

BLACK GOLD SCHOOL DIVISION

Alberta Public Health Emergency

COVID-19 Temporary Public Health Measures

2021-2022

Public Health Emergency Interim Plan

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Where We Are

Alberta has declared a state of public health emergency. COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rise, largely in unvaccinated Albertans. New measures to protect the health care system, stop the spread, and increase vaccination rates come into effect starting September 16.

All students, staff, teachers, and visitors are required to follow health measures mandated by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and/or measures implemented by an AHS Zone Medical Officer of Health.

Parents/guardians play a role in the safety of students and staff as they support actions in the home, such as keeping children home when sick and practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, that ultimately keep other children, students and staff safe.

CMOH will release updated health orders in the next two weeks. We will update this plan as needed based upon updated information. Parents will be notified whenever this plan is updated.

Mandatory Health Measures

The majority of students in Black Gold are attending in person learning. To reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses, schools will incorporate recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health that support good health practices. All students, staff, parents, and visitors should practice good hand hygiene and stay home when sick.

To reduce the risk to those who cannot get the vaccine yet, everyone should take precautions that make sense for them.

Masks

Non-medical face mask use is mandatory in school for students in Grades 4 - 12 students and for all staff. All visitors, including parents, must wear a mask when entering a school. For students in a combined Grade 3 and 4 classes, all students in the class are required to wear masks.

Masks are mandatory for all students and staff on school buses.

AHS guidelines strike a balance between safety, mental health and educational needs to keep schools open. AHS has stated that students and staff can remove their masks in classrooms when students are seated, facing the front in rows and working independently. During activities that require face to face close proximity between students or between students and staff, masks are to be worn. If there is a plexiglass divider between them, masks may be removed. Should a student need a mask break, teachers will make arrangements for this. Masks are not required outside or while participating in a physical fitness activity or performance activity. Masking requirements are in place for students and coaches who are off the fields of play for both indoor school sports and extracurricular activities.

All students in Grades 4 - 12 as well as all staff are required to wear face masks in all shared and common areas such as hallways and on buses. When non-medical face masks are used, hands should

be cleaned before and after putting it on and taking it off. Avoid touching the mask once it is on. Masks should be changed after they become wet or soiled.

It is **strongly recommended** that students in **Kindergarten - Grade 3 wear a mask** when physical distancing is not possible. Please note that **Kindergarten - Grade 3 students are required to wear masks on buses.**

"Hinshaw also said she thinks it's "very reasonable" to have kids wearing masks in schools.

She said she believes in a strong body of evidence that suggests regular mask use is an important factor in COVID control..."

CBC News from September 14, 2021

When selecting a mask, choose a fabric or cloth that can withstand frequent cycles through washing and drying machines. It should have multiple layers of fabric and fit securely against your face. If you are making a mask, use at least 3 layers; 2 layers should be tightly woven fabric, such as cotton or linen and the middle layer should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene. It is recommended that you use different fabrics or colours for each side of the mask. This helps you to know which side faces your mouth and which side faces out.

Individuals who are unable to wear a mask will require a medical note in alignment with Alberta Health CMOH Order 40-2021. In the specific settings where a mask is required, anyone unable to wear a mask due to an approved medical condition (see [Appendix A to Record of Decision - CMOH Order 22-2021](#)) will require a [medical note for mask exception](#) from an authorized health professional. AHS has provided the following list of qualifying health conditions:

- Sensory processing disorders
- Developmental delay
- Cognitive impairment
- Mental illness including:
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Psychotic disorders
 - Dissociative identity disorders
 - Depressive disorders
- Facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery
- Contact dermatitis or allergic reactions to mask components
- Clinically significant acute respiratory distress

Cohorting

All elementary schools (Kindergarten to Grade 6) will implement cohorting of students for both indoor and outdoor activities. Schools will minimize the expansion of cohorts as much as possible. When practical, individual classes will be in cohorts and as necessary, cohorts may consist of more than one class. K - Grade 6 teachers may teach more than one cohort, and when practical, teachers will move

between classrooms. When small group intensive support is needed for educational purposes, social distancing will be encouraged.

In addition to masking requirements, students, staff and visitors are encouraged to maintain 2 metres physical distancing as much as possible both inside and outside of the classroom. Within the school this may include environmental controls to avoid crowding, and limiting occupancy to support physical distancing. Where physical distancing is not possible (on the bus, in classrooms and when participating in some sports), extra emphasis will be placed on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and staying home when sick.

