

K-12 Education Recovery Plan



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Guidelines for Boards of Education
and Independent School Authorities
for the 2021/22 School Year



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of
Education

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Introduction

Purpose

This guide provides direction to boards of education and independent school authorities to deliver educational programs and supports in line with provincial pandemic recovery efforts in the 2021/22 school year by:

- Clarifying provincial expectations.
- Providing guidance across a number of key topics.
- Including links to additional information and resources that can support local decision-making and communication.

Boards/authorities are encouraged to apply a compassionate and trauma-informed leadership lens in their recovery planning - one that places people (and their mental and social-emotional well-being) at the centre and that recognizes the importance of meeting students and staff where they are.

Context

On May 25, 2021, the Provincial Government announced [BC's Restart Plan](#), a four-step plan that focuses on a safe and gradual return to normal activities. In line with the provincial Restart Plan, B.C.'s K-12 sector is planning for a full return to in-class instruction in the 2021/22 school year with an emphasis on pandemic recovery and continuing to provide safe learning environments for students and staff.

Through the tremendous efforts of educators, support staff and administrators, B.C. was one of the few jurisdictions to keep K-12 schools open and operating safely throughout the 2020/21 school year. This approach allowed many students to continue to benefit from the important academic, social and emotional supports that accompany in-person learning.

As the K-12 sector shifts from pandemic response to recovery, it is important to recognize students, staff and families have been impacted in many different ways and that some of the longer-term impacts of the pandemic are yet to be realized. Work is already underway across the province, with schools, school districts and community partners taking action to identify these impacts and put necessary supports in place, and these recovery activities will continue throughout the year ahead.

Guiding Principles

British Columbia is recognized for its world-class curriculum modernization and strong culture of collaboration across the K-12 sector to support the diverse needs and aspirations of students.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Government, Indigenous communities, public health experts and education partners have worked together to keep public and independent schools open and safe, guided by science and using an evidence-informed approach. As part of B.C.'s pandemic recovery, the K-12 sector commits to building on our collective accomplishments and innovations, with a focus on addressing inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. The following principles will guide the K-12 sector throughout the 2021/22 school year:

- 1.** Fully re-engage all students through high-quality in-class instruction and innovative approaches to learning.
- 2.** Align health and safety procedures with public health guidance to support student and staff wellness, with a focus on mental health.
- 3.** Focus supports to address unique student and staff needs, recognizing the pandemic has impacted individuals and communities differently.
- 4.** Consult and work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to address the unique educational and learning needs of their communities.
- 5.** Engage and collaborate with parents/caregivers, staff, unions and community partners to develop local solutions.

Parent/Caregiver Options

As part of the return to full in-class instruction in September 2021, and in alignment with [BC's Restart Plan](#), learners and families can anticipate that their school/school district will:

- Engage directly with all students and families to clearly communicate expectations and available educational program options for the 2021/22 school year.
- Continue to implement health and safety measures in alignment with current public health direction and Ministry guidelines.
- Emphasize social-emotional approaches to learning and communication as key components of pandemic recovery.
- Be responsive and flexible in meeting individual student needs, including acknowledging and addressing impacts from the pandemic on learning and well-being.

Starting from age 5 or 6 until they reach the age of 16, children who are resident in British Columbia are required by the [School Act](#) to take part in an educational program or course of studies. For the 2021/22 school year, parents/caregivers will continue to have the choice to:

- Enrol their child in a “bricks and mortar” public, independent or First Nation school.
- Enrol their child in an online/distributed learning program offered by a public, independent school or First Nation school.
- Register their child for homeschooling prior to the start of the school year. With homeschooling, parents/caregivers are responsible for designing the educational program for their child and must register their child with either a public or independent school.

Parents/caregivers can choose a different option at any time during the school year, based on program availability and applicable board of education or independent school authority policies and procedures. There is no provincial expectation for boards of education or independent school authorities to offer transition programs for the 2021/22 school year.

Students with minority language rights under [section 23 of the Charter](#) have the right to attend an educational program provided in French.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Information on [Classroom Alternatives](#):

1. [Online and Distributed Learning](#)
2. [Homeschooling](#)

Students and Parents/Caregivers with Immune Compromise or Medical Complexity

According to the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), most [children with immune compromise](#) can follow the same precautions for COVID-19 as the general population and can safely attend in-class instruction.

