

School during COVID-19

Guidelines for the 2021-22 School Year - January 2022 update

Based on the recommendations and health and safety [Guidelines for K-12 School Settings](#) from Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Kindergarten to Grade 12 students returned to classes in public schools after the December winter break.

A continued emphasis on pandemic response and providing safe learning environments for students, staff and school communities remains as we adapt to living with the emergent COVID-19 context. The Omicron variant has presented new challenges; however, we know there are steps we can all take to keep our schools as safe as possible.

We can add layers to our protection by:

- staying home when we are sick,
- making maximum use of space,
- getting tested when necessary,
- keeping our hands clean,
- self-isolating when it's recommended,
- wearing a mask, and
- getting vaccinated.

Enduring priorities for public schools during the pandemic

- Health and safety of students, staff and school communities;
- Learning continues for all students, with as many students in class as is safely possible;
- Supports for students with diverse learning needs and for students who need different or additional supports;
- Supports for children of critical and essential service workers; and
- Supports for students, teachers and support staff with flexible learning, including access to technology tools and training.

Ready to adapt - Living with COVID-19

We will keep as many students in schools as safely possible, based on recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) and advice of the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Center (YCDC).

Should there be an increased risk of transmission, increased cases or a community outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Yukon schools will adapt operations as necessary, based on the following contingency scenarios and the specific context of the school and community.

Public notices for possible exposures in schools are posted on [Yukon.ca](https://www.yukon.ca).

There are **two reasons** why a school would close or shift to remote learning that we are prepared for:

Public Health: The CMOH may recommend amendments to the K-12 school guidelines or make public health recommendations which could result in groups of students or all students at an individual school moving to remote or blended learning.

The CMOH may also direct the closure of a particular school in response to the evolving COVID-19 situation in Yukon.

Operational: The school superintendent due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students may also recommend that operational needs be achieved through remote learning for specific groups of students or all students at an individual school by moving to remote or blended learning

This would most likely be due to a high absenteeism of staff or certain employees required for a school to function and the inability to replace those absences. The superintendent may also recommend to the Minister of Education a full closure of a school where operational capacity does not allow for remote or blended learning.

Adapting school operations during the pandemic period

Public Health Risk	Advice from the CMOH	School capacity	What school looks like for students: <u>Priorities</u>	What it looks like at individual schools: <u>Public Health Contingency Scenarios</u>	What it looks like at individual schools: <u>Operational Capacity Scenarios</u>	Operational capacity
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">↑</div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: 2em;">↓</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">↓</div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">Low</p> <p style="margin-bottom: 10px;">High</p>	Guidelines for K-12 school settings (includes busing)	~100%	All Kindergarten to Grade 12 students in classes in schools full-time, for the maximum instructional time possible, 5 days per week. Flexible learning programs for all students.	Individual Case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers continue to be responsible for providing learning opportunities and assessing student learning of curricular learning standards. Remote learning opportunities are offered until it is safe to return to school. Continue to use Zoom and other digital platforms. Teachers must ensure students have digital and print resources Student(s) are sent home daily learning packages. Students not well enough will be offered support upon return to school 	Individual or few staff unable to attend work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are able to manage operationally. Temporarily adjust staff teaching assignments. No adjustments to student learning groups. Use of Teachers on Call. 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">↑</div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: 2em;">↓</div> <div style="margin-left: 10px;">↓</div> </div> <p style="margin-top: 10px;">High</p> <p style="margin-bottom: 10px;">Low</p>
		~50%	If necessary: essential groups in school full-time, and part-time rotating schedules for other students. Flexible learning programs for all students.	Cases in classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers continue to be responsible for providing learning opportunities and assessing student learning of curricular learning standards. Remote or blended learning opportunities are offered to students required to be at home until it is safe to return to school. Continue to use Zoom and other digital platforms. Schools must ensure students have digital and print resources needed to be successful at home. Students not well enough will be offered support upon return to school 	Multiple staff unable to attend work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are not able to manage operationally as usual to deliver some classes as scheduled. Temporarily adjust staff teaching assignments. Some combining or adjusting of student learning groups Use of Teachers on Call. 	
		~20%	If necessary: essential groups only in school. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students with disabilities or diverse learning needs ✓ Students in need of additional support Remote learning for majority of students.	Large group in school cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers continue to be responsible for providing learning opportunities and assessing student learning of curricular learning standards. Primary students (Early-K to Grade 3) and students requiring additional supports or with disabilities or diverse learning needs are prioritized to remain in school for in-person learning with safety measures in place. Remote learning opportunities are offered. Student(s) are sent home daily learning packages. Students not well enough will be offered support upon return to school. 	Significant proportion of staff unable to attend work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are not able to manage operationally to deliver most classes as scheduled. Temporarily adjust staff teaching assignments. Adjustments to student learning groups. Combining of classes for multiple days. Use of Teachers on Call. Temporary re-deployment of central administration staff. 	
		~0%	Last resort: face-to-face learning suspended; no students in classes in schools. Distance learning for all students.		Majority of staff unable to attend work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most/all teaching assignments require adjustment. Reconfiguration of most student learning groups Use of Teachers on Call. Temporary re-deployment of central administration staff. 	

