

West Vancouver Schools RETURN TO SCHOOL FAQs

September 2, 2020



Learning Options and Cohorts

What options are available beyond in-person learning?

Home Schooling - This is an alternative method of teaching outside of the BC education system. Typically, a family member delivers and is responsible for designing the entire educational program for their child at home. Homeschooling programs are not supervised by a B.C.-certified teacher.

Distributed Learning (DL) - This has always been an alternate to in-person learning that allows students to access learning on their own terms with limited in-person sessions. Teachers often teach via video conferences, email and through other means. In K-9 this is for a full program; in grades 10-12 it is for individual courses. West Vancouver does not have its own DL Program, but there are various options available to students all across the province.

Temporary Transition - For K-9 students who are not ready to return to in-person learning this September, we are working to develop a temporary transition program that will allow students to be attached to their school while receiving some of their education at home as we support a transition back to full time in-person learning through the fall. This program will start the week of September 21st.

How do we access different options for the fall?

We are asking families to have a discussion with their school principals / vice-principals. Each set of circumstances is different and this way we can help personalize the best option for your child. While the conversations are localized, the options are consistent across all schools.

Why has the district not done a survey?

Generally, larger districts are doing surveys, for example Surrey has 70,000 students and we have 7,000 students - we have the benefit of being more personal with the options and conversations.

What if my child has a specific medical condition?

According to the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control, most children who are immunocompromised can return to in-class instruction when safety measures are in place. Protective self-isolation is only recommended for children who are severely immunocompromised, as determined on a case-by case basis. This is a conversation to have with your doctor and your principal and speaks to why we need to personalize options for students. A student who is in cancer remission will need a different set of adaptations than a student without an underlying health issue who is looking to slowly transition back to in-person learning.

Are the options similar across districts?

Yes, we are in regular contact with districts across Metro Vancouver and British Columbia, and while there are some reports in the media and social media about process differences, the options are very similar.

If we choose a temporary transition program, when can we opt back in fully?

- **Elementary**

During the month of September, return to school for elementary students will be flexible. Students will be welcomed back to their schools when they are ready to transition to in-person instruction. After September 30th, there will be a limited number of return dates established with the intention that students have transitioned to in-person learning by January 4th, 2021.

- **Secondary**

Secondary students that choose the temporary transition program will be able to fully transition back to in-person instruction at the beginning of the second quarter, Wednesday, November 18, and at the beginning of the 3rd quarter, Tuesday, February 2.

If we choose a temporary transition program, who will be my child's teacher?

The temporary transition program will be district, not school based. Your child's teacher will be a West Vancouver teacher, but not one from your child's school.

If we choose a temporary transition program, will we keep our spot in our school?

Yes, you will keep the spot in your school. You will join a learning cohort when you transition back to in-person instruction at your school.

What programs will be supported in the temporary transition program?

English and French Immersion will be supported, but no additional specialty programs.

How will instruction occur in the temporary transition program?

The temporary transition program is designed to provide support for students while they transition back to in-person instruction at school. This is not an online learning program. Assignments and support will be provided by a West Vancouver School teacher at regular times and there will be opportunities for video conferencing on a weekly basis. Families will share the responsibility of core instruction. Students will need to be able to work independently from their teacher and will be responsible for completing work and assignments. The West Vancouver Temporary Transition Program will begin on September 21, 2020.

What if my child requires ELL support or has an IEP and we want to choose the temporary transition option?

Support for ELL and IEP's will be made available for students who require it but support will look different for those engaging in the temporary transition program. Virtual connections two or three times a week are likely.

How large will cohorts be for my child at school?

Most have seen that under health guidelines, cohorts can be up to 60 for elementary schools and 120 for high schools. Our reality in West Vancouver is that elementary school cohorts are really individual classes, so they will range from 20-35 in almost all cases - this includes students, teachers, EAs and any other adults that may be part of a cohort.

For secondary schools, grade 8 and 9 students will take their period 1 and 2 class with the same 30-60 students each quarter. These students groups may be combined for lunch groupings of up to 120 students and staff. Grade 10-12 students will have their first period classes in-person with up to 30 students. Where possible, second period classes will be in-person made up of students and staff in a cohort of 120. Where grade 10-12 cohorts can not be aligned by cohort due to timetable restrictions, personalized and diverse student programming, period 2 classes will be 'Hybrid' and will be made up of a remote class and smaller face to face classes.