In-class instruction may not be suitable for some children with severe immune compromise or [medical complexity](#), which should be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with a medical health care provider. If in-class instruction is not right for the child, parents/caregivers who do not wish to register the child in an online/distributed learning program or home-schooling must obtain a doctor's note indicating the need for alternative learning arrangements due to [the child's](#) health-related risks (e.g. *Homebound program*).

Boards/authorities are expected to work with these families to ensure access to learning and supports.

Parents/caregivers with severe immune compromise are encouraged to contact their school or school district administrator to discuss available options for their child (including ensuring appropriate preventative measures are in place for in-class instruction, online/distributed learning or home-schooling).

The Homebound program enables students to continue their educational program while absent from school for periods during the school year because of injury, disease, surgery, pregnancy, medical or psychological reasons, etc. Homebound program students stay within their school and school district while they are receiving their educational supports and can be welcomed back to in-class instruction at any time. More information on the Homebound program is available in the [Special Education Policy Manual](#) (p.37).



For more information on children with immune compromise or medical complexity, see BCCDC's [Pediatrics information](#).

Health & Safety Standards & Guidelines for K-12

COVID 19 - Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) issues [public health guidance for schools and school districts](#) that outlines the infection prevention and exposure control measures recommended to maintain **low risk** and healthy environments for students, families and staff.

Provincial K-12 **Communicable Disease** Guidelines

The [Provincial COVID-19 **Communicable Disease** Guidelines for K-12](#) were developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with education partners and outline key health and safety requirements for B.C. schools. The Guidelines build on the BCCDC public health guidance for K-12 and address a broader range of content and expectations for schools and school districts. In case of any discrepancy between these two guidance documents, boards of education and independent school authorities should follow the provincial **Communicable Disease** Guidelines.

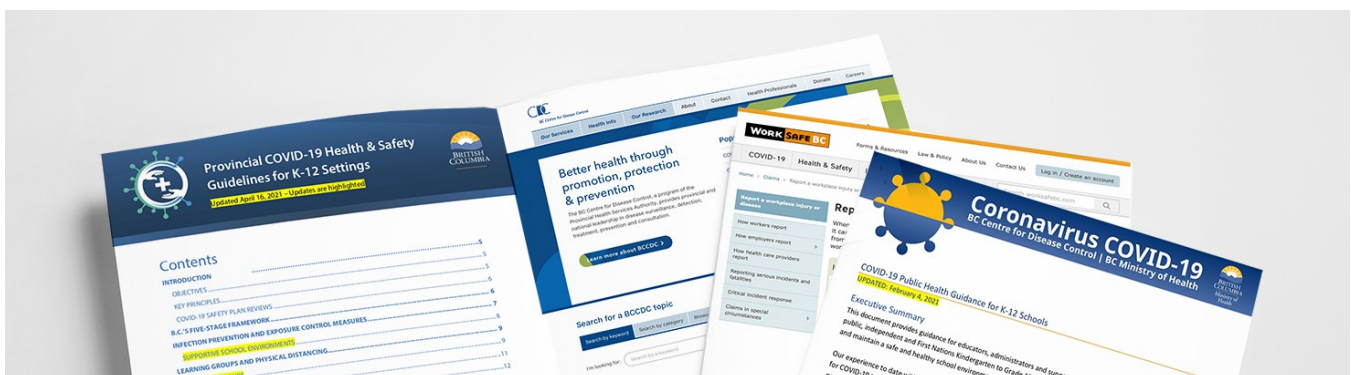
Medical Health Officers [can](#) issue local public health orders and recommendations regarding additional health and safety measures in K-12 schools beyond the provincial guidelines based on their authority under provincial legislation.

WorkSafeBC Guidelines

Further to the Provincial Health Officer's [statement](#) on June 17, 2021, employers are no longer required to maintain a COVID-19 Safety Plan but must instead transition to communicable disease prevention. Communicable disease prevention focuses on reducing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, and includes both ongoing measures (e.g. hand hygiene, cleaning) and additional measures to be implemented as advised by Public Health.

WorkSafeBC's [Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers](#) outlines a four-step process to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission in the workplace. Steps include understanding the level of risk, implementing appropriate measures, communicating policies and protocols, and updating measures and safeguards as required.

