

July 30, 2020

**CLASSROOM LEARNING TO RESUME IN SEPTEMBER
FOR ALL MANITOBA KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 STUDENTS**

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**Province Working with School Divisions,
Public Health to Welcome Students Back Safely: Goertzen**

Classroom learning will resume [on Sept. 8](#) for all students in kindergarten through Grade 12 at schools across Manitoba following last spring's suspension caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen announced today.

"The province is welcoming students back to classrooms for the new school year, while working closely with school divisions and Public Health," said Goertzen. "The best place for students is in class, giving them the full benefits of the tremendous work of Manitoba teachers and providing parents and caregivers with certainty that their children are receiving the best education possible."

The *Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools* guidelines have been developed in collaboration with the province's kindergarten to Grade 12 COVID-19 response planning team, as well as with school divisions and public health officials. Manitoba school divisions and schools will follow these provincial guidelines to finalize and post division plans by mid-August. Accessible and transparent information is important as students, staff and families will have questions about COVID-19 and returning to in-class learning.

Learning in classrooms will be full-time for students in kindergarten through Grade 8 and for special-needs students in all grades, with five days of instruction

per week. Some remote learning may be required for students in grades 9 to 12, based on the ability of high schools to implement necessary public health measures including physical distancing and the use of cohorts (designated groups of students) to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission, and to support contact tracing.

Three response levels have been developed to ensure that school divisions and schools are prepared to roll back from in-class learning based on public health advice. Divisions must ensure that all students learning remotely have access to technology.

“Manitoba Education and Public Health are working with divisions and individual schools to ensure that as many students as possible return to classroom learning full-time,” said Goertzen. “Divisions have been working diligently this summer on their individual plans for September, and are refining details for communication, screening, hand hygiene, physical distancing, the use of cohorts and outbreak management to be followed at every one of their schools.”

A total of \$48 million in savings is available to ensure that schools are COVID-ready in September, the minister noted, adding the province is monitoring resource implications closely as part of its planning to ensure the safe return to classroom instruction in the upcoming school year.

“The need for child care is top of mind. The departments of Education and Families are working with school divisions and the child-care sector to ensure that families can continue to access child care within schools,” said Goertzen. “Both departments are working together to develop learning guidelines for children with special needs, as well as students at risk.”

Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools is based on feedback provided by parents, caregivers, students and education stakeholders through an EngageMB survey that began in June. The minister noted tens of thousands

of Manitobans have completed the survey, and the government will continue to collect and use this information in adapting plans while the public health situation evolves. Manitobans can visit <https://engagemb.ca> to share thoughts or ask questions.

In a joint statement, the Manitoba School Boards Association, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools, Manitoba Association of School Business Officials and the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents said, "We believe that collaborative planning is in the best interests of students, parents, and school staff. The goal is to have as many students as possible learning in classrooms this fall and throughout the coming school year. Maintaining a strong focus on the health, safety and well-being of students, staff, families and communities, we all agree the emphasis needs to be on getting students the in-person teaching and learning they need while making sure that safety is the top priority for everyone."

For up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Manitoba, visit www.manitoba.ca/COVID19.

A comprehensive list of Manitoba government COVID-19 measures can be found at:

<https://manitoba.ca/bg/2020/04/covid19.html>.

For more information:

- Public information, contact Manitoba Government Inquiry: [1-866-626-4862](tel:1-866-626-4862) or [204-945-3744](tel:204-945-3744).
- Media requests for general information, contact Communications Services Manitoba: [204-945-3765](tel:204-945-3765).
- Media requests for ministerial comment, contact Communications and Stakeholder Relations: [204-945-4916](tel:204-945-4916).