

# Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

## Return-to-School Plan 2020-21

Last updated August 25, 2020

Rooted. Growing.  
Reaching. Transforming.



**GREATER  
SASKATOON  
CATHOLIC  
SCHOOLS**

THIS PLANNING DOCUMENT AND ANY ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS OUTLINING SCHOOL-SPECIFIC DETAILS WILL BE UPDATED ON AN ONGOING BASIS AS NEEDED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE CHIEF MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER OF SASKATCHEWAN.

# INTRODUCTION

“On June 9, 2020, the Government of Saskatchewan announced that in-classroom learning will resume for the 2020-21 school year.”

▪ [Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan, Primary and Secondary Institution Guidelines](#)

Nine days later, on June 18, the Ministry of Education shared [return to school guidelines](#) for school divisions to use when developing plans for the face-to-face return of students and staff. Using these guidelines, multiple teams of Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS) staff have prepared plans that will help our students and staff return to school while following the direction of the Ministry of Education and the Chief Medical Health Officer. We have planned operational supports that fall under six main categories:

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## Public Health Measures

- daily at-home screening
- revised scheduling
- outdoor drop-off & pick-up
- contact tracing processes



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## Environmental Measures

- visual cues such as signs
- limited sharing resources
- enhanced sanitization
- revised classroom layouts



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## Administrative Measures

- revised daily schedules
- grouping of students
- food & drink
- transportation
- suspension of field trips
- online at-home learning options



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## Personal Measures

- stay at home if symptomatic
- hand-washing and sanitizing
- isolating ill children to be picked up by parent/caregiver
- processes for ill staff
- revised classroom layouts



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## Personal Protective Equipment

- masks required for staff
- masks required for Gr. 4-12; recommended for pre-K-Gr. 3
- regular use of hand sanitizer



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## Social and Emotional Supports to:

- support self-regulation;
- manage anxiety; and
- build resilience



This document outlines the key points in each of those areas. School-specific details will be provided by August 26.

The over-riding principle guiding all decisions is health and safety of students and staff.

# ABOUT COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new virus in the coronavirus family of viruses that typically infects the respiratory system. “The infection transmits via coughing and sneezing (droplet transmission). It can also be spread by touching surfaces with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.” ▪ [Government of Saskatchewan website: About COVID-19](#)

Common symptoms may include one or more of the following:

fever ▪ cough ▪ headaches ▪ aches and pains ▪ sore throat ▪ chills ▪ runny nose  
loss of sense of taste or smell ▪ shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

As a respiratory illness, the best method to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to practise everyday preventive actions, including:

- Practise proper cough and sneezing etiquette (into a tissue or the bend of your elbow);
- Wash your hands often with soap and water; if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Clean and disinfect your home regularly;
- Maintain safe food practices;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas; and
- Avoid large crowds and practice physical distancing (do not shake hands, hug or kiss).

More detailed information can be found on the [Government of Saskatchewan's website](#).

# GREATER SASKATOON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS

## PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

*Self-monitoring* means paying attention to your health so you can identify signs of sickness.

*Everyone should be self-monitoring.* It is important to know the symptoms of COVID-19 and to act appropriately if you have those symptoms.

Self-isolation means staying at home to prevent the spread of infection. *If you are sick or have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19, you must self-isolate.* This will help stop the spread of the virus so that other people don't get sick. The Ministry of Health recommends you self-isolate for 14 days.

▪ [Government of Saskatchewan website](#)

- Students (with help from parents) and staff are expected to complete a Daily Screening Questionnaire prior to entering school. The form can be found online at <https://go.gscs.ca/dailyhealth>.
- Parents will be asked to safely wait outside of the school for their children during drop-off and pick-up times. Although parents, families and volunteers in schools are important to the success of our students, at this time, the health and safety of the students and staff will take precedence, so parent engagement will look different.
- Considerations will be made for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten parents, as well as students with intensive learning needs. Parent communication with teachers that may normally take place face-to-face during these times will be achieved through alternative modes.
- In order to facilitate rapid contact tracing, GSCS has developed a digital QR code process, and this registry will allow GSCS to track people entering our facilities.
- In the event that a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, GSCS will follow Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) protocols.
- All students and staff who go home ill need to be symptom free for 48 hours prior to returning to school.

# ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES

- Visual cues, signage, plexiglass, protocols for required use of shared resources, reduced furniture, etc. will all be in place in our facilities. Staff members will be explicitly teaching students the new routines, such as how to circulate in our schools to increase distance between people and reduce physical contact.
- Materials that have typically been shared will be limited and accompanied by a cleaning regimen. Your child's teacher will communicate more details regarding materials that are to come to school each day. Again, there will be clear guidelines regarding the use of student materials.
- Washing and/or sanitizing hands will take place regularly and will be required each time someone enters and exits our buildings.
- Enhanced cleaning protocols have been developed for all facilities and include, but are not limited to, regular cleaning of high-contact areas.
- Water fountains will be closed and each school will have water bottle filling stations.
  - Students are asked to bring a reusable water bottle to school and take it home every day to be cleaned.
- Students will be asked to come to school and leave with required daily supplies.
  - For elementary schools, lockers may be used, as determined by schools, if proper distancing can be maintained.
  - For high schools, lockers will not be used other than for physical education.
- Air circulation and ventilation:
  - Doors and windows should be open whenever possible to maximize flow of fresh air.
  - HVAC and other air-circulation systems should run continuously (not set to "auto") to ensure a continuous supply of fresh air to classrooms and building spaces.
- Schools will develop a plan to limit the number of people in a washroom at one time.
  - Where possible, classes or groups will have assigned washrooms.
  - There will be more frequent cleaning and sanitization of washrooms.

# ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

Maximizing physical distancing is the goal; however, with busy schools, it is important that we institute many changes to reduce contact and limit the number of physical interactions.

“...maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.”

- [Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan, Primary and Secondary Institution Guidelines](#)

## COHORTING & SCHEDULING

Cohorting—keeping defined groups of students together—is a practice that will be used throughout the schools to reduce the co-mingling of students. Students will go about their day with the same group of students as much as possible.

In accordance with the Government of Saskatchewan’s Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan guidelines for primary and secondary education, extensive scheduling will take place to ensure cohorts are maintained during recess, lunch, supervision and learning activities.

### HIGH SCHOOL

- High schools will implement a block system of scheduling that will allow for significantly reduced student-to-student contact.
  - The school year will be divided into blocks (instead of semesters) where students take two classes per block, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.
    - Blocks will range from 30 to 44 days.
    - Morning and afternoon periods will range from 115 to 175 minutes.
    - All curricular material will be covered within each block.
    - Final exams and projects will occur at the end of each block.
- High schools may consider a staggered entry plan by grade.
- Revised student schedules will be provided by schools.

### ELEMENTARY

- Staggered start details for Sept. 8 - 11 will be reflected in school-specific plans.
  - For new kindergarten students, an extended staggered entry plan will be in place to allow the necessary time and opportunity to teach the routines and practices required.
- Schools will develop plans for pick-up and drop-off of students.
  - Unless there is a need for parent/caregiver to enter the school, parents will remain outside the building.
  - Plans will define outside muster points for parents caregivers and staggered entry/exit times.
    - Physical distancing must be maintained.
  - All approved visitors must complete a health assessment, check-in using our QR code process, wear a mask and sanitize hands before entering schools.
- Schools will develop plans for recess scheduling and use of outdoor spaces and playground equipment.
  - Plans will use student cohorts to limit the number of students using equipment, ensure physical distancing and reduce risk of infection.

## FOOD & DRINK

- Students who eat lunch at school will do so in their classroom with strict cleaning protocols. If possible, parents are encouraged to have their children return home to eat lunch.
- For schools that provide nutrition programs:
  - Food will be delivered to classrooms.
  - Staff involved with food preparation will wear appropriate PPE.
  - No students will be involved in food preparation.
- There will be no sharing of food or drink.
- Everyone will be required to pack in and pack out all unused or leftover food each day.
- Parents/caregivers will be asked to have student food provided in clean containers (that they are able to open and close on their own) with their own utensils.
- Students must not share utensils, dishes, or water bottles and drink containers.
- High school cafeterias will not be open for the start of school. Opening dates TBD.

## ACTIVITIES & FIELD TRIPS

- All activities that require adults to group together will be done virtually whenever possible. This includes meet the staff nights, parent-student-teacher conferences, engagement evenings, Catholic School Community Council meetings and community events.
- Field trips and extra-curricular activities will be on pause. The status of these activities will be revisited regularly throughout the school year.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Families are strongly encouraged to transport their own children when possible.  
For students who require school bus transportation to/from school, there will be the following changes:
  - students will be assigned seats (same household together, school cohort as well);
  - bus sanitation protocols will be in place;
    - A full bus sanitization is to be completed after the morning and afternoon runs;
      - for double-looped routes, drivers will wipe down high-touch areas (handrail, seats, window latches) with approved disinfectant after each route;
      - double-looped school buses may arrive slightly later than the start time due to sanitization of the bus after the first route.
- personal protective equipment (PPE) will be mandated for drivers;
- masks are required for all students while riding the bus; and
- staggered arrival and departing times may be required at some schools to reduce the number of students using exterior doors at the same time.

