



BORDER LAND

SCHOOL DIVISION

August 23, 2021

Dear Border Land Community,

As the end of summer nears and fall approaches, excitement for back to school begins. On September 8, 2021, Border Land School Division looks forward to welcoming students back into our schools. We believe the best place for learning is in school with teachers and alongside peers. Our planning for the school year focuses on welcoming students back and addressing the pandemic's impacts on mental health, well-being, and learning.

Schools will begin the school year at the Caution (Yellow) level of the Pandemic Response System. Schools will work with Manitoba Public Health officials and Manitoba Education to implement any additional public health measures as required. Contingency plans will be in place should our schools be elevated to the Restricted (Orange) or the Critical (Red) levels. BLS D divisional and school based leadership teams are carefully reviewing the recently published [Manitoba's Restoring Safe Schools Planning Guide](#). As always, we will follow the guidance of Manitoba Public Health and Manitoba Education to ensure the safety of our students and staff. As we approach September 8, your local school will share out school specific reopening information.

Manitoba Education has released a [Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Students](#), to share what families can expect when schools reopen. We would like to highlight a few pieces of this document.

- Manitoba Public Health currently states that masks are highly recommended for all students, staff, and visitors. Masks and personal protective equipment will be made available to schools. We encourage students and staff to follow the Manitoba Public Health recommendation, as it may be helpful in preventing BLS D from being moved into the Restricted (Orange) level or remote learning should cases rise in our schools and/or community. Please be aware that Manitoba Public Health may change mask recommendations at any time. BLS D will continue to review mask protocols and will adjust as needed.
- Staff and students are expected to continue to follow the fundamentals of self-screening, hand hygiene, and staying home when sick. Parents/caregivers must [screen](#) their children for COVID-19 symptoms before sending them to school. Schools will continue to send symptomatic students/staff home.
- All K-12 Students will attend class full-time and will be in their regular classroom. To reduce potential exposure in students not yet eligible for vaccination, cohorts will continue to be used for Kindergarten to Grade 6. Schools will have plans to manage the flow of people in common areas and avoid over-crowding. There will continue to be less

furniture in many of our classrooms to allow for optimal flow and space at the start of the school year.

- Schools will continue to be cleaned on a regular basis with special attention to high-touch surfaces and washrooms. We encourage the use of refillable water bottles as only water fountains that are no-touch will be in use.
- Sports, extracurriculars, band, choir, and music are allowed to resume and will follow all Manitoba Public Health and Sport Manitoba requirements. No overnight trips are permitted at this time. Schools will publish additional information regarding extracurricular activities and sports.
- School bus transportation will resume. Assigned seating will continue, with priority being placed on siblings and classmates being seated together. Each bus will continue to be considered a cohort. Mask usage on buses will also follow current public health recommendations with usage being highly encouraged by staff and students. Buses will be cleaned daily. Reducing the number of students on our buses will help to minimize virus exposure to riders, therefore we strongly encourage alternative transportation where possible and transportation to non-eligible pupils may be limited.
- Public Health officials have indicated that they may offer approved COVID-19 vaccines through the school-based immunization program. It is our understanding that parents/caregivers will receive advance notification, and student vaccination will require parental consent. We expect to learn additional information in the coming weeks and will continue share this information to parents/guardians.

We have all come to understand that planning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic can be difficult as it is a fluid and sometimes unpredictable situation. BLSD will continue to update plans and communicate to families when changes occur.

Thank you for your continued support as we plan to have all BLSD students in our schools this September. We all look forward to returning to pre-COVID times, but also understand that given we are not yet there, there are steps we need to follow this school year to allow for as few interruptions as possible.

Sincerely,

Krista Curry

Krista Curry
Superintendent & CEO
Border Land School Division