More information and resources are available on the [WorkSafeBC website](#).



Identifying and Addressing Impacts on Learning and Well-Being

Supporting the health and well-being of students, families and staff continues to be the top priority as the sector shifts into pandemic recovery. Boards of education and independent school authorities must develop processes for identifying and addressing pandemic impacts on student learning and well-being, with a focus on the “*whole child*” including literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development and mental health.

Some pandemic impacts may be able to be identified prior to school start, whereas others may not emerge until students and staff are back in school. Boards/authorities should continue to take early action to engage with staff, families and community partners, to identify initial needs and to prepare necessary supports and referral pathways.

Additional considerations for boards/authorities include:

- At a provincial level, absenteeism for certain students in B.C., including Indigenous students, students with disabilities and diverse abilities, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds was greater during the pandemic than in previous years.
 - *Boards/authorities should continue to review their own local absenteeism patterns to help inform planning for specific supports.*
- Some students will have been disconnected from educational programs (in-class or remote) for well over a year. Conversely, some students who attended full in-class instruction will have been significantly impacted by the pandemic in other ways.
 - *K-12 recovery efforts should include a process for following up with every learner, to better understand their unique experiences and needs.*
- Not all pandemic impacts are “negative”.
 - *Many schools implemented innovative approaches that had positive impacts on learning and well-being, and which may continue to be important components of pandemic recovery efforts.*
 - *Research from BCCDC during the pandemic reinforced that schools have protective effects on child and youth cognitive, social, emotional and physical well-being, and are a valuable source of nutrition and social support.*

Learning

A range of approaches are already in place at the school/district level to assess student needs at the beginning of every year in the academic and social-emotional domains. This can include assessing for numeracy and literacy, reviewing previous student learning outcomes and utilizing various needs-based assessment tools.

In addition to annual processes already in place, schools and school districts should take the following actions prior to and during the 2021/22 school year:

- Assess impacts on student learning as a result of the pandemic.
- Develop and implement recovery strategies, including resources, supports and services to address these learning impacts.

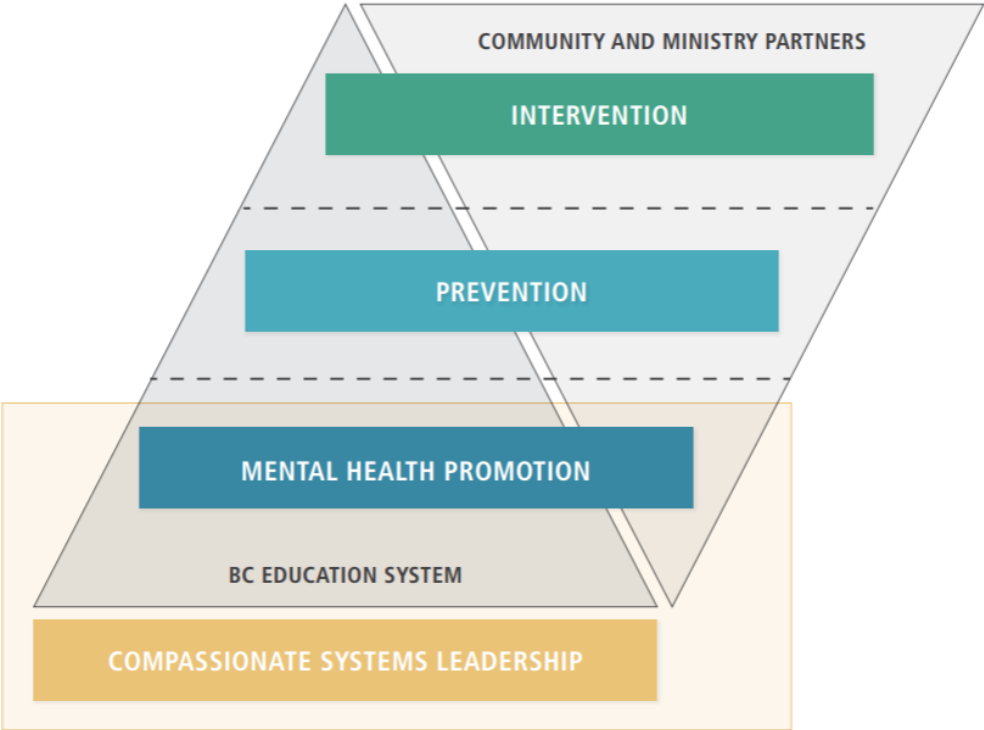
To support the development of these approaches, schools and school districts should reference strategies already in place under the [Framework for Enhancing Student Learning](#) to continuously improve the educational outcomes for all students and improve equity for Indigenous students, children and youth in care, and students with disabilities or diverse abilities.

