

# *Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year!*

## **BRSD Back-to-School Plan (Fall 2021)**

Released August 24, 2021;  
Updated September 24, 2021



*This plan was prepared based on information that was current to August 24, 2021 and updated based on information that was current on September 24, 2021.*

*We acknowledge that, as circumstances in Alberta change, our plan may continue to change as well.*

## A message from the Superintendent:

Hello everyone!

After the long, strange year that was 2020-2021, we have all been looking forward to returning to a more 'normal' school environment for the 2021-2022 year.

Here in Battle River School Division, our top priority is to ensure that school is a safe and healthy environment in which students feel comfortable to learn and staff feel comfortable to work. The school division feels strongly about balancing restrictions and opportunities, in order to maintain environments that are safe, but also create environments that are conducive to both positive learning and positive wellbeing. It's been a challenging time for both students and staff. We want to do everything we can to support them.

With that in mind, the school division will be restoring many activities and opportunities, while also doing our best to maintain a safe environment.

On the coming pages, we will share more information about what will be coming back, along with the strategies we will be using to make those activities possible.

If you have specific questions about how to meet the needs of a specific student, please contact the Principal of your child's school directly.

If you have other questions that haven't been answered here, please be in touch with us! We'll do our best to provide answers. Direct your questions to Diane Hutchinson, Director of Communications, [dhutchinson@brsd.ab.ca](mailto:dhutchinson@brsd.ab.ca)

We know that, especially right now, things can change quickly. Battle River School Division has pledged to review its practices regularly in the coming months and make changes as required.

Please watch the [BRSD School Re-Entry \(Fall 2021\)](#) section of our website for ongoing updates.

*Rita Marler*  
*Superintendent of Schools*

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## Wellness

The last 18 months have been an incredibly challenging time for all of us. Disruption and uncertainty have led to an increase in stress levels and anxiety for students, families, staff and communities.

Battle River School Division has a dedicated Wellness Support Team whose work is designed to support students, families and staff in staying well.

**The BRSD Wellness Support Team** includes, but is not limited to:

- BRSD Family School Liaison team.
- BRSD Mental Health Capacity Building team.

We want school to feel like a place where everyone belongs. It is the goal of the BRSD Wellness Support Team to help all students and staff feel safe, calm and connected at school.

Every school will have ongoing access to a member of the BRSD Wellness Support Team. In collaboration with school administrators, the Wellness Support Team will assess what supports are required at each school. This will guide the services provided for students and also for staff.

If a student under the age of 14 is requiring on-going support, caregivers will be contacted by the FSLW team. Parents and caregivers can also reach out to the Wellness Support Team for referrals to 1:1 in-school mental health support or access to community agencies.

Watch for activities and events designed to support student wellbeing and belonging throughout the year.

## *Many activities are coming back*

We know that students and staff have been missing many of the activities and opportunities that were cancelled last year. In order to help enhance student wellness, here is what will be coming back:

- Extra-curricular sports teams (with some limitations)
- Performance opportunities including Band / Music and Drama
- Field trips
- Breakfast and Hot lunch programs
- Microwaves
- Guest speakers
- The opportunity to sit with other students in common areas or gather with friends at recess
- Parent volunteers
- Assemblies and ceremonies (with some limitations)

## *Strategies that will make activities possible*

We are aware that bringing back all of these activities comes with risks. In order to help mitigate the risks, we are implementing the following strategies on a division-wide basis:

- 1. making masks mandatory for all riders on school buses, and for all staff, as well as all students in Grade 4 to 12 while in school hallways / common areas and when in close contact. This was directed by AHS on September 15.**
- 2. cohorting of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. This was directed by AHS on September 15.**
- 3. asking students / families and staff to do daily self-assessments of their health, and STAY HOME if they are not well.**
- 4. offering hand sanitizer and conducting daily cleaning.**
- 5. welcoming visitors into schools on an appointment-only basis. Masks are required.**
- 6. participating in the vaccine program AHS is planning for schools (for students who have parental permission to be vaccinated).**

More details about each of these strategies is included in the following pages.

