
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

June school restart sets the stage for September French, Chinese and Punjabi translations available

VICTORIA – The June school restart saw almost 200,000 students safely return back to the classroom, giving the Province and a newly appointed education steering committee important information to prepare for the 2020-21 school year.

“Students, educators and families throughout the province have shared heart-warming stories of how meaningful those in-person connections in the classroom were,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “What we’ve learned from this successful June school restart will be invaluable in planning to have even more students in class in September, if it is safe to do so.”

On June 1, all kindergarten-to-Grade 5 students had the option to attend school half-time, while students in Grades 6 to 12 had the option to attend school for the equivalent of one day a week. During this time, the student population was limited to no more than 50% in kindergarten to Grade 5, and no more than 20% in Grades 6 to 12. Children of essential service workers and students who require additional support were welcome to attend schools full time.

To prepare for September, Fleming appointed a steering committee with representatives from teachers, parents, First Nations, support staff, principals and vice-principals, school boards and trustees, and the public health sector to learn from best practices and find solutions to issues.

The committee will review lessons learned from March to June, identify existing and potential issues and propose solutions, and develop and support parent and teacher resources. The Province is committed to ensuring families and education-sector workers have regular updates so they can plan for the school year ahead.

“Boards of education across B.C. recognize the important role that schools play in their communities and the healthy development of children,” said Stephanie Higginson, president, BC School Trustees Association. “With this in mind, boards are committed to ensuring that the students they serve are provided with the best educational opportunities available during these challenging times. Throughout the summer and into September, boards will work closely with the Ministry of Education to ensure as many students as possible will benefit from in-class instruction with strict health and safety guidelines in place in the upcoming school year.”

Throughout the pandemic, educators and support workers have ensured that health and safety standards are strictly followed. These include greater space between desks, minimal physical contact, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning of high-contact surfaces twice daily, and clear protocols for drop-offs and lunch and recess breaks, to name a few.

Plus, teachers have supported students in new and innovative ways, like organizing virtual music performances, keeping students active and engaged through phys-ed video challenges, teaching Indigenous cooking classes and arranging video scavenger hunts to keep students engaged.

Enabling the use of Zoom for B.C. schools has allowed 35,000 educators using that secure video-conferencing platform to bring students together online.

The goal is to have even more students in class in September, as long as it is safe to do so based on the advice of Dr. Bonnie Henry, provincial health officer. Several return to school scenarios are being developed based on a five-stage approach, allowing schools to respond quickly in the event of a second wave. All five stages are supported by strict health and safety guidelines from the provincial health officer, the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC.

Quotes:

Teri Mooring, president, BC Teachers' Federation –

“Our teachers and support staff in B.C. have worked incredibly hard throughout this health emergency to support our students and each other. From emergency remote learning to the staged reopening, school staff have been creative, caring and committed. They have also been concerned about their safety and the well-being of their students. It has been a difficult time for everyone. That’s why it’s good to see the Ministry of Education create this steering committee and working groups to ensure we collaboratively identify all of the issues and plan for solutions before September. This will go a long way to help teachers, support staff, students and their families feel more comfortable about school resuming in the fall.”

Paul Faoro, president, CUPE BC –

“I want to thank all the CUPE members who work in the K-12 education system. These were uncharted waters for everyone, and collectively we did a great job welcoming students back to school. Over the summer, we’ll be working with our partners in education to ensure schools are safe, welcoming and inclusive in September.”

Andrea Sinclair, president, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) –

“BCCPAC truly appreciated the organization and collaboration put forward by our educational partners and the Ministry of Education. Concerns parents had regarding the reopening of schools, though voluntary, were brought forward and alleviated due to the enormous efforts of our educators and support staff. We believe the spirit of ‘in it together’ will continue to ensure the new school year provides all our students educational opportunities for success.”

Quick Facts:

- 5,000 children of essential service workers and students who needed the extra support attended B.C. schools from March to June 2020.
- During the same period, almost 75,000 meals a week were arranged for 16,000 families, and 23,000 technology loans were arranged for students.
- Since March 27, 2020, there have been 308,093 visits to the Keep Learning website where students have access to lessons and device-free activities for any age.

Learn More:

For more information on the five-stage approach to operating schools, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf>

Students, parents, guardians and teachers can find health and safety guidelines, learning resources and accurate, timely information about schools, programs and educational services, including regularly updated frequently asked questions, online:

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools/>

Parents and families are encouraged to access resources on the Keep Learning website that support students learning from home:

<https://www.openschool.bc.ca/keeplearning/>

To find a local school district, visit: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/bcmap.htm>

For a French translation: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/6-25-20_school_restart_French.pdf

For a Chinese (traditional) translation: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/6-25-20_school_restart_Chinese\(traditional\).pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/6-25-20_school_restart_Chinese(traditional).pdf)

For a Punjabi translation: http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/6-25-20_school_restart_Punjabi.pdf

A backgrounder follows.

Contact:

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BACKGROUND

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Five-stage approach for K-12 education during pandemic

The Ministry of Education has developed a five-stage approach: Stage 1 represents all students in all grades learning in the classroom, while still abiding by strict health and safety guidelines. Stage 5 represents a full suspension of all in-class instruction.

If there is an outbreak or a second wave in the 2020-21 school year, schools can move in and out of each of the stages to ensure the safety of students, their families and employees, while maintaining continuity of learning.

Education stages for K-12 students:

Stage 5

- Suspend all in-class instruction for all grades and students.
- Remote and online learning for all students.

Stage 4

- In-class learning for children of essential service workers, students with disabilities and students who require additional support, five days a week.
- Remote and online learning continues for most students.

Stage 3 (current stage)

- In-class learning for children of essential service workers, students with disabilities and students who require additional support, five days a week.
- Kindergarten to Grade 5 – part time, two to three days a week, with 50% of students at a time in schools.
- Grades 6-12 – one day per week, with 20% of students at a time in schools.
- Remote and online learning continues to be available for students.
- Parent/caregiver choice to return to in-class instruction.

Stage 2

- In-class learning for children of essential service workers, students with disabilities and students who require additional support, five days a week.
- In-class learning for all students in elementary school (kindergarten to Grade 7) on a full-time basis.
- In-class learning for secondary students (Grades 8 to 12) on a part-time basis, with 40% of students at a time in schools.
- Remote and online learning continues to be available for secondary students.

Stage 1

- A return to full in-class instruction five days a week, while continuing to follow strict health and safety guidelines.

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