There is no cohorting for Grades 7 to 12 students; however, physical distancing will be encouraged where possible.

Physical Activity in Schools

Students are not required to mask or maintain two-metre physical distancing during a physical activity such as physical education. When not physically active (receiving instruction, watching other students, etc.), students and staff should wear non-medical masks; this is mandatory for Grades 4 - 12 and strongly recommended for Kindergarten to Grade 6).

There are no restrictions on outdoor activities and indoor sports/performance/recreation/special interests are permitted with requirements for two-metre physical distancing, where possible.

Extracurricular Activities

Kindergarten - Grade 6

All elementary schools will implement cohorting for both indoor and outdoor activities. As a result, all elementary extracurricular activities, indoors and outdoors, are cancelled.

When considering field trips, Kindergarten - Grade 6 classes must remain in their cohort and schools will work through all safety protocols with the host venue. As always, parents can choose whether their child participates in school field trips. No overnight field trips will occur at this time.

Grades 7 - 12

Indoor extracurricular activities are permitted for Grade 7 - 12, with requirements for two-metre physical distancing and masking where possible, and symptom screening for participants. Students are not required to mask or maintain physical distancing during a physical activity, such as a team sport; while not on the court of play, masking is required.

For operational effectiveness and the safety of students, only participants and coaching staff are permitted to attend Grades 7 - 12 indoor sporting events.

When considering field trips for Grades 7 - 12, schools will work through all safety protocols with the host venue. As always, parents can choose whether their child participates in school field trips. No overnight field trips will occur at this time.

Further guidance with additional details will be provided by Alberta Health shortly and this plan will be updated as needed.

Assemblies and Large Gatherings

Schools will continue to encourage physical distancing. Assemblies and large group gatherings of students and/or staff will not occur at this time in all schools.

Volunteers/Visitors

All visitors, including parents, must wear a mask when entering a school. Only volunteers/visitors approved by the principal are permitted in schools. All volunteers and visitors must complete the Alberta Daily Health Checklist, stay home when sick and follow isolation requirements from AHS.

Food in School

Potluck events, and barbecues, are postponed at this time. Treats cannot be sent from home for birthdays or other special days. School hot lunch days must provide **individually packaged food from a commercial vendor or restaurant only.**

School vending machines may open; hand sanitizer and hand washing/sanitizing reminder signs must be visible nearby. All students must wash or sanitize their hands before using a vending machine.

Schools that offer school nutrition programs will continue to follow the processes put in place during the 2020-2021 school year.

All students must wash or sanitize their hands before eating and eat only their own food. At this time, microwaves will not be available to students. Food delivery services (such as pizza delivery or Skip the Dishes) are not permitted in the schools.

Transportation

Children/students should not board the school bus if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Transportation of children and students must follow all public health measures and additional cleaning of school buses will take place.

Masking is mandatory for all students and staff on school buses. Anyone unable to wear a mask due to an approved medical condition (see [Appendix A to Record of Decision - CMOH Order 22-2021](#)) will require a [medical note for mask exception](#) from an authorized health professional.

Students and staff should only carpool with people from the same household. If absolutely necessary to include more than one household, limit the number of people in the vehicle to maintain as much physical distance as possible and ensure everyone is wearing a mask.

Vaccines

The decision to be vaccinated is a personal choice. According to the *Personal Information Protection Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, staff must respect the health privacy of students, including their vaccination status. Currently, Albertans born in 2009 or before are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine and by fall 2021 it is expected that the majority of individuals in this age group will have had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated with two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

To promote a safe school year, AHS and Alberta Education strongly encourage all eligible Albertans, including students, staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers to get vaccinated with both doses before the school year begins, or as soon as possible. More information about the COVID-19 vaccine program can be found [here](#).

Vaccines Available in Schools

To increase accessibility to COVID-19 vaccines, AHS will make immunizations available through temporary clinics in some schools for students in grades 7 to 12, as well as for teachers and staff, in September. Students, teachers, and staff can receive whichever dose they are eligible for at these temporary school vaccination clinics. Black Gold will work with Alberta Health Services to bring these clinics to a school in your community.

No vaccines can be given to students without parent or guardian consent. Consent forms will be available from the AHS website to download prior to the start of temporary clinics in schools.