Individual schools may also retain some of the practices that were put in place last year, if those practices have proven to enhance the school environment. This might mean students continue to enter through different doors; that lunch or recess times are staggered; or include other strategies that were found to be beneficial.

## Masks are mandatory for all riders on buses, as well as for all staff and students in Grades 4 to 12 while in hallways and common areas

There is very helpful information available from Health Canada about why a mask is important for all people over the age of 2, what kinds of masks are best and how to ensure a mask fits properly. You can find that information [here](#).

On September 15, the Alberta Government and Alberta Health Services directed that, in addition to masking being mandatory for all riders on public transportation (which includes school buses) the mask mandate was now mandatory for all school staff, as well as students from Grade 4 to Grade 12, at the following times:

- While moving through the school hallways.
- If in close contact with other students or staff (sitting together without any distance between chairs or in a small, closed office, etc).
- While gathered in commons areas or other places such as assemblies, with groups of students. Students seated around tables at lunch time should wear masks except while eating.

When students and staff are in their classrooms and settled in their seats, masks can be removed. Masks will not be required outdoors or when participating in physical and performance activities, but should be worn when seated on the bench. Students and staff are always welcome to leave their masks on at all times if they choose to do so.

Mask exemptions can be made for students who have a current doctor's note.

## Elementary Students (Kindergarten to Grade 6) will remain in cohorts.

On September 15 the Alberta Government and Alberta Health mandated that all Kindergarten to Grade 6 students would remain in cohorts – small groups of students that separate themselves from others. The intent of cohorting is to mitigate the risk of exposure for younger students. This also makes it possible for Kindergarten to Grade 3 students to not wear masks within the school.

## Students / families and staff must complete a Daily Self-Assessment and STAY HOME if they are sick

Families must complete the [Daily Self-Assessment for Children Under 18](#) (pages 3 and 4 of the link) each morning, for everyone who is going to school.

Anyone who is feeling unwell **must stay home** and is asked to follow the guidance provided in the self-assessment tool to determine their next steps. The self-assessment does not need to be brought to school each day.

The self assessment was modified on September 22, to direct anyone who is a 'household contact' of a person who has tested positive for COVID 19 and who is not vaccinated must isolate for 14 days.

Students who come to school when they are unwell will be isolated. Parents will be contacted to return the child home as quickly as possible. A student with a pre-existing medical condition that may result in coughing (such as asthma or allergies) should ensure the school is aware of the condition.

The image shows a screenshot of a 'COVID-19 ALBERTA HEALTH DAILY CHECKLIST (FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18)'. The form is titled 'COVID-19 INFORMATION COVID-19 ALBERTA HEALTH DAILY CHECKLIST (FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18)'. It includes an 'Overview' section and a table of questions with 'YES' and 'NO' columns. The questions cover symptoms like fever, cough, sore throat, and loss of taste/smell, as well as household contacts and travel history. At the bottom, there are instructions for what to do based on the assessment results. The form is dated '©2020 Government of Alberta | Updated: August 2021' and has the Alberta logo.

BRSD staff are also required to review the [Daily Self-Assessment – Adult](#) (page 1 and 2 of the link) each day and must stay home if they are feeling unwell. If an employee has COVID symptoms they will not be permitted to return to work until symptoms are resolved and they have received a negative COVID test result or other satisfactory medical evidence is provided.

An employee who is a 'household contact' of someone who has tested positive for COVID 19 and is not vaccinated must isolate.

If an employee themselves tests positive for COVID, they must refrain from attending work for a period of at least 10 days.

### **Hand sanitizer and daily cleaning**

Clean hands are one of the best ways to avoid illness. Since soap and water is not always easy to access, BRSD will continue to make hand sanitizer available to students and staff at locations throughout schools and office buildings. Classrooms, schools and offices will be cleaned on a daily basis.

