

**Questions Regarding the Back to School Plan**  
**Compiled by Autism Nova Scotia**  
**Responded to by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**  
**August 26, 2020**

**Responses provided in the following themes:**

1. EIBI
2. Learning Support Teachers – service delivery within Public Health directives
3. Healthcare
4. Public Health Directives
5. Other: Bussing, Technology, Family Resources

For up to date information, visit Nova Scotia Back to School website: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/backtoschool#faq> and <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/>

**1. EIBI**

<p>Some families in the EIBI program who have a child starting school in September have yet to see the progress report or have a team meeting through EIBI. Will the school receive a report from EIBI and will these team meetings happen?</p>	<p>EIBI staff are holding team meetings now that services are open; they are being done virtually where possible and where not possible are done in-person (with social distancing).</p> <p>With regards to the reports, they are usually ready once the intensive period is complete; for children who are ending intensive August 31st, 2020, it will be mailed out after that date.</p> <p>Please note that families determine if the school gets a copy.</p> <p><b><i>(Response provided by Department of Health and Wellness (DHW))</i></b></p>
<p>With many families losing months of EIBI services, is there a plan on how the education</p>	<p>When children start school this September, Primary teachers, and Student Planning Teams, which include families, will identify appropriate programming and services to support children with Autism.</p> <p>Many of the key components of EIBI interventions are foundational in the Public-School system ASD supports.</p>

system will pick up where the health system left off?

Specialist Support may include:

In addition to the child's classroom teacher, children in Primary diagnosed with ASD are eligible to receive support from school-based services such as:

- Autism Specialist/Autism Support teachers
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Learning Support Teachers
- School Psychologists
- Behaviour Specialists

Programming and services may include:

- Speech Language Pathology: support in classroom or other location for individual or small group
- STAR (Strategies for Teaching based on Autism Research) includes: Discrete Trial Teaching for Receptive and Expressive Language, Pivot Response Treatment, Functional Routines, Pre-Academic and Play and Social Skills
- Visual Supports used for learning, establishing routines, organization and building independence
- Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) is supported by the SLP for students who are non-verbal or have limited verbal communication
- Assistive Technology Specialist and SLPs work with Augmentative Communication Specialists at the IWK to explore other communication devices
- Social Development Intervention to support social skill learning and peer interaction
- Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy, referrals when appropriate and available

**2. Learning Support Teachers – service delivery within Public Health directives**

<p>How will the class bubble affect students who need other services, such as learning centre, guidance counselors, etc.?</p>	<p>In both Full and Partial/Blending options, students will have access to programming and services provided by Learning Support Teachers, such as Learning Centre, School Counsellors, Speech Language Pathologists, Autism Specialists, and others.</p> <p>Schools will work to minimize the interaction between cohorts while following the Public Health guidelines including hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette, face shields, masks, and contact mapping.</p> <p>Guidance documents are being developed to provide suggestions on various scheduling and related service-delivery options that schools might consider for both Full and Partial/Blended opening to also help minimize interaction between cohorts.</p>
<p>In regard to TA's/EPA's, what will happen for those students who share their support staff?</p>	<p>In both Full and Partial/Blending option, students will have access to the support of TAs/EPA's.</p> <p>School teams will work to minimize the interaction between student and staff while following the Public Health guidelines including the use of masks and contact mapping.</p> <p>Guidance documents are being developed to provide suggestions on various scheduling and related service-delivery options that schools might consider for both Full and Partial/Blended opening to also help minimize interaction between cohorts.</p>
<p>Will they continue to have a shared support staff and if so what protocols will be in place to ensure student and staff safety?</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>Will TA's/EPA's stay within one classroom or will they support students in more than one classroom?</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>Will there be more support staff hired to help support students while limiting the risk of sharing support staff between students?</p>	<p>Over the last three years there has been an additional 45 million dollars allocated to support the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy. This includes Learning Support Teachers and Teacher Assistants.</p> <p>There has been additional funding for the 2020-2021 school year to cover the costs of substitutes, as needed.</p>

