



**Re-opening Plan-2020-2021 Academic School Year
Province of Manitoba's Restoring Safe Schools
Last Updated: August 21, 2020**

Planning for re-opening:

School will reopen for teachers and staff on September 2, 2020, with students returning on September 8, 2020. While Manitoba is targeting a return to in-class learning for all in the fall, school divisions and independent schools have been asked to prepare for the following:

1. In-class learning
2. Blended learning (in class and remote)
3. Remote learning (with exceptions)

General Planning Considerations:

This plan is based on the most current information available and is subject to change. Schools must follow existing public health requirements and educational priorities as identified by Public Health and Manitoba Education. Existing guidelines, considerations and conditions of preparedness outlined in *Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools*, as well as those previously established for *Limited Use of School Facilities and Day Camps* have helped inform this plan.

Public Health Orders and Guidance:

A Pandemic Response Team (school principal, administrative assistant, classroom teacher, resource teacher, custodian and school board chair) is in place. The school principal, in collaboration with the Pandemic Response Team, will remain current with evolving Public Health Orders and communicate these to the school community as necessary. Staff will be informed of developments through the summer and will be provided with specific training on existing Public Health Orders, symptom management and sanitizing protocols prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year. Information on home screening and safety measures in place will be communicated to parents in August 2020 with direction on reviewing these protocols with their children. As classes return to school, classroom teachers will teach new processes to students and reinforce these messages frequently.

School day structure/learning plans:

Level 1 –

In-class learning

- In-class learning resumes for all K-8 students.

In Level 1, we would begin the school year with caution, with adjustments to the start/departure times, assigned entrances and washrooms, and staggered recesses. Parents and volunteers will not enter the building initially in order to limit risk. Over time, we would look at gradually shifting to our traditional timetable, reintroducing extracurricular activity and increasing options for volunteers and visitors within the school.

Learning Across All Subject Areas

The learning expectation would be regular programming to the best of our ability with health protocols in place.

Cohorting

In order to accommodate full classes of students, we will be using a cohort system as suggested by Public Health. In this system, one meter of distance is required between student workspaces. Each cohort has less than 75 students. Furniture will be moved into temporary storage to allow for increased space for physical distancing of desks. In some classrooms desks will be 1 meter apart with some barriers for the desks that cannot maintain the 1 meter social distancing. Teachers will move from classroom to classroom and students would remain in their homeroom. Kindergarten – grade 2, grade 3-5, and grade 6-8 will be 3 separate cohorts that will enter and exit the building at different times and will have outdoor breaks only with their co-hort. Otherwise, each grade will be kept separate from other grades to mitigate the spread of germs.

Recess

Public health advises that playgrounds and play structures are low risk for transmission. Children need to get outside and be active. Students will not be able to bring their own sport equipment or toys to play at recess. They will only be permitted to use class equipment that will be sanitized before the next use of the equipment. Play areas will be assigned to each class with physical distancing. Each cohort will go outside at staggered times to play. Students will only be permitted to play with each other at an arm's length away and only with students from their own classroom. Hand hygiene will be performed before and after recess.

Water fountains will not be used. Students will bring their own water bottle from home to use. There will be no sharing of water bottles.

Level 2-

Blended learning

All students, including students that have special needs and vulnerable students that need the interaction of a school day will attend classes in smaller groups. This would be a blend of in class and remote learning as 2 meter social distancing would need to take place. This would mean each class would be made into small groups attending school on a rotational bases so that in-class sessions could still occur and students that were not physically in school would remote learn. This would only occur if public health deemed to safe to be in class.

Level 2 will focus be on Numeracy and Literacy, along with Science, Social Studies and French. Whenever possible other curricular areas such as music, physical education and art will be maintained, although adjustments to time allotments may be necessary to allow adherence to public health orders including time for increased sanitation.