### **Visitors will be welcomed into schools on an appointment-only basis. Masks are required.**

For the protection of all children, we are asking parents to make appointments to be in school during school hours, when students are in attendance.

The intention is to reduce the number of community members that students are exposed to at school.

*Adults bringing students to school / picking them up* are to stay in their vehicle or outside the school. Parents and guardians of children who have complex needs and require support to enter the building are asked to contact their school directly to develop a plan that meets the child's needs.

*Parents who volunteer with breakfast or hot lunch programs* will be welcome to be in the school for this purpose, by prior arrangement, as long as they are well, wear a mask and ensure they clean / sanitize their hands appropriately. Individual schools may also choose to welcome parent volunteers into individual classrooms, if they feel this will be beneficial to student learning. Classroom volunteers must be well and wear a mask.

*School Council meetings* can take place at schools outside of school hours, as long as participants are well and wear a mask. Virtual meetings are encouraged.

*We welcome parents to make an appointment* to meet with their child's teacher or with the school leaders at any time. If they are going to be in the school they must be well and wear a mask during their visit.

*Parents of team members or performance event participants* may visit the school, outside of school hours, to watch a game or performance, as long as they are well and wear a mask at all times. Parents are asked to remain in the designated area only. Please do not visit other areas of the school or enter the change rooms. If there are additional restrictions put in place by AHS or other circumstances which increase the level of risk at a school, additional limitations may be temporarily put in place, including closing an event to visitors temporarily.

*Other visitors*, such as contractors / repair persons and guest speakers are able to enter schools as required, as long as they are well and wear a mask.



*Staff of Battle River School Division* who work on a division-wide basis are not considered visitors, as their roles require them to move between school sites. All staff of BRSD are required to stay home if they are not well and wear a mask when they are in a school or in close proximity to other people.

### **BRSD will participate in the Alberta Health Services COVID-19 vaccine clinic program**

Alberta schools have a long partnership history with Public Health nurses, for the purpose of immunizing school-aged children. Schools make the space available and Health Nurses provide vaccinations to students who have parental permission to be immunized. In the fall of 2021, Alberta Health Services plans to visit schools and provide one dose of COVID-19 vaccine to students aged 12 and over, **who have parental permission to receive the vaccine**. The COVID-19 vaccine program will be in addition to the existing immunization clinics that take place in schools.

## **What to expect at school**

Students and parents are wondering what a school day might look like in the fall of 2021.

### ***Before Leaving Home Each Morning***

All students and staff must complete the [Daily Self-Assessment](#) (pages 2 and 3 apply to students, page 1 and 2 applies to adults).

Families are **not** required to submit the form to the school each day. Students who have any symptoms noted on the questionnaire must stay home.

### ***On the Bus***

All riders are required to wear a mask on the school bus.

### ***Arriving at School***

Adults bringing students to school / picking them up are to stay in their vehicle or outside the school.

**Hand sanitizer** will continue to be available for student and staff use.

**Lockers** are available for student use.

### **Breakfast Programs**

Students will be able to access breakfast at school. Volunteers will be able to support these programs, as long as they are well, wear masks and use appropriate hand washing / sanitizing practices. Food should either be individually wrapped or be distributed directly to individual students and not set out 'buffet-style'.

### ***Lunch***

Microwaves and vending machines will be available to students. Volunteers are able to assist with hot lunch programs, as long as they are well, wearing masks and use appropriate hand washing / sanitizing practices.

### ***Food in Schools***

Potluck events are not yet permitted. Barbecues, food trucks or special lunch days (e.g. hot dog day) can take place, as long as proper food handling procedures are followed and those preparing the food are well, wearing masks and washing / sanitizing appropriately. Food should be distributed directly to individual students as much as possible and not set out 'buffet-style'.

