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# Summary of School Re-Opening Plans in Canadian Provinces & Territories; International Plans[[1]](#footnote-1)

## August 27 2020

# **Summary**

* What is new since last update: In-school COVID-19 testing
* Reopening models affirm current medical and public health findings that children, especially younger children, seem to be less likely to either acquire or transmit COVID-19.2
* Current public health and mental health findings advocate for a return to school for children, partly to offset the strain on students and families that the lockdown has created.
* Most reopening models have 3 scenarios developed: full return to school for all students; partial return/blended return for all students/older students; complete closure of schools with return to remote learning.
* Return to school practices include, at minimum, physical distancing procedures, increased hand-washing for students and staff, increased sanitization procedures; measures to control risk when student/staff reports symptoms. The latest requirements in most school districts include wearing of non-medical masks for students and staff in common areas.

# Summary of Models of School Re-Opening Nationally and Globally

* There is a lack of scientific consensus about the impact of school closures and re-openings on community transmission of SARS-CoV-2. There is considerable concern about the indirect effect of school closures on students and parents.
* Most models of school re-opening involve increasing physical distance between students and keeping students in defined groups with limited interaction between groups to reduce the potential for wide-scale transmission within schools.
* Changes to models in late August do not support reduced class sizes.
* Internationally, countries who reopened schools in the spring used staggered start and break times and/or alternate shifts.
* Nationally, many provinces and territories reopening schools in late August-September are not using staggered times or shifts.
* A number of countries re-opened schools in the spring only for younger or older students in order to accommodate the increase in resources (classroom space, teachers, etc.) required for smaller class sizes. More countries have re-opened only for younger students than have re-opened only for older students.
* In a number of countries, face masks are required for students and/or staff in schools, with variability of the lower age limit for face mask requirements. However, some countries are not using face masks as a part of their re-opening model.
* In Canadian provinces and territories, use of masks is encouraged when physical distancing is not possible; recommended in many jurisdictions for staff; required in Ontario and Alberta for staff and students Grades 4-12; required in New Brunswick Grades 6-12 outside class; recommended in Prince Edward Island staff and students Grades 7-12; required in Newfoundland and Labrador Grades 7-12 outside of classrooms; required in British Columbia in middle and secondary school outside of classroom.
* August 7 2020 guidelines released by the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends use of non-medical masks in school settings for children aged 10 and over.
* Systematic school-based testing for SARS-CoV-2 virus or antibodies is being done on a small scale in a limited number of settings internationally; this approach is not widely implemented at this time.
* In-school testing for COVID-19 is being introduced in some jurisdictions, as of late August:
* A [statement](https://www.sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-School-Reopening-SickKids.pdf) on return to school by an Ontario experts’ group led by Toronto Sick Kids’ Hospital recommends that onsite temperature and pulse oximeter checks are not recommended: students don’t often present with fever or hypoxia.
* In the Sick Kids’ statement, it is suggested that physical distancing measures of 1 metre or 3 feet might be more practical for elementary students than the standard 2 metres (6 feet) and may be almost as beneficial.