Level 3 –

Remote learning with exceptions

- In-class learning for children of critical workers, while remote learning for all other K-8 students

Remote Learning

Over the spring, learning shifted from in-class to remote learning. Teachers used a variety of online platforms, along with packaged materials to deliver programming across the grade levels. Staff will take time to reflect on the successes and challenges of remote learning and to determine what additions or alterations could be made to improve remote learning in the future. As student engagement was high during the spring, few alterations are anticipated and would mainly relate to increased teacher/student interaction throughout the school day. Students would have physical packages of work plus interaction with the teachers weekly.

In-school Sessions

The school developed a Limited Use Plan for re-opening the school during June 2020. This plan worked successfully, but it will be adjusted to increase the opportunity for student/teacher personal interactions in the event that level 3 is enacted. All families that are critical workers would have the opportunity to send their child(ren) to school with 2-meter social distancing in place for desks. This would only occur if public health deemed it safe to do so.

Emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy

In Level 3, learning resources will be focused on Literacy and Numeracy, with allowance for other curricular areas at the discretion of the classroom teacher in consultation with the school principal.

Requirements for Preparation:

As we plan for the above levels, provincial guidelines identify four key areas of preparedness for schools to consider: **Institutional (Operations), Learning, School Staff** and **Students and Families**, each with points to address.

Operational Preparedness – All Level

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Our building staff have increased their cleaning and disinfecting regimen, with more frequent cleaning of washrooms and high touch surfaces. Doors of washrooms will be set open to allow for less contact. Other high touch surfaces including handrails, push-releases, counters and light switches will be cleaned with greater frequency, at least 2 times per day. Hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and disinfectant have been secured for this purpose and will be restocked as needed.

Hand Hygiene

All entrances, rooms and spaces are equipped with hand sanitizer. Anyone entering the building will be expected to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer. A schedule for class hand washing will be in place (before eating, after recess and additionally as needed) with students receiving direct instruction on hand washing and use of hand sanitizer.

Screening

The school has a screening protocol based upon the screening tools developed by the Province of Manitoba. Families will conduct self and child screening before leaving home in the morning. Children and staff who are ill or showing any symptoms must not come to school.

Physical Distancing in and Around the School

Signage will be around the school encouraging hand hygiene, physical distancing and listing symptoms of COVID-19 for all to be aware. All traffic flow signs will be visible throughout the building and will indicate "keep right" as students and staff move through the building. Arrows will be placed on the floor as needed to assist with this. Entrances will have COVID-19 symptoms check list posted for people entering the building to self-check themselves. Review of this practice will be part of the education for students. Each grade will be assigned a specific entrance to the building and arrival time will be a window of arrival, as opposed to a set time. This will reduce congestion and allow for physical distancing and time to sanitize hands upon entry to the building. Teachers will set up routines for locker and coat hook access to avoid crowding in these areas. Departure time will be staggered, with staff members escorting younger groups out to the designated pick-up area. Supervision at pick-up time will be maintained, and increased if needed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

At this point, Dr. Roussin, Manitoba's Chief Health Officer, has mandated students from grade 4-8 to wear non- medical masks. Grade 4- 8 students will have to wear masks as not all area of the school allow for 2-meter social distancing. Kindergarten to grade 3 students may choose to wear non-medical masks as well. Students will be able to remove their masks for lunch and outdoor activity. Staff will wear non-medical masks. They may also wear a face shield depending on how closely they are working with an individual. Staff will have access to face shields for use when working in close proximity with students. Instruction on proper use of PPE will be part of staff development prior to school start.

School Transportation

St. Gerard has 1 school bus to transport students. We will follow the protocols in place for transporting our students. Students from grade 4-8 will be required to wear non-medical face masks. Each child will be hand sanitized before entering the bus. Students will be required to carry their own hand sanitizer for this purpose. The Bus Driver will not have hand sanitizer on the bus for safety reasons. We will have one child per seat except when a family is seating together and if needed, we will sit by class cohort. We will take multiple runs for drop-off and pick -up to follow the social distancing, if needed. We will communicate these protocols to families. Families may choose alternate transportation for their children.