Tuesday and Thursday X Block classes and programs are all considered Hybrid Classes. These classes may be made up of a remote class and smaller face to face classes or have an alternate facility/space that allows for physical distancing. For example, a sports field or Gymnasium.

Will all secondary classes be in-person?

As directed by the Ministry of Education, our goal is to maximize in-person learning as part of Stage 2. All grade 8s and 9s will have in-person classes. For grades 10-12, all first period classes will be in-person. If second period classes can be scheduled within cohort limits, they will also be in-person. If second period classes cannot be scheduled in cohorts due to scheduling conflicts and student choice, they will be Hybrid. Hybrid classes will include online remote learning and small group instruction.

If my child is sick or is required to self-isolate will there be online supports available?

All teachers will be setting up a Google Classroom and work towards sharing classroom information regularly. Each situation will be handled according to the individual needs of the student.

Health and Safety

Why are masks not mandatory in classrooms?

The Provincial Health Officer, the Ministry of Education, the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC have collaborated to create clear guidelines for K-12. The guidelines outline a layered approach to Health and Safety including: reinforced hygiene practices, physical distancing, learning cohorts, and the use of masks for staff and secondary students in spaces where physical distancing is not possible. At this time, the Provincial Health Officer has not indicated that masks must be worn in other circumstances. The West Vancouver School District will continue to comply with the direction of the Provincial Health Officer. All students and staff are welcome to wear a mask while at school. The school district will be providing re-usable masks to every high school student and every staff member at the beginning of the school year. Masks will be available to elementary students upon request and schools will communicate details to parents. Note: limit 2 masks per person.

Will individual teachers / classes be able to have stricter rules for mask wearing?

No, optional mask wearing in classes applies to all schools in West Vancouver (and British Columbia).

What will the school district do if a teacher is away from work - will teachers teaching on call (TTOCs) be in different classes over the course of a week/month, or will they be considered as part of the cohort?

The district is in the process of finalizing enrolment and staffing at our schools. We are also organizing how teachers on-call will be working in our schools. Health and Safety guidelines will be followed for all itinerant staff and teachers on call which means that if they are not within a particular learning cohort, physical distancing will be required at all times, and if this is not possible, they will be required to wear masks.

What will the school district do when someone at a school (student or employee) is diagnosed with COVID-19? What is the plan for supporting a student's ongoing academic learning if the student is required to self-isolate and is unable to attend school in person?

The Public Health Authority controls all investigations relating to COVID-19 exposure. If a student or employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 and they were potentially infectious while they were at school, Public Health will conduct an investigation to determine if there were any potential close contacts within the school. Public Health will request cohort lists; visitor lists; bus lists to determine who will be contacted. All contacts and any direction about next steps will be provided by Public Health. Students who are absent from school for longer periods of time due to self-isolation or any type of illness, including COVID-19, will be provided with learning supports while they are away from school.

Will students be expected to self-isolate if the exposure is within their cohort?

Schools will follow the direction of the local public health authority if there is COVID-19 exposure within their learning cohort.

What are the ventilation plans for West Vancouver Schools?

Our facilities department is monitoring the HVAC system at every site and adjusting settings to maximize fresh air flow. As part of our normal summer maintenance, every HVAC air filter is currently being replaced in preparation for the return to school.

Additionally, we are now taking the further step of replacing these traditional filters with MERV-13 filters to increase the level of filtration. This process is subject to market supply and will proceed as filters become available.

Finally, in accordance with Provincial Health Authority recommendations, where necessary, windows will be opened to increase the flow of fresh air before and during school hours.

How often will bathrooms be cleaned during the day?

Following health guidelines, bathrooms will be cleaned twice in a 24 hour period.

Are Parents allowed inside the schools?

Parents are encouraged to pre-arrange any visit to the schools by making an appointment. Parents will be required to conduct a health self-assessment prior to entering schools. Parents will be required to sign in with detailed contact information each time they visit a school. Parents will be required to be masked in common areas of the school.

Do I have to take my child to the doctor if they are sent home because of illness?

Yes, if a child develops symptoms at school, they will need to be picked up by a parent or caregiver as soon as possible. The child should be taken to a health care provider for assessment. The child will need to stay home until COVID-19 has been excluded and symptoms have resolved.