Health and safety at school

Yukon public schools welcomed K-12 students back to classes in school in August 2021, with health and safety measures and routines in place to protect students, staff and visitors.

These [guidelines](#) and the associated school operational plans were updated November 8, 2021, with increased measures related to mask use and restriction of inter-school activities.

Guidelines and plans for public schools

The health and safety of students and staff is the first priority.

[K-12 School Guidelines for 2021-22: COVID 19](#) were set in collaboration with the Department of Education and Chief Medical Officer of Health to outline key health and safety requirements for Yukon schools.

The guidelines outline the infection prevention and exposure control measures recommended to maintain safe and healthy environments for students, families and staff.

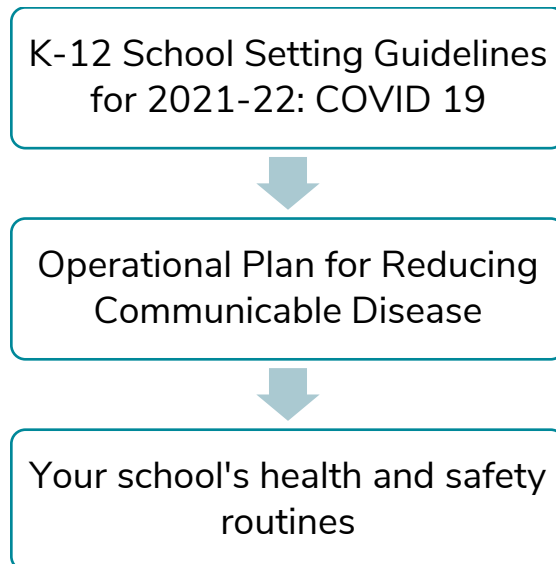
Schools have the following measures in place, as of November 8, 2021, to ensure schools remain a safe environment for students, staff, and families.

- Students over the age of five and staff are required to wear masks in all indoor settings, including the classroom, common areas and hallways.
- School buses are operating with required mask use for all drivers and riders age five and older.
- Physical distancing, hand washing and other hygiene practices, and staying home while sick are still a key part of the school year.
- Activities between schools are suspended until further notice.

Operational Plans for Reducing Communicable Disease

School administrators worked with staff, Superintendents, School Councils and Yukon First Nations to update the [Operational Plans for Reducing Communicable Disease](#) (previously called Operational Plans) for the 2021-22 school year for their schools. Plans were updated on November 8, after changes to the K-12 School Setting Guidelines for 2021-22: COVID-19.

These plans set out the specific infection prevention and control measures at each school, how each school will adapt its schedules and operations, and each school's communication plan for sharing information with their school communities.