Learning impact assessments should be done in alignment with any other assessments for [students with disabilities and diverse abilities and students requiring additional supports](#).

Mental Health and Well-Being

As students, families and staff prepare for the start of the 2021/22 school year, it is important to highlight the role of the education system in supporting mental health and well-being through system-wide mental health prevention and promotion. At the school and classroom level, this includes an acknowledgement of the importance of supporting students to build resiliency, coping skills and knowledge that contribute to their overall wellbeing.

In September 2020, the Ministry of Education released the [Mental Health in Schools \(MHIS\) Strategy](#), outlining a vision and pathway to create and sustain school environments that support well-being and positive mental health.



The MHIS Strategy embeds positive mental health and wellness programs and services for students in all areas, including school culture, leadership, curriculum and learning environments, through three core elements:

1. Compassionate Systems Leadership
2. Capacity Building
3. Mental Health in the Classroom

In partnership with the BCCDC, the Ministry initiated a Mental Health School Start-Up Working Group with membership from education, mental health, and government partners. In addition to reviewing data, research, and current literature to understand the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing, the working group developed [Key Principles and Strategies for K-12 Mental Health Promotion in Schools](#) which builds upon the MHIS Strategy and efforts currently underway at all levels of the education system. This new resource identifies key principles, including cultural responsiveness and humility, as recommended areas of focus along with strategies and resources to support recovery efforts.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



[erase](#) (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) hosts a range of mental health and well-being resources for students and families.

WorkSafeBC resources:

[Managing the mental health effects of COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for employers](#)

[Addressing the mental health effects of COVID-19 in the workplace: A guide for workers](#)

Trauma-informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice is a compassionate lens of understanding that is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events including the emotional and traumatic impact of a pandemic. Trauma-informed practice includes:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments.
- Understanding coping strategies.
- Supporting independence.
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual needs of students and staff.

Use of regular needs-based “check-ins” and surveys can assist in gathering important data to inform what level of trauma response and recovery will be necessary to support individuals and the school community. School and school district staff should also practice cultural awareness, sensitivity and humility regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many Indigenous communities, as part of an effort to create culturally safe school environments

Some students may have experienced elements of trauma during the pandemic. Educators and support staff should be aware of changes in student behaviour, including trauma-related behaviours which may include fear; hyperactivity; aggression; body aches and pain; depression; self-harming behaviours; excessive shyness; or withdrawal. To support educators and staff in identifying and responding to the needs of students who have experienced trauma, the Ministry has created [trauma-informed practice resources](#) that are available on the [erase website](#).

Additional resources are available to assist schools and school districts in supporting students, staff and their families in pandemic recovery and transitions back to full in-class instruction:

- [Building Compassionate Communities in a New Normal - webinar](#)
- [Linda O’Neill – Trauma Informed in the Classroom](#)
- [Ministry of Children and Family Development: Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families](#)
- [North American Centre for Threat Assessment & Trauma Response: Education as a Special Consideration](#)

Indigenous Students (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)

First Nations Students Living on Reserve

Some First Nations communities may continue to take increased safety measures during the pandemic recovery phase or still be under states of emergency as the 2021/22 school year begins. This may mean that some First Nations learners will not be able to attend in-person classes.

First Nations have the authority to declare states of emergency and have responsibility for the education of their citizens. In the spirit of Reconciliation and consistent with the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#), boards of education and independent schools (*excluding First Nations independent schools*) are expected to engage with First Nations communities who have First Nation students living in community (*on-reserve*) enrolled in the school district/school as soon as possible to discuss return to school plans for September. This will help to identify potential accommodations needed to support students who may not be returning to in-person classes.