Various Other Questions

What protocols are in place regarding the riding of the bus?

Students will be assigned to specific buses prior to the start of the school year, and will be required to follow the protocols for bus transport as provided by the Health authorities.

What will happen in Orientation Week?

- **Elementary**

At elementary, all students will attend an orientation session of one hour and 45 minutes, on either Thursday, September 10 or Friday, September 11. The orientation sessions will be completed in small groups and physical distance will be maintained as students will not be with their learning cohort. During the orientation, teachers will welcome students back and will review health and safety protocols and routines. This will include an overview of routines for drop off, pick up, recess and lunch routines, as well as safety expectations around shared spaces, hand hygiene protocols and much more.

- **Secondary**

At Secondary, all students will be invited back to their schools in their cohorts or by their first period class at an assigned time on Thursday, September 10 and Friday, September 11. During the student orientation staff will be welcoming students back and will be reviewing the health and safety protocols and new school routines. Each school will be communicating the details and schedules with their students and families. Please pay attention to the assigned times and instructions.

How do recess and lunch work?

- **Elementary**

Recess and lunch will be organized slightly differently at each site depending on the school population and available field and play spaces. Most schools will have staggered recess and lunch times, which means students will be taking a break at different times. In some schools, play areas may be designated to different groups of students. When interacting outside, children in different cohorts will minimize physical contact.

- **Secondary**

At the Secondary level there are staggered breaks in the morning. Students will be assigned a cohort location where they can have break with other students from their cohort.

Students will be assigned lunch locations in their cohorts. Many students will choose to leave at lunch and many grade 10-12 students will be heading home for their remote learning afternoon classes. On Tuesday and Thursday, students that do not have an X Block class, activity or support class will go home at lunch.

In order to manage congestion at transition times the Secondary Schools have staggered morning start times and morning breaks. Students will be directed to use specific entrances and exits, and hallways will have directional arrows and markings. Students will be assigned cohort locations and will be released from classes in a controlled and sequential manner. Students will not have lockers to avoid unnecessary high touch surfaces and to reduce hallway congestion. Students and staff are required to wear masks in hallways and commons spaces.

Can students go home for lunch?

In the interest of everyone's health and safety, we are minimizing visitors to the school, including parents and guardians. This means that students should be prepared to come to school for the full day, with their lunch and snacks and everything that they need.

Secondary students can go home during lunch and when they do not have a class.

Are all electives including music and drama running this year?

Yes, all courses scheduled for this year are continuing. These classes will be conducted according to the health and safety guidelines.

In the quarter system at secondary, how will learning support work for a student who needs support over the full year?

Students that require ongoing learning support will have access to regular support services as per their Individual Educational Plans (IEP) during Tuesday and Thursday X blocks. These students will also receive additional learning support throughout the rest of the week as needed.

Will PE classes still occur?

Students will continue to participate in Physical and Health Education classes which are a required part of the mandated curriculum. These classes will be conducted according to the health and safety guidelines.

Are there school sports this year?

Inter-school sports will not be taking place this fall, however, extracurricular activities, which may include some sports, may take place within a single school site. Participants in these activities will need to comply with the health and safety protocols such as maintaining physical distancing.

How will before and after school care work?

Before and After School Care programs will continue. These programs are operated by private child care operators who must follow all Public Health Office directives. We will continue to work closely with our child care operators but it is important to note that all before/after school programs are licensed by Vancouver Coastal Health, under the direction of the Ministry of Child & Family Development. Families enrolled in before and after school care will receive detailed information from each respective private child care operator about the new routines and health & safety protocols that will be in place in each program.

Given the likelihood of additional mental health issues, what supports will be in place in schools this fall?

All teachers received training in Trauma Informed Practices and Compassionate Learning Communities this September. As well our highly trained District Student Support Services team and School Counselors will continue to work closely with all of our schools, and our students, to ensure that we are responsive to all needs that arise.

We have strong community partnerships and ties to community resources such as the Foundry North Shore and YURT (Vancouver Coastal Health - Youth Urgent Response Team). Additional community supports will be available to students and families as needed.

How do we get more information on the fall?

In addition to our school district messages all of our schools have communicated with families for the fall via email. We are also working with North Shore Multicultural Society on back to school workshops in a range of languages. Our high schools are hosting virtual parent information sessions this week to better explain school specific plans and answer school specific information.