Mandatory Vaccines for Staff, On-Site Partners, Contractors, and Volunteers

Beginning **November 15, 2021**, all employees, contractors, on-site partners, and volunteers who enter Black Gold buildings and have direct contact with employees and/or Division students are required to be **fully immunized**, unless there is an exemption on the basis of a protected legal ground or the individual participates in regular rapid testing to verify that they are COVID-19 negative.

This vaccination requirement **DOES NOT APPLY TO STUDENTS**. Currently, children under 12 years are still not eligible for vaccination and there is no provincial legislation that requires K-12 students to have specific vaccinations. Every child in Alberta is entitled to have access to an education program as per the Education Act. We cannot inquire as to a student's vaccination status, nor will we discriminate against any who willingly declare whether or not they are fully vaccinated or those who choose not to declare.

This vaccine mandate **DOES NOT APPLY to parents and guardians who are picking up or dropping their children off in a Black Gold building**. Parents and guardians play an important role in their children's education and the partnership that staff have with parents are vital to the overall success of our students.

Beginning November 15, 2021, **all employees who are not fully vaccinated**, or will not disclose their vaccination status will be required to take a rapid test within 72 hours of every scheduled workday or shift, outside of work hours, to confirm they are COVID-19 negative. COVID-19 rapid tests must be administered by an approved AHS provider no more than 72 hours before attending work and there must be a minimum of 48 hours between tests. The Division will reimburse employees for rapid testing until December 23, 2021.

After December 23, **employees who are not fully vaccinated** or will not declare their vaccination status must continue to provide a negative rapid test every 72 hours at their own expense.

As of November 15, 2021, **on-site partners, contractors and volunteers** in any Division building who have direct contact with employees and/or Division students (within two metres) for 15 minutes or more are required to provide proof that they are fully vaccinated or proof of a negative rapid test. The costs of all testing for non-employees shall be paid by the individual required to produce the test results.

If any individual receives a positive rapid test result, it is considered a preliminary or presumptive positive and the employee must comply with AHS requirements:

- Seek confirmation through an AHS approved lab-based PCR test within 48 hours; and
- Immediately isolate until the AHS approved lab-based test results are confirmed negative.
- Follow AHS guidelines if COVID-19 PCR is positive or provide proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test, as soon as it is received, prior to attending at any Division property.

Good Public Health Practices

Best practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission and other respiratory illnesses are strongly encouraged, including promoting and facilitating hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and staying home when sick.

- Stay home when sick
- Use good respiratory hygiene
- Use good hand hygiene

Cleaning and Air Flow

Black Gold schools will continue with enhanced cleaning protocols with continued emphasis on high-touch areas. Students will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after using shared equipment.

HVAC systems in all Black Gold schools will continue to be maintained to provincial standards. Windows will be open to bring in fresh air when practical.

Stay Home When Sick

Before leaving home, all staff, students, and visitors should assess whether they feel well enough to attend school by using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#). If anyone is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they must not attend school but stay home and fill out the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to determine if they should be tested, and where to access testing.

Students must stay home and isolate for 10 days if they have one of the following COVID-19 symptoms; fever, cough, shortness of breath, or loss of sense of smell or taste. They can return to school before the 10 days are up if they have a negative COVID-19 test result **and** they are feeling better.

Alberta Health Daily Checklist was recently updated by the CMOH. Dr. Hinshaw recommended that any **unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals (including children under 12) should stay home for 14 days when a person who lives in the same house as them tests positive for COVID**. Staying home for 14 days is strongly recommended but not mandated. She acknowledged that this may be an issue for school aged children under 12 as they are not able to get vaccinated. If a member of your household tests positive for COVID-19, anyone who is not protected with 2 doses of vaccine in your household should quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure. ***Dr. Hinshaw indicated that this recommendation only applies for household contacts and not school based (e.g. classmates) or workplace exposures/close contacts.***

Responding to Illness

If students develops symptoms at home:

- Students/children must not enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- The student/child must stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g. call Health Link 811, or their primary care practitioner or, if needed, 911 for emergency response) and fill out the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to determine if they should be tested.

