s) of COVID-19 are required to follow Alberta Health requirements. Please refer to the Staff COVID-19 Flowchart if you are unsure about whether you should attend work.

If you are unable to attend work because you either a) have one or more of the COVID-19 symptoms, or b) have a confirmed case of COVID-19, you are required to log your absence into Atrieve using the **COVID-19 leave code**. When you enter this code, you have the option to write in the comments either, "1. Confirmed COVID-19" or "2. COVID-19 Symptoms" (see picture below). You are *not required* to disclose a confirmed case of COVID-19. However, should you choose to do so, your personal information and privacy will be protected. This information will be used as part of our data reporting to inform staff and families of the amount of active COVID-19 cases present in schools. ***No confidential or identifying information will be shared.***

Start Date:	15-Sep-2021	**End Date:**	15-Sep-2021
Absence Code:	02Ab Covid-19	**Status:**	Requested

Absence And Dispatch Status Info

Not yet submitted.

Details

Description of Leave Type:	Employees can use this leave code for themselves for 1 of the 2 reasons: 1. Confirmed COVID-19 2. COVID-19 Symptoms Employees must follow all AHS direction for quarantine. This leave code is only if the employee has one of the two above and not a member of their family. Please list your reason in comments area.
Special Notes To Applicant:	Please add 1 or 2 from the list above in the comment section.

Notes

Application Comment

Please note: logging your absence as "sick leave" indicates that your leave is **not related** to COVID-19 and therefore, any provision regarding the requirement to provide medical documentation will apply, as per your applicable Collective Agreement or Terms and Conditions of Employment contract.

Employer paid sick leave can be accessed for COVID-19 related absences, as available per the Collective Agreement or Terms of Employment governing the employee's position. If paid sick leave is not available, staff can access job protected, unpaid leave. Staff may be required to provide medical documentation to Human Resources, if requested.

Staff who feel well enough to work from home during their isolation period are required to obtain approval from **both** their Administrator/Supervisor and Human Resources before doing so.

STAFF WITH FAMILY CARE OR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO COVID-19

Staff with family care or personal responsibilities related to COVID-19, who are unable to enter the workplace due to conflicting responsibilities, must contact Human Resources to inform them of their circumstances. Staff *may* be able to access limited paid leave as per their Collective Agreement or Terms and Conditions of Employment contract.

Staff who require extended leave, or who do not have any paid leave available as per their Collective Agreement or Terms and Conditions of Employment contract, will be able to access job protected leave in accordance with the Alberta Employment Standards Code: Personal and Family Responsibility leave. If a staff member is granted a leave of absence for this reason, it would be considered a job-protected leave without pay and is limited to their existing employment contract end date.

Human Resources may require documentation to verify the need to access Personal and Family Responsibility leave as outlined in Alberta Employment Standards.

Staff who must remain at home because a dependent living in their household has COVID-19 can access up to 10 days to care for dependent. To access this COVID-19 assistance the employee will have to first utilize their two days under article 18.02(9) and are entitled to access an additional 8 days for a total of 10 to provide care for their dependent. This is a limit of 8 days for this school year. Staff no longer have to provide proof of a positive COVID test for their dependent. For the remaining up to 8 days please use the code Dependent Child has COVID. If you have any questions, please either email rita.olsen@sd76.ab.ca or call at 403-529-6734.

WELLNESS SUPPORT

COVID-19 can have a significant impact on social and mental health. Please remember, if you or your family members are struggling to cope, reach out to the Employee Family Assistance Program offered through Homewood Health for free and confidential support at 1-800-663-1142 (French speakers may call 1-866-398-9505) or online at www.homeweb.ca. Or visit our new It Takes a Village webpage for a range of mental health resources and community supports.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program or other supports, please contact the division Health, Wellness, and Attendance Advisor – Sarah Scahill RN BN – at 403 528 6723 or sarah.scahill@sd76.ab.ca