



Have you got questions about back to school? We've got answers!

We've heard many questions about back to school in recent days. Here are five of the most common:

What is the first day of school? Will it change?

In Battle River School Division, the first day of in-person school for students was changed from September 1 to **Thursday, September 3**. At-home learning programs start on **Tuesday, September 8**. We do not expect these dates to change again. The whole school calendar is available on our BRSD website: <https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/230246>.

When will I learn more about the exact plans at my school – timetables, schedules, options, student drop-off and pick-up, etc?

Most school staff are returning to work during the week of August 24 to 28. At that time, they will be finalizing all the details and updating information specific to their building. Watch for details on your school's website.

Do students need a COVID-19 test before they can come to school?

It is not mandatory to have a COVID-19 test before coming back to school. However, anyone with a health condition that can cause covid-like symptoms such as a cough or runny nose is encouraged to have a COVID-19 test, as well as complete a form outlining their health issue (found on our website: <https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/292187>) and share it with their school. That way, the person is able to be at school without question, as long as their symptoms do not change.

Am I supposed to keep all my kids at home if someone has the sniffles?

The person who has the sniffles must stay home. But it is not necessary for the siblings of someone with COVID symptoms to stay at home. Alberta Health has prepared a Daily Self-Assessment checklist, which should be completed each day, for every person planning to go to school. If the answer is "yes" to any question, the person should stay home. You can find the Daily Self-Assessment on our BRSD website: <https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/287801>

- *Please note that a copy of this Daily Self-Assessment was shared with all families at the end of June. However the form has been updated by Alberta Health over the summer. Please use the current version, updated August 21.*

If someone at a school tests positive, will the school close?

If someone at a school tests positive for COVID-19, there will be immediate action taken by Alberta Health Services and the school / school division, but it is highly unlikely the whole school will close. Alberta Health has developed an entire protocol about what will happen if someone in a school tests positive for COVID-19. Here is a link to the government's protocol:

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/f3b954c8-7ec4-42ea-a6f5-0a10d08cbbac/resource/49512d1b-a192-46ac-ba05-12ffadebef4/download/covid-19-resource-guide-for-covid-19-in-school.pdf>

BRSD's Re-Entry Plan

The Government of Alberta has created a School Re-Entry Plan, which can be found at:

<https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/280379>

Battle River School Division has built on the government's plans, in order to create an action plan that is specific to our own schools. It is located on our website: <https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/292370>

The plan provides an overview of the health and safety measures BRSD will have in effect at schools, as well as both the in-person and at-home learning opportunities that will be available. These plans are evolving as guidelines from the province are updated.

In addition to the 'top 5' questions answered previously, families have asked a number of other questions about different aspects of school re-entry, on topics such as in-person learning, at-home learning, masks, busing and more.

In-school learning

How many students are in a cohort?

Alberta Education has not recommended a maximum cohort size. In Battle River School Division, a cohort is defined as one classroom of students. It is our intent that no cohort be more than 30 students. Most cohorts will be less.

Who decides if schools (or a specific school) stays in Scenario 1 or moves to a different scenario?

Alberta Education, in consultation with Alberta Health, made the decision to re-open schools based on 'Scenario 1 – near normal with health measures in place'. It is the same two authorities – Alberta Education in consultation with Alberta Health – who will decide if schools (or a specific school) move to a different scenario. This is not a decision a local school board has the authority to make.

As a parent, how can I best support a child who has specialized learning needs?

BRSD's Re-Entry Plan is a general document that provides an overview of what school re-entry will include. To talk about supporting the specialized needs of a specific student, please contact your school directly and work together to determine the best course of action. There is also information posted on our website specifically for families whose children have specialized learning needs:

<https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/296714>

Parents are not able to walk their children into school. But my Kindergarten age child has never even been to school before. Can I come in on the first day?

Schools are making plans for Kindergarten orientation events at which parents can be present with their child. The details will vary from school to school – please contact your school directly to find out more about what will be available for Kindergarten students.

Are junior High options switching every 9 weeks, like the high school classes are?

Please watch for information that is specific to your school.

Will schools be offering physical education and sports teams?

Yes, schools will be offering physical education, although the activities may be different than in other years.

We have received information from the Alberta Schools Athletic Association that, effective September 1, sports teams will be permitted to practice, with appropriate protective measures in place. We're waiting for additional updates regarding further plans for the year.

Will schools have fire drills and lockdown drills this year?

Yes. We will do drills on a class by class or cohort by cohort basis, rather on a school-wide basis. Alarms will be used only in the event of a real emergency.

If my child has to self-isolate, will they automatically be switched to at-home learning?

No. Students who are going to school in person but have to be away from class temporarily will be supported by their classroom teachers.

What if I want my child to switch to at-home learning at a time that's different than what you're offering? Can I do that?