Riding the school bus

School bus services for the 2021–22 school year returned to operation with the additional measure of required mask use for:

- children 5 years and older; and
- bus drivers.

Students were provided a school bus pass on their first day of school. Students are required to show their school bus pass when they get on the school bus, which will list their bus number.

Bus route information is posted on Yukon.ca: <https://yukon.ca/en/school-bus-schedules>.

Reminders for students and families

- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in our K-12 schools and communities. Eligible students and staff are strongly encouraged to get their vaccine.
- Parents will need to [monitor students for symptoms](#) and keep them home if they are showing symptoms.
 - All students and staff should stay home if they have symptoms.
 - Arrange for testing if students have symptoms or based on the latest public health advice.
 - For students who are immunocompromised, please consult your doctor to determine if they should attend school.
 - If students need to be kept at home for health reasons, they will be able to continue with their learning away from school - please contact your school to discuss short- and long-term options.
- All students 5 years and older (K-12) and staff must wear masks in all indoor school settings.
 - This includes in classrooms, hallways and on school buses.
 - Exceptions are made when eating, drinking or participating in vigorous physical activities.
- If a student develops symptoms of COVID-19, staff must take the following steps:
 - Immediately separate the symptomatic student from others in a designated, supervised area.
 - When over the age of 5, the student must wear a mask.

- Contact the student's parent or guardian to pick them up as soon as possible.
 - Anyone in the room with the ill student must wear a mask and, where possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres from them.
 - Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space and areas the student occupied or used. This includes classrooms, bathrooms and common areas.
- Schools will continue to be cleaned more often.

Operating and adapting school programs

School principals and staff have planned operations to ensure a safe school environment for students and staff based on the health and safety guidelines from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the unique needs and context of their school.

Regular updates will be shared by your local school and [on Yukon.ca](https://www.yukon.ca) about school operations, as part of ongoing communication between school staff and school communities.

The plan for the 2021-22 school year includes:

- Full-day, in-class instruction five days per week or adapted operations as required.
- Resource programs for students with disabilities, transitions programs and individualized programming for students needing additional support will continue at school all day, every day.
- For information about the Gadzoosdaa Student Residence, please contact the Gadzoosdaa office at 867-667-8067.

Identifying and addressing impacts on learning and wellbeing

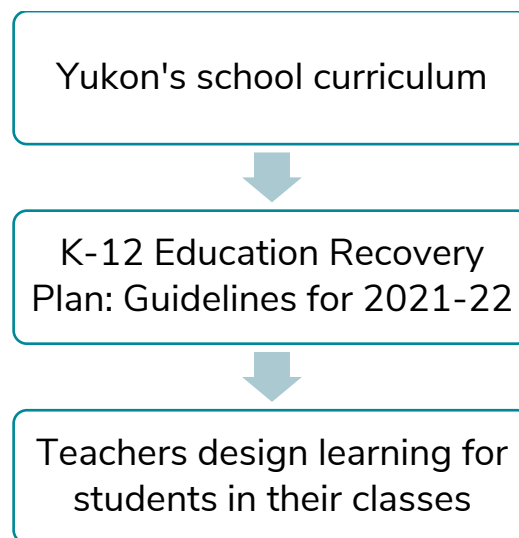
Supporting the health and well-being of students, families and staff continues to be a priority as we learn to live with COVID-19 throughout the pandemic.

Schools must develop processes for identifying and addressing pandemic impacts on student learning and well-being, with a focus on supporting the development of the

whole child. Prioritization should be in the areas of literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development and mental health.

Schools are following the [K-12 Education Recovery Plan: Guidelines for Schools for the 2021-22 School Year](#), which outline the expectations, approaches and supports for learning to deliver the curriculum and a full and complete school year during the pandemic.

These guidelines will direct the delivery of remote and blended learning, meeting all students where they are at in their learning from last year, and adapting instruction and learning supports.