# Summary of School Re-opening Models by Province/Territory, by Country[[2]](#footnote-2)

| **Province / Territory** | **Current Status** | **Date of closing** | **Date of re-opening** | **Flex-ed:2 younger students** | **Flex-ed: older students** | **Max class size** | **Alternate shifts** | **Alternate days** | **Facemasks required** | **Reduced class size** | **Physical distancing** | **Increased handwashing** | **Temperature checks** | **Viral or antibody testing** | **Contact tracing** | **Impact on transmission** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| British Columbia | Stage 2 | ~March 17 | June 1  [Sept 10](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school) | • | • | ?  ? | Y  N | Y  HSS | N  common areas | Y | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? | ? |
| Alberta\* | Closed | ~March 17 | ~ [Sept 8](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2020-21-school-re-entry-plan) | • | • | ? | Y/N | N | G4-12 | ? | Y | Y | ? | ? | If cases |  |
| Saskatchewan\* | Closed | ~March 17 | [~ Sept 1](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2020/august/04/safe-school-plan) | Y | Y | N | Lunch, recess | Poss | Common areas | ? | Y | Y | ? | Y | Y | School-Public Health Collab. |
| Manitoba\* | Closed | March 23 | [Sept 8](https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=49065) | • | • | ? | Lunch, recess | Poss for G9-12 | G5-12 buses, common areas bu | Poss | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? |  |
| Ontario\* | Closed | ~March 17 | ~ [Sept 8](http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/7010464/Technical-Briefing-Deck-ENGLISH-FINAL.pdf) | • | Y | Y | Y/N | 9-12 | G 1/4-12 | ESS1 students | Y | Y | ? | ? | Y |  |
| Quebec | Open | ~March 17 | May 11  ~ [Sept 8](https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/back-to-school-plan-fall-covid-19/) | N | N | 6 / sub group | N | Y/N | G5-12 common areas | Y/N | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? | 78 cases: May 11-28 |
| New Brunswick | Closed | ~March 17 | ~ [Sept 8](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/return-to-school-guide.pdf) | • | • | 15 / varied | N | G9-12 | G6-12 common areas; | K-6 | Y | Y | N | N | ? |  |
| Nova Scotia\* | Closed | ~March 17 | [Sept 8](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/back-to-school-plan.pdf) | • | • | ? | N | N | G4-12 buses, common areas | N / Poss | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? |  |
| Prince Edward Island | Closed | ~March 17 | [Sept 8](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/students-return-class-learning) | • | • | ? | Y/N | N | G7-12 | Cohorts | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? |  |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | Closed | ~March 17 | [Sept. 9](https://www.gov.nl.ca/eecd/files/education-re-entry-document.pdf) | • | • | N | Poss | HSS1 poss | G7-12 common areas | N | Y/N | Y | ? | ? | Y |  |
| Nunavut | Closed | March 17 | ~ [Aug17-Sept 4](https://gov.nu.ca/education/information/2020-21-opening-plan-nunavut-schools) | • | • | N | Stage 2/3 | Stage 2/3 | N | S. 2/3- inc. land-based | Y | Y | N | N | ? |  |
| Northwest Territories | Closed | ~March 17 | [~Sept 8](https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/sites/covid/files/resources/reopening_nwt_schools_safely_plan_for_2020-21_eng.pdf) | • | • | ? | Poss | Poss | Y | Poss | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? |  |
| Yukon | Closed | ~March 17 | ~[Aug 20](https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/edu/edu-planning-for-2020-21-school-year.pdf.pdf) | • | • | N | N | N | N | N | Y | Y | N | N | N |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Current Status** | **Date of closing** | **Date of re-opening** | **Younger students only** | **Older students only** | **All Ages** | **Max class size** | **Alternate shifts** | **Alternate days** | **Facemasks required** | **Reduced class size** | **Physical distancing** | **Increased handwashing** | **Temperature checks** | **Viral or antibody testing** | **Contact tracing** | **Impact on transmission** |
| Denmark | Open | 3/16/2020 | 4/15/2020 | Y | • | • | 12 | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | N | ? | ? | No significant increase in the growth rate of COVID-19  cases 1 |
| France | Open | 3/3/2020 –  3/16/2020 | 5/11/2020 | Y/N | • | Y/N | ? | N | N | Secondary schools | Y | ? | ? | N | ? | ? | Unknown |
| Germany | Open (localized) | 3/3/2020 –  3/18/2020 | 5/4/2020 | • | Y | Y | 10 | Y | N | Y/N (SARS-CoV-2-  negative students allowed to not wear masks) | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Increased transmission among students, but not school staff 1 |
| Greece | Open (localized) | 3/11/2020 | 6/1/2020 | Y | • | • | 15 | ? | ? | ? | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? | ? | Unknown |
| Israel | Open | 3/12/2020 | 5/3/2020 | • | • | Y | NA | N | N | Y (>7 years old) | N | N | ? | N | ? | Y | Outbreaks observed in multiple schools |
| Japan | Open | 3/2/2020 | 4/24/2020 | may vary | may vary | may vary | may vary | may vary | may vary | Y | may vary | Y | ? | Y | ? | ? | Unknown |
| South Korea | Open | 3/2/2020 | 6/8/2020 | • | • | • | 33% –  67% | Y/N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | ? | Y | Unknown |
| New Zealand | Open | 3/24/2020 | 5/14/2020 | • | • | Y | NA | N | N | N | N | Y |  |  |  | Y | Unknown |
| Norway | Open | 3/11/2020 | 4/20/2020 | Y | • | • | 15 | N | N | N | Y | Y | Y | N | ? | ? | No significant increase in the growth rate of COVID-19  cases 1 |
| Scotland | Closed | 3/23/2020 | 8/11/2020 | • | • | Y | ? | maybe | maybe | ? | Y | Y | Y | ? | ? | ? | NA |
| Sweden | Open | never closed | never closed | Y/N | • | Y/N | NA | N | N | N | N | N | ? | N | N | ? | Relatively high rate in children suggests there may have been significant spread in schools.2 |
| Switzerland | Open | 3/16/2020 | 5/11/2020 | Y | • | • | 50% | N | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | N | ? | ? | Unknown |
| Taiwan | Open | winter break extended 2 weeks | 2/25/2020 | • | • | Y | NA | N | N | Y | N | Y/N | Y | Y | ? | ? | Unknown |
| Vietnam | Open | 2/28/2020 –  3/31/2020 | 5/18/2020 | • | • | Y | NA | N | N | Y | N | Y | ? | Y | N | ? | Unknown |