Indigenous Student Success and Achievement

Boards of education and independent school authorities are expected to continue to support equitable outcomes and opportunities for all Indigenous learners by maintaining Indigenous student supports and collaboration with Indigenous communities and education partners. Boards/authorities are expected to collaborate with local First Nations, Métis Chartered communities and Indigenous communities on any changes/updates to the delivery of any programs including Indigenous language and culture services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on Indigenous communities. Boards/authorities should identify Indigenous students whose educational outcomes may have been negatively impacted during the pandemic and make accommodations to ensure these students are supported. The needs of Indigenous students who require additional supports should be planned for and prioritized in partnership with parents/caregivers and communities.

Boards of education are also expected to engage with First Nations to identify the transportation needs of First Nation students living on reserve and attending in-person classes. Collaboration between boards and First Nations is necessary to ensure there are equitable and safe transportation opportunities as students return to in-class instruction.

Additional considerations for boards/authorities include:

- Collaboration between teachers and Indigenous support staff on the development of Indigenous students' learning plans, including ensuring the integration of language and culture into these plans.
- Awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many Indigenous communities.
- Understanding that some Indigenous families and communities may continue to take increased safety measures, which may mean that some students will not be able to attend in-person instruction in September.

Communication

Boards/authorities have an obligation to inform and communicate with the First Nations they serve regarding learning plans for Nominal Roll students, Enhancement Agreement goals and Equity Action Plans, Local Education Agreements and Joint Transportation Plans.

Boards/authorities are expected to inform and communicate with the local Métis Chartered communities regarding the learning plans, Enhancement Agreement goals and Equity Action Plans for Métis students.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Indigenous Education in British Columbia](#)

[Indigenous Education Teaching Tools and Resources](#)

[BC Tripartite Education Agreement \(BCTEA\)](#)

[Métis Nation BC Chartered Communities](#)

Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities and Students Requiring Additional Support

Boards of education and independent school authorities should identify students impacted by the pandemic who require additional supports, and ensure supports are in place.

As per regular policy and procedures, learning plans such as Student Learning Plans (SLP), Individual Education Plans (IEP), and Annual Instruction Plans (AIP) should be put in place as soon as possible to support the student's learning. These plans should be based on needs, goals, and strategies articulated in existing plans with additional attention on any additional supports or services, including access to mental health supports, required as a part of recovery.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Regular connections between staff, families and students can happen in a variety of ways and should begin well in advance of the start of the school year. Given the numerous impacts of the pandemic on families, communications should focus on relationship, connection, and lowering anxieties. Parents/ guardians' feedback indicates that relevant, clear and concise information increases their sense of trust and collaboration.

EXAMPLES OF STUDENTS WHO REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

- Some children and youth in care
- Students not yet meeting literacy expectations
- Students at risk of not graduating
- Students requiring mental health or substance use supports
- Students with serious medical conditions
- Students who may be at-risk due to the situation in their home environment
- A student with a disability who has been destabilizing due to changes in their routine
- Students (*including adult learners*) whose educational outcomes may have been negatively impacted during periods of limited in-class instruction

MCFD SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES

At a provincial level, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) continue to work together in an integrated manner to support students with disabilities/diverse abilities and learners requiring additional support. At the local level, boards/authorities are encouraged to work with MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies (DAA) to support coordination of services during recovery.

Supports and services provided by MCFD/DAA should be returning to pre-pandemic states and will become more consistent across communities. Boards/authorities are encouraged to work collaboratively with MCFD/DAA to explore the needs of families during recovery to enable students to maintain stability while returning to the educational setting.

SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITIONS

[Nursing Support Services for children and families](#) include referrals, in-home nursing respite, delegated care, and at home program assessments.

See the [Students and Parents/Caregivers with Immune Compromise or Medical Complexity section](#) for more information on the Homebound Program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Many organizations that provided assistance to families prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to operate. Families are encouraged to seek support from agencies they are familiar with and that they have accessed previously.

[Special Educational Services: A Manual of Policy, Practices and Guidelines](#) is a single point of reference providing legislation, policy and guidelines to support the delivery of inclusive education supports and services. More information is also available in this list of [resources for parents/caregivers of children with disabilities and diverse abilities](#).

[Provincial Outreach Programs](#) are available to support boards/authorities through professional learning, resources, consultation and training during recovery.