What students and parents can expect for learning this year

As part of Yukon's modernized curriculum, teachers and students use technology as part of learning to develop digital literacy and skills they will need for their lives and careers through blended learning. They will also deepen their engagement through increased hands-on minds-on learning such as service learning, place-based learning and Yukon First Nations Ways of Knowing, Doing and Being.

Blended learning is an instructional approach that combines traditional in-person classroom teaching with other forms of digital learning. An increased focus on

professional development for blended learning was provided for educators in response to survey data collected.

It is important to note that blended learning is a broad concept that can include a wide range of strategies and approaches. It is a flexible approach primarily focused on empowering students and teachers to improve learning outcomes by maximizing teacher-led instructional time and providing student-led time to develop independent learning skills.

Blended tools seek to enhance the relevance of learning for students, and thereby increase student engagement and performance. Digital learning technologies and tools, when combined with in-person classroom instruction, create 'blended learning' opportunities that can allow greater personalization and flexibility for learners.

A handout on blended learning is available on Yukon.ca: <https://yukon.ca/en/what-blended-learning-handout>

Some blended strategies could include:

- In-person teaching and learning, where students apply their knowledge, deepen their understanding and demonstrate their learning with their teachers (teacher-led activities, on the land learning opportunities, workstations, labs, etc.),
- Student-led learning where students use digital tools to gather information through inquiry, reading, research and work on assignments (online tools, resources, and collaboration),
- Teacher support, instruction and feedback both in person and online,
- Students learning skills to manage some of their own learning (goal setting, organization, prioritizing, time management, etc.) with some flexibility for the time, place, and pace of their learning.

Service learning is a kind of experiential education, where students participate in a learning activity with community goals that takes place outside of school. Service learning has a high impact on engaging students in their learning. During the pandemic, people connected and worked together and learned in this way as part of the natural response to the pandemic.

Place-based learning is a kind of experiential education. Place-based learning environments are those in which students develop a more personal relationship with their natural environment and community as foundations for learning and resilience. Emphasizing hands-on and relevant learning experiences, this approach to teaching and learning helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' understanding of the world, and creates a heightened commitment from students to serve as active, contributing citizens.

First Nations Ways of Knowing, Doing and Being

School staff are expected to continue to communicate and work with local Yukon First Nations contacts to enhance supports for First Nations students. School staff will ensure they maintain and combine efforts, through existing relationships with Yukon First Nations, to support the needs of these students served by their schools. School staff should also be working with Yukon First Nations to ensure that Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being continue to be part of student instruction.

Students with diverse learning needs and those who need different supports

- Resource programs for students with diverse learning needs and disabilities, transitions programs and other programs for students needing different supports will be available at school all day every day.
- School staff continue to be responsible for developing plans for students with diverse learning needs, to ensure equity in access to learning opportunities. Further, schools should identify students impacted by the pandemic who require additional supports, and ensure supports are in place.
- More information about these supports is available through your school and in the [Yukon Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Recovery Plan: Guidelines for Schools for the 2021-22 School Year](#).

Support for Students and Families

The pandemic and its impacts can present unique circumstances and stressful events in the lives of students and their families. Acknowledgement of the impacts of these unique circumstances and positive supports and response is vital to maintain well-being and relationships.

As students, families, and staff adjust for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year, it is important to highlight the role of the education system in supporting positive 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 and learning success.

It is important that school staff continue to monitor students and connect them and their families with community supports.

School staff should communicate the supports that are available to families, including specific information on how to access these supports and available community resources that can help support ongoing learning and family well-being.

Mental Health Resources

- [Mental health and wellness support during COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 and teenagers: Supporting Youth Mental Wellness](#)
- [Erase \(Expect Respect and a Safe Education\)](#) hosts a range of mental health and well-being resources for students and families.
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) free resources and supports
- [Connected North](#)

More information

- [General information about COVID-19](#)
- [K-12 school guidelines for 2021-22: COVID-19](#)