If a student develops symptoms at school:

- The child/student will be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able.
- The child/student will be isolated in a separate room. If a separate room is not available, the child/student must be kept at least two metres away from other children/students.
- The child/student's parent/guardian will be notified to pick up the student immediately.
- If the child/student requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child/student until the parent is able to pick up the child/student. The student and staff should wear masks. Interactions that may result in contact with the student's respiratory secretions should be avoided. If close contact is required, the staff member should also use a face shield or eye protection.
- Staff/students must perform hand hygiene before donning a mask, before and after removing the mask, and before and after touching any items used by the child/student.

Positive Cases of COVID-19

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, they are required to isolate according to the government guidelines for symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19:

Symptoms	COVID-19 Test Results	Management of the Individual
Symptomatic (Person has symptoms of COVID-19)	Positive test result	Isolate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a minimum of 10 days or until symptoms have improved, AND until there is no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications <i>whichever is longer.</i>
	Negative test result	Stay home until symptoms are gone
	Student who has not been tested	Student: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, or loss of sense of taste/smell Isolate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a minimum of 10 days or until symptoms have improved, AND until there is no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications <i>whichever is longer.</i> If a student has 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): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ONE symptom: stay home and monitor for 24 hours. If symptoms improve, return to school when well enough to go (testing is not necessary). TWO symptoms OR ONE symptom that persists or worsens: stay home until symptom(s) resolve (testing is recommended)
	Adult who has not been tested	Adult: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or runny nose Isolate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for a minimum of 10 days or until symptoms have improved, AND until there is no fever for 24 hours, without using fever-reducing medications <i>whichever is longer.</i> If an adult has other symptoms, stay home until symptoms resolve.
Asymptomatic (does not have any symptoms of COVID-19)	Positive test result	Isolate for at least 10 days from the date of the test (when the sample was collected)
	Negative test result	No Isolation required

Contact Tracing

Beginning October 12, 2021, AHS will notify schools when a student or staff member has tested positive COVID-19 and was infectious while at school. Schools will determine in-school close contacts and if a child is identified as a close contact in-school, parents/guardians will receive a notification letter with information.

School administrators will:

- inform the parents/guardians of students when they are a close contact to a person with COVID-19 who was infectious at school.

If you are told that your child is a close contact at school, at home, or in the community, please monitor them for symptoms. If they feel unwell, they must stay home and fill out the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to determine if they should be tested and where to access testing.

Outbreaks of COVID-19 in Schools

Public reporting of COVID-19 cases in schools will resume on October 6, with Alberta Health identifying online [each school with at least 2 COVID-19 cases](#). AHS has established three categories of COVID-19 cases that were infectious while at school within a 14 day period:

1. Alert: 2 to 4 cases
2. Alert: 5 to 9 cases
3. Outbreak: 10 or more cases

The outbreak investigation is considered over when there have been no new confirmed cases in the school for 28 days.

Alberta Health Services will continue to support schools to manage COVID-19 outbreaks. A medical officer of health or designate has the authority under the Public Health Act to recommend additional public health measures.

In addition, for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12, if three or more COVID-19 cases are identified in one class within a five day period the entire class (all students) will shift to online or at-home learning for 10 calendar days.

Optional at Home Rapid Testing for Families

Starting in late-October, AHS will provide optional rapid testing kits for Kindergarten to Grade 6 schools, starting first with schools that are experiencing an outbreak status.

The rapid testing program is voluntary. If they choose, families will be provided with rapid testing kits to test twice per week for four weeks. These tests are for those individuals that are asymptomatic and are to be done at home. Rapid tests are a more effective way to slow the spread of COVID-19 in areas where there are more COVID-19 cases. **Symptomatic children need to be tested at an AHS assessment centre and should not use the rapid tests.**

AHS has stated that the program will begin pending test kit availability and will continue until Health Canada completes its review of the submission for approval to use COVID-19 vaccine for children under 12. More information will be shared once details of the program are finalized.

High Rates of Absenteeism

If there is a school-wide absence rate of 10% or higher due to illness, or if an unusual number of individuals have similar symptoms, the school will report this to AHS. AHS may declare an outbreak of a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness and recommend additional measures to reduce ongoing transmission.

Provincial Exams

Alberta Education has mandated that Diploma exams and Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) will resume as normal practice.

Diploma exams will be mandatory in the 2021-2022 school year and will constitute 30 percent of a student's final diploma course mark.

Administration of Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT) will resume as per normal practice and be administered in all subjects: English Language Arts, French Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies; including Knowledge and Employability courses.