Y/N indicates variability in implementation within the country; Current status based on UNESCO COVID-19 Impact on Education tracker [(https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse)](https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse)



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# General Responses for Return to School – All Canadian Jurisdictions

General in-school safety rules: Generally in place in all jurisdictions

* In-School requirements in all jurisdictions:
  + Desks spaced apart where possible, depending on school/classroom size; some PTs suggest physical distancing impossible for elementary students, required for all older students
  + Avoiding groups or gatherings of students in hallways or other common areas
  + Elementary students may be grouped in cohorts for in-class, recess
  + Regular cleaning of high-contact surfaces like door knobs, toilet seats, keyboards, desks at least twice a day
  + Cleaning the school building at least once a day
* Students, educators, and staff will be required to clean their hands before entering school property
  + Hand-sanitizing and cleaning stations available, with well-stocked supplies
  + Shared classroom items removed
* Students or employees should not share food or personal items like phones, pens or pencils
  + Clear protocols in place for the safe and healthy handling of all food items
* Staggered drop-offs, lunch and recess breaks, with increased outside time
* One student per seat on school buses, unless children are from the same house
  + Consider installing a physical barrier between the driver and passengers (e.g. plexiglass)
  + Many PTs have loading back to front; unloading front to back protocols
  + Some PTs (NS) require use of masks while on buses
  + Some PTs (PEI) will not limit to one student per seat
  + Some PTs (SK) assign seating on buses
  + In all PTs, parents/caregivers encouraged to transport students
* The use of non-medical masks by students during the school day is controversial; experts do not agree that the possible benefits (protecting others from respiratory droplets) outweigh the risks and challenges (false security, increased face touching, prolonged use during school day).[[3]](#footnote-3)

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1. Acknowledgement: Information, particularly International reopening details from Summary of School Re-Opening Models and Implementation Approaches During the COVID 19 Pandemic <https://globalhealth.washington.edu/sites/default/files/COVID-19%20Schools%20Summary%20%28updated%29.pdf>

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