Considerations and Planning for Children and Youth in Care

Children and youth in care often face unique circumstances and stressful events in their lives, in addition to those experienced because of the pandemic, that can affect their ability to learn - including separation from family members and their broader community. During the pandemic, physical visitations with family members may have been restricted, making children and youth in care feel even more alone and requiring additional support to feel connected at school.

Monitoring school attendance of children and youth in care and supporting their connections to peers, trusted adults, and the broader school community is critically important during the recovery phase. For Indigenous children and youth, maintaining connection to their culture, Indigenous community and land is vital for maintaining their well-being.

Collaboration needs to continue between boards/authorities and MCFD or Delegated Aboriginal Agencies to ensure the needs of students who are in government care are considered in collaboration with social workers,

caregivers, and students themselves. A range of options should be considered to ensure both children and youth in care and their caregivers are supported. It is also important to connect children and youth in care with service providers that can help address any food security and mental health concerns that may be a result of the pandemic.

International and Boarded Students

Program Continuity

International Students and boarding students who are resident in the province of B.C. will follow the same education program protocols as domestic students for the 2021/22 school year.

School District 73 Business Company ("SD73BC") is currently the only authorized provider of online/distributed learning for international students who are not in the province. The Ministry has authorized SD73BC to enter into agreement with boards of education and independent school authorities to arrange a limited number of online courses for their students who are unable to come to B.C. for the start of the 2021/22 school year. However, all students who engage in these online courses must confirm that they **have an in-progress study permit application and** intend to come to B.C. to enrol with a board or authority as a resident student as soon as it is safe and practicable to do so. Students located outside of B.C. who study with SD73BC pursuant to this arrangement will not earn course credit until they arrive in B.C. and enrol with a board or authority who will complete an equivalency review of courses undertaken with SD73BC and award course credit where appropriate.

Self-Isolation for New and Returning Students

As of the date of this document, all international students arriving in, or returning to, B.C. are required by law to self-isolate for 14 days **if they are not fully vaccinated (two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine administered more than 14 days prior to arrival)**. Students are also required to submit a self-isolation plan and complete the federal ArriveCAN application prior to arrival. More information is available on the [provincial government website](#).

As per requirements from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, boards/authorities must abide by provincial and federal health and safety guidelines for receiving international students, including ensuring that students have a place to quarantine or self-isolate upon arrival. Schools and school districts should communicate any related expectations to the homestay family and check-in with the family on a regular basis to ensure that the student is following required quarantine or self-isolation protocols.

Resources & Links

[K-12 Legislative Framework](#)

[Educational Standards for Independent Schools](#)

[Policy for Student Success](#)

[School Calendar and Hours of Instruction](#)

[Framework for Enhancing Student Learning](#)

Education Programs

Curriculum

- Teachers continue to be expected to work with their students to cover all required learning standards of the provincial curriculum including an emphasis on the [First Peoples Principles of Learning](#).

Assessment & Reporting

- Boards of education must meet the requirements of British Columbia's [Student Reporting Policy](#). Independent school authorities must develop student reporting frameworks which adhere to the criteria established in the [External Evaluation Report](#).

Graduation Program

- As in previous years, students will be able to graduate provided they have fully and successfully met all of the graduation requirements, which includes the required Provincial Graduation Assessments as well as completion of all of their courses needed to fulfill graduation requirements, to the end of the term, semester, or school year.

Career and Post-Secondary Transitions

- The Ministry offers a variety of [programs and courses](#) to support the career development of students.
- Students may earn "[dual credit](#)" by enrolling in and successfully completing courses at specific [post-secondary institutions](#).
- The [Provincial Scholarships Program](#) recognizes student achievement and encourages students to pursue post-secondary education.

Key Contacts & Additional Resources

- Board of education questions regarding collective agreements or employment related matters can be directed to the [BC Public School Employers' Association](#).
- Medical Health Officer Contact Information by Health Authority (*general inquiries*):
 - [Island Health](#) T: **1 800 204 6166**
 - [Fraser Health](#) T: **604 918 7532**
 - [Northern Health](#) E: healthyschools@northernhealth.ca T: **250 565 2000**
 - [Interior Health](#) T: **250 469 7070** (ext. 12791)
 - [Vancouver Coastal Health](#) T: **604 527 4893**