Limiting Non-essential Visitors

We welcome parent involvement in our school community, provincial guidelines instruct us to limit the number of non-essential visitors in the school for the time being. If possible, parents are asked to conduct school business via email or telephone. Parents are asked to make appointments with the office to come into the school. Parents may accompany their children to the school doors, but we ask that parents refrain from coming into the school.

Facility Use and Gym Rentals

At this point, all facility permits have been put on hold until we are confident that appropriate safety measures can be implemented and maintained. Considerations will include: the level of sanitation required after an event, the need for a record of attendees, and the increased burden on staff for cleaning and disinfecting. This will be monitored and as the comfort level increases use of the gym after hours could happen. All health protocols will be followed including; self- screening, record of attendance, and cleaning/disinfecting.

Food Handling/Sharing

The school has a “No Sharing” of foods brought from home policy, originally set for allergy measures. Students will be reminded of this rule and its increased importance through the pandemic. Shared food as part of a class celebration will be suspended until further notice. Our daily Hot Lunch program will be on hold until the process of distributing food has been evaluated and protocols put in place to ensure safety of students, staff and volunteers. Students will eat lunch in classrooms to maintain social distancing.

Toys and Other Shared Learning Equipment

Play is an integral part of the learning in the early years. Consideration will be given to how to mitigate the risks of interactive play. Staff will assess the toys and other items used in the classrooms and put away items that are not easily disinfected, including: stuffed toys, costumes, hats, etc. All toys will be disinfected at the end of each day. We will use as a resource *Learning and Joy in the Pandemic: Manitoba Kindergarten Practice Resource*.

Learning Preparedness

Recovery Learning

We were fortunate to have had a high rate of student engagement through the remote learning period in the spring. However, there are students who will need additional supports as they re-enter school. Transition meetings with teachers took place in the spring to communicate information on students’ academic, social and emotional needs to the receiving teachers. We anticipate that there will be some additional needs that surface as we begin classes in the fall and through the school year in general. Our use the *Recovery Learning Guidelines* document to help us navigate this situation.

Blended learning

There will be students who must remain home for short or long periods of time during the pandemic. Teachers are able to send and receive assignments electronically. Teachers will also prepare learning packages as needed for pick-up or delivery. Frequent email and phone communication with students and parents will be in place to ensure engagement in remote learning. This will be facilitated by the classroom teacher, but may also require involvement from support staff. To support our blended in-school and remote learning approaches we will additionally refer to the list of Learning Resources available on the Manitoba Education website.

Technology Education

St. Gerard School has a computer lab and computers in the classrooms. Students and staff will be asked to hand sanitize or wash hands before and after using any school device. Staff and students will be instructed on the method to disinfect devices between users. Staff have a strong grasp of which families had difficulty with remote learning through the spring, as evidenced in student engagement. We had taken a technology survey with families in the spring and it seems all of our students have access to the internet and devices- some more limited than others.

Music Education

Our music program will focus on assignments that present less risk for students, including: body percussion, non- movement activities, individualized manipulatives etc. Smaller class groupings, use of larger spaces (gym, cafeteria), assigning instruments to individuals/class cohorts and students traveling with personal supplies will all be taken into consideration. Students will be expected to hand sanitize or wash hands before and after music class. To reduce travel within the building, some music classes will be held in homerooms. Manitoba’s Restoring Safe Services *Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists* will be used as a reference and guideline for instruction.

Physical Education

Physical active will be an important part of the school's reopening, as it is important for mental health and social emotional connection in addition to physical well-being. Our Physical Education program will incorporate activities that allow for increased distancing and will endeavour to allocate equipment to particular cohorts to reduce the amount to disinfection necessary between classes. Students will be expected to hand sanitize or wash hands before and after physical education class. Changing for gym class will be held back and then gradually reintroduced starting with the Grade 6-8 students once a process has been developed to ensure distancing and sanitation. Wherever possible, physical education classes will be held outdoors. Manitoba's Restoring Safe Services *Sports Guidelines* will be used as a reference and guideline for instruction.