<p>Will there be continuity between the Boards with regards to how school and support services are offered in this coming year?</p>	<p>RCEs/CSAP will be provided with provincial COVID-19 guidance documents which provide direction aligned with Public Health advice while allowing for regional variation. Overarching principles found in guidance documents and the Inclusive Education Policy will apply provincially.</p>
<p>Have Boards been expected to develop and submit re-opening plans?</p>	<p>RCEs and the CSAP have been working over the summer on their re-opening plans taking guidance from Public Health and the NS Back to School Plan into consideration.</p>
<p>For those students who access the Learning Centres, what will their day look like?</p>	<p>During Full Re-Opening, classes resume for all students, including those who access supports from a Learning Centre, with additional health and safety measures in place. (See above). During Partial or Blended opening, for students in grades 9-12 with IPPs or those who require additional support, school teams will explore options to have them continue to attend school full-time, as will students P-8.</p>
<p>How will the staff support the students in this “new normal” classroom setting?</p>	<p>School administrators and teachers are busy planning for a safe and welcoming return to school. Guidance documents and resources are being developed to help with the return to school from both a wellness and academic learning perspective. EECD’s eLearning and Back to School websites will continue to be updated with resources for teachers and families.</p>
<p>Will sensory rooms be available to students? If not, how will students’ sensory needs be met?</p>	<p>Provincially we do not promote the use of sensory rooms. Students’ sensory needs as identified through the program planning process will be supported. If this requires access to additional resources/materials, required cleaning protocols will be determined and implemented, as per Public Health guidelines.</p>
<p>What about students who access school-based specialists such as psychology, speech, OT, Behavior Specialists, etc? What will these services look for the student?</p>	<p>In both Full and Partial/Blending options, students will have access to programming and services provided by Learning Support Teachers, such as School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Behavior Specialists, and others. Schools will work to minimize the interaction between cohorts while following the Public Health guidelines including hand hygiene, cough and sneeze etiquette, face shields, masks, and contact mapping.  Guidance documents are being developed to provide suggestions on various scheduling and related service-delivery options that schools might consider for both Full and Partial/Blended opening to also help minimize interaction between cohorts.</p>

### 3. Healthcare

<p>Will there be extra Covid protocols in place for students who are immunocompromised?</p>	<p>The COVID-19 Guidance document for Students with Specialized Healthcare Needs contains information for students who are immunocompromised.</p> <p>While there is evidence suggesting that generally people who are immunocompromised and infected with SARS-CoV-2 have higher rates of hospitalization and/or severe disease, to date there isn't strong evidence to suggest that children and youth are at higher risk from SARS-CoV-2 as compared to other respiratory viruses like influenza. This includes children and youth who are immunocompromised. We recognize that data relating to this group of children and youth is potentially limited, as they have been more likely to follow public health measures such as physical distancing, hand hygiene and mask wearing.</p> <p>Given the importance of school attendance on children's physical, social, and emotional well-being and while the number of cases of COVID-19 in the Maritimes remains low, attendance is encouraged for all children. As the pandemic continues to evolve or if the level of virus in communities' changes, guidance may change. Additional information related to children who are immunocompromised will be available from health specialists at the IWK.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that there are some children with medical complexities who cannot be in school at this time, just as they would not be in attendance pre-COVID.</p>
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### 4. Public Health Directives