## AT-HOME OPTIONS

- For students with underlying medical conditions or risk factors, parents should consult your child's physician to consider the health risks and make a decision that will best support your child. Please contact your child's school to discuss available options and supports. School division staff will work with families who decide to not attend school in person.
  - Options include home-based education and online learning.
    - Homeschooling, or home-based education, is a long-term commitment in which caregivers provide instruction at home. A Home-based education plan must be submitted to the Ministry of Education by September 15.  
[More information can be found on the GSCS website.](#)



## ONLINE LEARNING

- Students in kindergarten through Grade 12 registered with Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools will be able to access online learning through Greater Saskatoon Catholic Cyber School during the 2020-21 school year.

### Elementary Online Learning: kindergarten – Grade 8

- In the Elementary Online Learning Program, students will be grouped by grade (from multiple school communities) and assigned to a teacher.
- The online content addresses curricular outcomes for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Religion and Science, integrating the remaining courses.
- Content is provided through both synchronous (the teacher is online with the students at the same time) and asynchronous (students access course content on their own at any time) delivery models.
  - The content delivered through the synchronous model provides access to learning opportunities within all subject areas as outlined within Saskatchewan curricula.
- Assignments will be graded and progress reports will be provided in a similar fashion to face-to-face courses.

### Process to access Elementary Online Learning: kindergarten – Grade 8

- Parents must notify your local school that you want to register for the Elementary Online Learning Program. Our Cyber School staff will follow-up with you shortly after notification.
- Students who choose the online option will be placed into a virtual classroom and assigned a teacher.
  - Note that the establishment of virtual classrooms will take place mid-September and will lag behind the face-to-face classrooms. By mid-September, all students who elect to take the Elementary Online Learning Program will be contacted by their teacher.

## High School Online Learning: Grades 9-12

- The High School Online Learning Program provides an online learning option for all required high school courses as well as many elective courses.
- The courses provide Saskatchewan curricula through an online, asynchronous delivery model (students access course content on their own at any time).
  - Students work through the content with the support of a teacher.
- Assignments are graded and marks provided.
- Regular credit is granted upon successful completion.

## Process to access High School Online Learning Program: Grades 9-12

- Parents are to register their child at their local high school and notify administration that their child will be taking classes through the High School Online Learning Program.
  - Schools will provide direction for registering for the program.
- For more information contact Greater Saskatoon Catholic Cyber School:
  - Ryan Hauber, Principal: [rhauber@gscs.ca](mailto:rhauber@gscs.ca) • 306-659-7701
  - Todd Paslawski, Vice-Principal (high school): [tpaslawski@gscs.ca](mailto:tpaslawski@gscs.ca) • 306-659-7705
  - Cara Hauber, Vice-Principal (elementary): [chauber@gscs.ca](mailto:chauber@gscs.ca) • 306-659-7706

# Frequently Asked Questions About Online Learning

## Is the Saskatchewan curriculum being taught?

Yes, the content follows the Saskatchewan curricula and is taught by Saskatchewan licenced teachers. Credits earned are parallel to face-to-face credits.

## Can my child re-enter face-to-face courses for grades K-8?

Yes, re-entry into face-to-face courses is possible. However, there are several things to consider including, but not limited to, classroom space in the grade at your home school and alignment of curriculum timing. For example, where the online class is at in mathematics may be different compared to the face-to-face class. A transition plan would need to be discussed with the school principal to support your child's academic success. Natural transition periods, such as term end, or other breaks, such as Christmas, might be better transition times.

## Can my grade K-8 child join the Elementary Online Learning Program mid-year?

Yes. As with the previous question, there are numerous considerations with that decision including the curriculum timing alignment, among others. Natural transition periods, such as term end, or other breaks, such as Christmas, might be better transition times.

## Does the school division provide the hardware such as a laptop?

No, the division does not provide hardware. However, in order to support equitable access to online learning, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools may make technology available to students, depending on the availability of refurbished equipment.

## As a parent, do I have to teach my grade K-8 child in the Elementary Online Learning Program?

The Elementary Online Learning Program will provide both synchronous (the teacher online with the students at the same time) and asynchronous (student accessing course content on their own) opportunities. While the teacher will provide the learning opportunities, as with face-to-face classes, parental support and encouragement is vital to student success. This is particularly true in an online learning environment and even more important for younger students when they have work to complete.

## What happens if schools need to move to online learning?

If the Chief Medical Health Officer directs schools to move to online learning, students will stay with their class. Face-to-face classes will transition to online learning.

## Is there a way to have my child do online learning and be with a cohort of children from their own school?

No. The complexity in scheduling students and staff in both online learning and face-to-face classes does not allow this. Families who choose to enrol in online learning will receive information from their virtual teacher. Parents are encouraged to stay in touch with their home schools by visiting their school website and reading the school newsletters.