Assemblies and Other Gatherings

Public Health Orders will likely limit the size of groups as we move into the fall. This will impact our ability to gather as an entire school. In order to maintain our sense of community we will gather smaller groups for Mass and assemblies. Larger gatherings may occur outdoors while the weather allows.

Field Trips

All field trips for the 2020-21 school year will need additional evaluation before they are approved. The Field trip plan will include information of the venue's physical distancing and other health and safety measures.

Recess Time

Outdoor play is important for children's health and well-being, so daily recess periods will continue. Staggered recesses will take place with kindergarten to grade 2 going out at one time and grade 3-5 going out at another time, as well as assigning play areas to specific groups to minimize the crossover between groups. Cohorting will be in place.

Extra-curricular Activity and School Sports

Our school community values extra-curricular opportunities, including sport, and has offered a wide variety of options for students. Extra-curricular activities will be gradually reintroduced as the school year begins, with thorough assessment of each activity to ensure that public health orders can be maintained.

Staff Preparedness:

Symptom Management

Our staff has a very high attendance rate, which speaks highly of their professional commitment. In this pandemic, however, staff members will have to demonstrate this commitment to the school community by remaining at home when they are ill or have any respiratory or other COVID-19 symptoms.

Personal Risk Factors

Staff members who have personal risk factors or require medical accommodations must advise the Principal of the issue. Each case will be dealt with according to Manitoba labour law and school employment guidelines.

Staff Well-being

Staff members have experienced a great deal of stress through the period of remote learning. Emphasis on personal well-being and stress reduction will continue to be a part of our professional dialogue through this year.

Student and Family Preparedness

Communication

The school has strong mechanisms in place to communicate information to parents. We will continue to use them to educate and inform parents as school reopens in the fall. If there are families that are not responsive via the normal mechanisms, we will look at other ways of reaching out to them.

Attendance and Participation in Remote Learning

Students are expected to attend in-class learning unless they are ill or exhibiting symptoms. Families will be required to report absences to the school office as per our regular process. If remote learning is enacted as part of the learning plan, students will be expected to participate. School staff will work to identify any barriers to full participation in remote learning and assist families in addressing them. Students who are unable to return to school due to personal or family health risks factors related to COVID-19 will be supported in remote or blended learning.

Illness at School

Parents will be expected to screen their child at home prior to bringing them to school. If a child should become ill or symptomatic while at school he or she will be isolated away from the group, a medical mask will be provided for the child to wear unless there is a safety issue preventing the child from wearing the mask, and parents will be contacted to take the child home. Parents are encouraged to have contingency plans in place to care for an ill child.

In the event that there is a case of COVID-19 connected with the school, public health will lead the response and provide guidance. Public health would be contacting those individuals who may have been exposed if a positive case is in the school. Public health will advise staff, and students if they have been in close contact, if they need to self-isolate or self-monitor and when they can return to school.

Before and After School Care

Childcare is important for many of our families. If needed, depending in numbers of children attending each day, we will break the participants into smaller age-based groups and disperse them into multiple spaces in the school for social distancing. Children will also need to have their own supplies as sharing will not be happening. After school snack will continue however all snacks will be individual- no family style sharing will occur until permitted by public health.

Community Mental Health and Well-being

Attention to the mental health and well-being of our school community is a priority for our school community. We have access to Clinicians for support though CSS. We have learned techniques for stress and mindfulness practices that we will use to help with anxiety and well-being as needed. Continuing to greet students and families by name, encouraging people to talk about concerns and fears and being there to listen to each other will help us all maintain a positive attitude during this difficult time.