<p>If there is a second wave of Covid what is the plan for schools?</p>	<p>The goal of the Nova Scotia Back to School Plan is to maximize in-person attendance while ensuring health and safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. With that in mind, this document focuses on a full return to school in September 2020 but also addresses how school may be modified to respond to COVID based on direction from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health as found in the COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Schools (see Appendix A)</p> <p>One of the advantages of maintaining fluidity between the plans is the ability of the province to respond to COVID-19 exposure that may affect a community or region of the province but not all of Nova Scotia. That is, EECD, directed by Public Health, may move an individual school, a family of schools, or a region from one plan to another in response to an outbreak of COVID-19, while keeping the rest of the province's schools operating under a different plan. For example, if there were to be an increase of COVID-19 cases in a community,</p>
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	schools in the area might begin to operate under a blended or learning-at-home response plan, while the majority of the province continues with full in-school learning.
If a student or staff wakes with symptoms that are on the Covid screening (such as cough or runny nose), what will the process look like?	All individuals need to stay home when they are ill, even if their symptoms are mild and they should contact 811 to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.  If COVID-19 testing is required, individuals must follow public health advice for returning to school. If testing for COVID-19 is not required, they can return once fever (with no medications) and other symptoms have resolved for 24 hours.
Who do they notify (school, public health, 811, etc)?	See above and Back to School Plan  Schools will communicate specific school level steps to follow when schools re-open.
What steps need to be taken?	See above
Is there an isolation period?	See above  If a case of COVID-19 is confirmed to be connected to a school setting, Public Health will provide additional guidance on the required actions. Public Health is responsible for case management and contact follow-up of all COVID-19 cases, and for determining the need for individual or public notifications.
If there are other school age siblings in the home what happens to them? Can the sibling attend school?	If a case of COVID-19 is confirmed to be connected to a school setting, Public Health will provide additional guidance on the required actions.  Public Health is responsible for case management and contact follow-up of all COVID-19 cases, and for determining the need for individual or public notifications.
There is talk of social distancing in the classrooms but what will that specifically look like for the student?	School classrooms are being reorganized to create more space between desks and to limit physical contact. It will look different grade by grade, school by school. If physical distancing cannot be maintained in grades 4-12, students and staff will be asked to wear masks.

<p>Will masks be worn by students and staff? What if mask wearing poses a challenge?</p>	<p>We take our direction from public health officials when it comes to mask use. The new direction is that students from grades 4 to 12 must wear masks if they cannot physically distance.</p> <p>Also, students who travel by bus, regardless of grade, will be required to wear a mask while on the bus. These students will be supported to remove their mask in a location where hands can be cleaned, and masks can be stored safely until needed.</p> <p>Parents should be encouraged to help their children become comfortable with wearing a mask. A very small number of individuals will not be able to wear masks due to sensory or health issues (i.e., severe anxiety).</p> <p>On the parent resource section of the COVID-19 Back to School page there are posters and resources, including sample Social Narratives, for the use of parents/guardians and teachers to help students get comfortable with wearing a mask at school.</p> <p>Medical exemptions should not be required. Information on the use of non-medical masks can be found here:  <a href="https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/stayinghealthy/#masks">https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/stayinghealthy/#masks</a>.</p>
<p>Will social distancing be maintained? What about when it can't?</p>	<p>Efforts to maintain physical distancing will be made in our schools, where this is not possible students in grades 4-12 will wear masks.</p> <p>See above.</p>

## 5. Other

<p>If students are sent home due to cases of Covid, or parents choose to keep their children home due to Covid, what technology supports will be put in place for those students without access to device/internet?</p>	<p>We are planning an extensive roll-out of tech equipment for students who do not have a device or have limited access to a device. Over 14000 new and refurbished devices have been ordered for this Fall. Students without internet will attend school unless there is a stay-at-home order issued. If the province moves to a learn at home model, teachers will communicate assignments for these students via the transfer of USB sticks and via the telephone.</p> <p>If a parent chooses to keep their child home, they will be directed to information found of the Home-Schooling page for more information, devices are not provided in this instance.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ednet.ns.ca/homeschooling/home-schooling">https://www.ednet.ns.ca/homeschooling/home-schooling</a></p>
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<p>How can I advocate for the needs of my child to ensure the transition is the most successful?</p>	<p>Communication starts with your child's classroom teacher and school administrator. Please visit your school website for information closer to the start of the school year and you are encouraged to reach out with any questions or concerns. This is a new experience for all of us and feeling anxious or concerned is normal, we will work together to make the transition a safe and positive one for everyone</p>
<p>In the past there were significant wait times for psychoeducational assessments. What will this look like for students within Covid?</p>	<p>There is a guidance document that addresses issues related to the completion of psycho-educational assessments when school re-open.</p> <p>The priority for September is to get back to school and get back to learning; we would not be completing psych-ed assessments until students have had time to adjust to being back in school. School Psychologists will be valuable members of our support teams.</p>