Mental Health and Wellness

Black Gold School Division recognizes that some responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the closure of schools to in-person learning and cancellation of extra-curricular events, led to a deterioration in mental health and wellbeing of children and youth. We know that student mental health and wellness are very important for academic and personal success. Families and schools both play a role in supporting positive mental health.

Black Gold's [Mental Health at Home](#) site has a number of strategies and resources to support positive mental health for our students. Parents/guardians and students who are concerned about the well-being of a student can contact their school or access a number of community resources.

- [211 Alberta](#): Phone 211
 - An initial call to 211 is a great first step in navigating which resource or helpline may be best for you.
 - This is a helpline and online database of Alberta's community and social services and is answered and updated by highly-trained specialists.
- [Distress Line \(CMHA\) Edmonton Region](#):
 - Toll free Northern Alberta: 1-800-232-7288
 - Crisis 24 hours Edmonton: 780-482-HELP (4357)
- [Mental Health Helpline](#): Phone: 1-877-303-2642

- This toll-free helpline provides confidential and anonymous services, crisis intervention, information about mental health services and referrals to other agencies.
- Mental Health Help Line (français): Phone: 1-800-567-9699
 - Same services as above
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
 - www.Kidshelphone.ca
 - Text CONNECT to 686868
- Kids Help line (français):
 - www.jeunessejecoute.ca
- Health Link: Phone: 811
- Alberta Health Services
 - [Help in Tough Times](#) offers mental health resources.
 - Healthy Together offers tips for staying healthy, active and safe.
- The federal First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310
 - 24-hour availability, 7 days a week, or chat online at Hope for Wellness
- [Crisis Text Line](#) Alberta (available 24/7)
 - text CONNECT to 741741
- [Crisis Services Canada Suicide Prevention Service](#): 1-833-456-4566
- [Child Advocacy Centres of Alberta](#)
 - Offers resources to help recognize signs of child abuse and support victims of abuse.

Family Choice of Learning

Black Gold continues to offer both In-School Learning and Distance Learning for the first half of the school year. Our goal is to ensure all students receive a high-quality education, no matter which option they choose. As the deadline to change the choice of learning was August 21, 2021, *students can no longer move from in school classes to distance learning for semester one.*

In December, parents/guardians will have the opportunity to change their child’s choice of learning for semester two.

Students participating in our Distance Learning program remain enrolled at their community school. Distance learning students will be able to participate in school activities such as extracurricular activities, work experience, ceremonies and celebrations.

Contingency Plans

In consultation with AHS and Alberta Education, we have developed robust contingency plans in the event that there is a significant change in the COVID-19 situation. Highlights of these plans are given below.

If a school is experiencing an outbreak, one or more outbreak measures may be implemented. Examples of these outbreak measures include; active health screening with questionnaires, increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfection, maintaining classroom cohorts, mask recommendations,

and/or limiting extra-curricular activities. Localized rapid testing may be available for emergent situations that arise. If there is a resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic that impacts the Division, depending on the specific situation, and in consultation with AHS and Alberta Education, one of the following two scenarios may be implemented.

Scenario 1: In-school classes (enhanced health measures)

If required, a portion of a school (individual class or grade) or an entire school may be temporarily moved to at-home/online learning due to operational reasons such as staffing issues and will take into account any health measures that are in place. Contact tracing and outbreak management will follow all recommendations made by AHS and Alberta Education.

Scenario 2: At-home Learning (in-school classes are suspended)

If there is significant change in the provincial or regional COVID-19 situation, AHS and Alberta Education may mandate at-home learning for all students. If this does occur, Black Gold will work with families, as we have in the past, to ensure that student needs are met and learning continues.

Next Steps

Implementation of this Plan is subject to change with direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Alberta Education will continue to engage with education partners as part of this process. The Division will continue to update this plan based upon the direction of Alberta Health Services and recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Parents will be notified whenever this plan is updated.

References:

[2021 School Year Plan](#) - Alberta Education

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

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

[Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) - Alberta Health

[AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) - Alberta Health

[Parents' Guide 2021-2022 School Year](#) - Government of Alberta

[CMOH Order 42-2021](#) - Chief Medical Officer of Health

[CMOH Order 22-2021](#) - Chief Medical Officer of Health

[Medical note for mask exception](#) - Alberta Health

[AP 166 Appendix B- COVID-19 Vaccination](#) for Employees - Black Gold School Division