The school division does not have the capacity to support your child's switch to a different plan except at the designated times. However, as a parent you are free to change your child's learning plan at any time.

What if school staff get sick? Are there enough substitute teachers and educational assistants?

We will do our very best to ensure that there are adequate staff available at all times to support student learning.

Are teachers and EAs responsible for all the extra cleaning in schools?

No. Every BRSD school will have custodial staff available for at least 3 hours during the school day, to manage the extra cleaning and sanitizing that is required at this time. Some teachers and educational assistants may choose to do additional sanitizing in their classrooms, but this is not an expectation.

Students will be in cohorts at school. But some students are also in cohorts outside of the school, for extra-curricular activities. How do we limit the number of cohorts a student is part of?

The school division will ensure that students are in a limited number of cohorts at school. Involvement in extra-curricular events beyond the school is a family-based decision which the school division cannot control.

At-home learning

Will students take all the courses at home or will they just focus on a few?

At-home learning will be different this fall than the 'emergency' at-home learning that was available last spring. Students who are learning at home this fall will be expected to complete the full program of studies.

Will it be the same teachers providing instruction to students at home and at school?

No. BRSD will have designated at-home learning teachers. However, teachers throughout the division will all be covering the same portion of the year's program at the same time, so students can transition smoothly between at-home and in-person learning.

How do students connect with teachers? Can students do their school work at any time of day?

Prior to the start of the school year, students who are learning at home will hear from their teachers. During the year, there will be regularly scheduled daily check-ins for students during school hours.

Students are free to do their school work at any time of day, but there will also be attendance standards and expectations to be met.

How many students are planning to learn at home?

Based on the results of our recent parent survey, we expect approximately 700 students to start the school year learning at home.

More information about At-Home Learning is posted on our BRSD website:

<https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/282998>

Masks

Will students and staff wear masks in classrooms?

The Alberta Government has mandated that all staff and all students in Grade 4 and above must wear masks when they are on the school bus and when they are moving through hallways and common areas of schools where they are coming in to contact with others. Masks are not required when students are in classrooms, as long as the students are seated at their desks and maintaining as much physical distance as possible. When students are involved in activities that require them to be interacting more closely, or when a staff member and student are working in close proximity, mask should be worn.

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are not required to wear masks, but are welcome to do so.

When will we receive the masks?

Every student in Grade 4 and above will be receiving two re-usable masks from the Alberta Government. It is an expectation that the student will have these masks available for use during the school day.

The masks have just arrived in our school division. It is our intention to have masks be handed out on the first day of school. Students who ride the school bus will receive a disposable mask to wear on the first day. All students will be met outside and receive their two re-usable masks before they enter their school buildings on the first morning.

What if my child loses or ruins their mask?

In the event of an unexpected situation, where a student's masks become unusable, the school can provide a disposable mask for the student to wear for the remainder of the day. But schools do not have the resources needed to supply masks to students every day.

What if my child is not able to wear a mask all day?

Mask use has been mandated by the Alberta Government. However, exemptions are possible if a student is mentally, physically or psychologically unable to wear a mask. If this is the case for your child, please speak with the Administration of your school to work together on how best to proceed. There is also information in this document that might be helpful in outlining what practices might be put in place at school to ensure a child can be served safely: <https://www.brsd.ab.ca/download/296714>

Busing

How many students will be on a school bus?

Based on the number of families who have said they will be starting the year learning at home, and the number of families who have indicated they will drive their children to school, we do expect buses to have slightly fewer students on board this fall, but individual buses may still be at capacity.

Does BRSD have enough bus drivers?

We do have enough bus drivers. However, we do not have an unlimited supply of substitute bus drivers so, in the event a regular driver becomes unavailable for any reason, we may not have a substitute driver available. We will do our best to provide as much notice as possible to families if a bus route must be cancelled.

When will we hear about bus pick-up and drop off times?

Bus drivers are gathering the week of August 24 to get some additional training in how to welcome students onto the bus safely this fall. Then they will be contacting parents to share information on pick up and drop off times, as well as any extra updates you will need to know about masks, seating, entering and exiting the bus.

When can I get my bus pass?

Bus passes are going to be distributed through the Camrose schools this year. No pass will be required for the first two days of school.

If I'm going to keep my kids at home for the first quarter of the year and then send them back in November, will there be space on the bus?

If your children are eligible for busing (because they are more than 2.4 km from their designated school), seats on the bus will be available for them when they return to school.

We usually buy a bus pass, but my kids are going to be at home for the first quarter of the year. Can we still buy a bus pass if they start attending in person later in the school year? Do I have to pay for the full year?

We expect there will be room on the bus for riders who purchase a bus pass. Depending on when your child returns to school, we may be able to pro-rate the cost of the bus pass.