



BORDER LAND

SCHOOL DIVISION

February 9, 2022

This letter is being written to bring clarity to information that has recently been shared regarding what Border Land School Division does and does not have the authority to determine.

Since the start of the pandemic, Manitoba Public Health has set provincial direction and determines the Public Health orders. Manitoba Education consults with Public Health to determine how Public Health orders are to be applied to the school setting. Manitoba Education then provides direction to all public-school divisions and provincially funded independent schools. The guidance provided by Manitoba Education can be found on the Manitoba Education [website](#).

Mask use for all staff and students in schools has been in place since September 2021. At that time schools were operating in the yellow level of the pandemic response system. Based on the spread of Omicron, when students returned to school in January, schools were moved to restricted orange on the pandemic response system. In restricted orange, school divisions were directed that mask use now included physical education classes and as a result, indoor physical education was to be low cardio. Outdoor physical education classes can be vigorous without masks.

Confusion has arisen as the Public Health Order states that masks need not be worn for physical activities. Manitoba Education directions has clarified that this refers to physical activities outside the physical education classroom, such as high cardio **extracurricular sports** where students are permitted to remove their masks.

We expect the use of masks in physical education class will be removed when we shift out of restricted orange, but until that time, all school divisions across Manitoba are following this direction. This is not something we can alter locally. Locally a school division has the authority to process mask exemption requests when submitted with the required medical documentation, but we do not have the authority to alter the direction provided to us by Manitoba Education.

Border Land School Division has received emails, phone calls and experienced protests. The current direction is supported by some and not by others. One consistent feeling that emerges from the communication is that of tiredness and wanting it all to be over. Although we recognize that feeling, we need to continue to follow the direction Manitoba Education provides us. Contrary to social media reports, we as a division are not lying. A joint letter from Manitoba Education and Manitoba Public Health was shared to families in September, and this is still the case. Public health orders and direction from Manitoba Education is binding on school divisions. Locally school staff are working hard with students and families to support children within the parameters provided. We thank them for their ongoing work.

We also want to thank you, our families, for your patience, understanding, and your continual work with your local school in supporting your children. We are all looking forward to endemic planning. We believe we can continue to work together to see us to that time.

Thank you

Krista Curry

Krista Curry
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