### *Hallways and Common Areas*

All students and staff from Grades 4 to 12 will wear masks while moving through the hallways and common areas at schools or offices.

### *Water Bottle Filling Stations*

Water bottle filling stations have been installed at every school. Every student should bring a clearly labelled water bottle to school for their personal use.

### *Recess*

Individual schools may choose to stagger recess times for different grades or groups of students. Once outside, masks will not be required. Elementary students must remain in their cohorts.

### *School Council Meetings*

In-person School Council meetings may go ahead in school buildings, outside of school hours, with all participants wearing masks. If a School Council wishes to meet virtually rather than in person, this will be supported.

### *Volunteers and Visitors*

Volunteers for specific purposes, such as breakfast and lunch programs, as well as in specific classrooms or field trips, will be allowed in Division schools by appointment or advance arrangement, if they are well and wearing a mask. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to visit with their child's teacher or the school leadership. All parents entering the school must be well and wear a mask.

### *Assemblies, Grads and Other Ceremonies*

In-school gatherings that bring multiple cohorts of junior or senior high students together are permitted as long as all participants are wearing masks. Elementary students should not be attending assemblies, as they are staying in cohorts. Parents will be welcome to attend events outside of school hours, if their child is participating in the event. This includes such things as games, performances or awards nights. All parents are asked to wear masks and ensure they are well. Other spectators / attendees will not yet be permitted. Further limitations on spectators and visitors could be put in place at a school temporarily, depending on AHS regulations and circumstances.

Guidelines for graduation ceremonies in the Spring / Fall of 2022 will be determined at a later time.

### *Field Trips*

Field trips can take place. All students, staff and accompanying volunteers must wear masks on the school bus and follow any COVID protocols that are in place at the field trip location.

### *Extracurricular Activities (including athletics and music)*

Schools will return to extra-curricular activities, such as athletics, music and drama productions. Community coaches may enter school buildings to coach extracurricular sports, outside of school hours, after they have received Agent of the Board status. Coaches must wear masks and only enter the building if they are well. Parents of participants will be welcome to attend games or performances

outside of school hours. Larger groups of spectators are not yet permitted and additional restrictions could be put in place at a school depending on current AHS restrictions or circumstances.

### **Community Use of Schools**

Community groups will be able to resume use of school facilities, such as gyms, outside of school hours. Please contact your school to make arrangements. Community groups must adhere to all existing AHS guidelines, restrictions and requirements.

### **School Photos**

School photo sessions can be scheduled.

## **Learning**

An area of emphasis for all grade levels will be ensuring the continuation of strong literacy and numeracy development. We appreciate the support of Alberta Education in providing additional funding for this focus.

Most high schools are returning to a full semester system. However, specific schools will have some courses available on a quarterly basis.

Families who are seeking flexible learning options are encouraged to work with the Battle River Alternative Centre for Education (BRACE) to learn more about

- *Online Learning*, in which students learn from home, guided by a certified BRSD teacher. Online learning can be accessed by students throughout BRSD and can be used as a primary means of learning or to access courses in addition to those being taken at school.
  
- *Home Education*, in which parents lead the learning, with support from BRSD

### **Reporting**

Teachers will assess students throughout the school year. Student progress will be reported to parents at these key times during the year:

#### **2021-22 Dates for Quarters, Semesters and Reporting**

November 10th end of 1st Quarter

November 19th report card go home

- Full report cards for all, except Kindergarten

January 28 end of 2nd Quarter & end of first semester

Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup> Full reports for students in semesters/and quarters

- No report cards for K to 6

April 12 end of 3rd Quarter

April 14 Report Cards go home K to 12

June 28 end of 4th Quarter and end of year

June 28 Full report home for all students

***Provincial Achievement Exams and Diploma Exams***

Provincial Achievement Exams will be mandatory for students in Grade 6 and 9.

Diploma Exams will be mandatory for Grade 12.