## When do Elementary Online Learning Program courses take place?

The school day will follow a regular elementary school schedule. For the synchronous learning portion, schedules will be provided to families for planning purposes. The asynchronous portions can be done according to the home schedule. It is important to note that the teachers will be using a combination of large group, small group, and individual synchronous activities. Students will not be engaged in synchronous activities for full days.

## Will Online Learning be available in French, Cree and Ukrainian?

Online learning will be available as an option for courses in English. At this time, we are not able to offer complete online elementary-level courses for French, Cree or Ukrainian. If there is enough demand, we will create online French, Cree or Ukrainian cohorts (groups of students in the same grade from various schools) that can provide some degree of instruction in French, Cree or Ukrainian. We will work with families on a transition plan when you decide to return to face-to-face learning to ensure you can continue on your language learning pathway.

- School assemblies, celebrations etc. will happen virtually as schools will not be gathering in groups larger than the classroom.
- Although learning experiences will be adapted to ensure safety protocols are followed, students will return to accessing the full curriculum that they were used to and enjoyed prior to school suspension in March, 2020. Certain activities and instructional methods will require modifications to reduce contact. Your child's classroom teacher will be able to speak to any modifications that are required to courses such as physical education.
- As a general rule, parents/caregivers will not enter schools.
  - Considerations will be made for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten parents, as well as students with intensive learning needs.
  - Although parents, families and volunteers are important to the success of students, at this time, the health and safety of students will take precedence.
  - If it is required for a parent/caregiver to be present in the school and it has been approved by the classroom teacher and principal the school will provide information on the required safety protocols to follow.
- Before and After School programs will operate.
  - Program operators have been given specific protocols that they will provide to parents/caregivers.

# PERSONAL MEASURES

- The health and safety of our students and staff is of utmost importance.
- Ill children cannot be sent to school. Parents are asked to screen students daily in the morning using the Daily Screening Questionnaire found at <https://go.gscs.ca/dailyhealth>
- During the course of a day, children occasionally become ill. Parents are expected to have a plan to pick up their child promptly if the school calls letting them know their child is ill.
- Should a student develop symptoms, they will be isolated from the rest of the students until they can be picked up.
- When ill, staff will not be permitted to come into our facilities to plan for a substitute.
- Staff members will have a process in place to ensure their daily plans are available for their replacements.
- All students and staff who go home ill need to be symptom free for 48 hours prior to returning to school.
- Both hand sanitizer and surface cleaning solution will be located in every room of all schools.  
Explicit instructions will be in place to ensure students and staff are using these items effectively and frequently.

# PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

## FACE COVERINGS

- Staff are required to wear masks when:
  - interacting with students, colleagues or visitors.
  - moving to and from rooms.
  - appropriate distancing cannot be maintained.
- Grade 4 – 8 students are required to wear masks when:
  - moving to and from rooms.
  - appropriate physical distancing cannot be maintained.
    - Masks are not required when students are in class, sitting and facing forward.
- Grade 9 – 12 students are required to wear masks when:
  - moving to and from rooms.
  - in classrooms and it is not possible to maintain physical distancing; or
  - students are outside of their classroom cohort.
- All students are required to wear masks while riding the bus.
- All visitors must wear masks.
- Masks are recommended for pre-kindergarten – Grade 3 students when moving to and from rooms.
- Accommodations will be made for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs.
- Two reusable masks will be provided for each student.
  - Students are also welcome to wear their own masks.
- GSCS encourages families to begin training their children to wear a mask prior to attending school in September.
- Students wearing reusable masks will be instructed to bring them home daily.
- Shields and masks will be provided for staff.
  - Face coverings can be a mask and/or a face shield.
    - Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control.
    - Face shields can be used when sustained close contact with other people occurs but are not a substitute for cloth face coverings. They provide a barrier protection to the facial area and related mucous membranes (eyes, nose, lips) while allowing for better visual facial cues. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Sanitizer is to be used regularly. Sanitizer in schools conforms to Canada Health guidelines, so there is no need for families or staff to provide sanitizing wipes (such as Lysol wipes).

# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

Students and staff returning to school do so with a varying range of emotions; fear for some, and the weight of uncertainty for most due to the unseen force of COVID-19. Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has been preparing to welcome students back with a strong emphasis on the social and emotional needs of students. Strategies to support self-regulation, manage anxiety and build resilience will be shared with school teams and with students.

## SUMMARY

Health and safety of students and staff remains the guiding principle in Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools' return-to-school plan. This document outlines the first stage in the school division's plan and are subject to change pending direction or guidelines from the Ministry of Education and/or the Chief Medical Health Officer of Saskatchewan. School-specific plans are being developed and will be shared with families by August 26.

As we enter into the return-to-school phase, it is important to acknowledge that the return to school may be met with anxiety for students, families and staff. It is in working together as one Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools family that we will provide the safe, welcoming, faith-based learning environment that has always been a hallmark at Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools.