



British Columbia Boarding Schools - Restart Plan for 2020-21

Revised: June 16th 2020

Introduction

As a unique educational sector, boarding schools' distinctive pedagogical approach of developing well-rounded and well-grounded global leaders has helped shape the province's education landscape for over 100 years. Boarding schools are essential leaders, major employers, and have a significant economic impact at both the local and provincial levels.

Some BC Boarding schools have between 80-100% of students boarding on campus.

British Columbia's Boarding schools support the BC Ministry of Health's approach to control the spread of the novel COVID-19 virus. Since the Minister of Education postponed all in-class instruction on March 17th, boarding schools around the province quickly pivoted to distance learning platforms that have and will continue to support the continuity of student learning. Furthermore, to reduce density in schools, non-essential staff were encouraged to work from home. As part of our strategic guiding principles at this time, boarding schools have stepped forward to support local and surrounding communities with our resources as part of our commitment to leadership here in BC: working with local public schools and school districts, supporting local non-government organisations and businesses which have stepped forward to help local families in need, the homeless and other disadvantaged groups during this period.

During this pandemic, boarding schools implemented a number of mitigation strategies that support the Ministry of Health's recommendations for schools; in fact, since our sector prioritizes the wellness of students and staff, we plan on implementing even more mechanisms to support our boarding communities. We are thankful for and would like to acknowledge the support of Dr. Perry Kendall, former BC Provincial Health Officer, for his counsel in creating this report. After a lifelong career in public health, his expertise and guidance are helping us set the highest of standards and we are grateful to him.

Mitigation Strategies

Using the following provincial documents:

- The BC Centre for Disease Control and Ministry of Health's - COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings;
- The Ministry of Education's Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings;
- The Ministry of Education's Supporting the K-12 Education Response to COVID-19 in BC - Operational Guidelines for School Districts and Independent School Authorities; and,
- Worksafe BC's COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - K-12 Education documents,

We developed a series of mitigation strategies that enable our boarding schools to operate in a safe and productive manner.

<p>General hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent handwashing ● Coughing/sneezing etiquette ● Avoid sharing food/drinks ● Avoid face touching ● Proper diet, sleeping, general wellness ● Directions to stay home when feeling ill ● Easy access to hand sanitizers 	<p>Sanitizing spaces/surfaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implementation of increased sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces e.g. door handles, hand railings, desks, washrooms ● Enhanced laundry/housekeeping protocols 	<p>Physical distancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a culture of physical distancing (2 metres) ● Limit large gatherings ● Visible spacing markers ● Reduce class size ● Adjust boarding house protocols
<p>Engineering controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In key areas, such as reception and the dining hall, erect physical barriers e.g. plexiglass ● Enhanced food services protocols. Rather than buffet-style meals, food services staff to prepare plated or takeout meals 	<p>Administrative controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Campus protocols on entry for day students, staff, parents, guests, deliveries ● Directional signs for pedestrians ● Avoid congestion by varying timetables ● Athletic delivery modifications ● Adjust yearly breaks/ calendar ● Continue to have access to our distance learning platform ● Health centre protocols ● Testing/contact tracing processes 	<p>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to face coverings ● Increased use of PPE for key areas of the school

For more details regarding each mitigation strategy, please see Appendix A.

Program Implementation

Using the above noted mitigation strategies, campus-wide implementation details are provided below.

General

- Full assessment of floor space across the boarding campus and flexibility to adapt/repurpose to support boarding school routines
- Some boarding schools are currently piloting essential routines and protocols during the second half of term (post June 1st) with staff and local day student population in preparation for fully opening in September - and draw upon learning outcomes and best practices from BC day schools (public and independent) re-engaging with in-person delivery of education and then share with other BC boarding schools
- Implementation of physical barriers where appropriate and ensuring effective ventilation systems to support air exchange

Boarding

- Daily health checks for students
- Pedestrian movement controls including directional signs
- Create 'bubbles' within the residences, where possible, and group 6-10 boarding students together as suggested by the BC Ministry of Health representatives in the drafting of this restart plan
- Create practical room arrangements within 'bubbles'
- To reduce density, limit access to each boarding residence
- Develop 'family' units and 'bubble' approaches to campus life
- To avoid congestion, rescheduled routines
- Avoid large gatherings
- Increased access to handwashing spaces and hand sanitizing materials

Dining Hall

- To avoid congestion for the three meals a day in boarding school (Monday to Sunday), vary dining times
- Plated or takeout meals
- Food services staff to have access to PPE in line with latest guidance from the Ministry of Health
- Use of physical barriers
- Using WorkSafe BC Guidelines, create a COVID-19 safety plan that will be shared and posted

Health Centre

- All health procedures to be shared with local Medical Public Health Officer
- As boarding schools, we have medical professionals (nurses and doctors) on our staff providing first class support to our students - with the flexibility to increase staffing in this area during the academic year 2020/21 if circumstances require it
- A boarding school campus has a significant live-in staff population supporting the boarding experience and providing critical pastoral care/emergency response
- Ongoing education regarding the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 in support of day and boarding student population
- Establish isolation wards with a plan in place for a student per room, medical team support with PPE, food deliveries, cleaning and social/emotional support structures
- Symptomatic students isolated and tested
- If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a student community, the health team will immediately contact senior administration and local health authorities, and the student will be housed in our isolation ward for 14 days and until they are symptom free
- In consultation with local health authority officials, contact tracing routines will be put in place
- If there are multiple positive tests, we will move COVID-19 students to isolation wards and inform parents to pick students up to isolate at home
- If students are unable to be picked up / cared for by parents, the school will monitor and care for students in our isolation ward for 14 days and until they are symptom free with routines in place for social / emotional support
- The health team will maintain ongoing contact with the local public health authority
- Schools will work with local public health authority to advise a potential staged, partial or full shutdown of in-person classes, campus and boarding residences

- Distance learning will be made available for all students from September 2020 with appropriate BC Ministry of Education permission in place
- Health care staff to have access to PPE
- Using WorkSafe BC Guidelines, create a COVID-19 safety plan that will be shared and posted

Daily arrival

- Each morning, boarding students to have a health check carried out by a member of staff
- Prior to arrival on campus, day students and staff are asked to do a self-assessment /personal health check (with support from parents for students)
- Ensure clear protocols and base location for days students whilst on campus
- No parents or visitors on campus except by appointment with infection control safeguards
- Staff, parents, visitors, or other community members that are ill, should not enter campus
- Arrival protocols for all deliveries and contractors
- Some boarding schools will deploy the use of our security teams on campus to support the restricted access to campus

Start of year arrival

- Staggered arrival of boarding students - an intentional, structured plan to guide student returns on the latest guidelines from the provincial health authorities
- For all students, monitor travel including country of origin in order to attain a detailed understanding of every student's travel plans when returning to campus
- All international students will abide by government travel restrictions including a health check prior to departure and on arrival to Canada
- All international students must have a 14 day self-isolation plan that is shared with the school with some boarding schools offering to support families with quarantine and a program of engagement on campus or at a suggested alternative (school-run) satellite campus

Yearly calendar

- Adjust holidays to limit international travel
- Have school supported activities for students that may not be able to return home during holiday periods
- Develop local host family program to support boarders for shorter holidays and encourage BC families to invite / host students in the same bubble as their children within the school

Campus movement

- Clearly marked pedestrian pathways
- Limit guest entry with clear visitor protocols

Laundry/Housekeeping

- Laundry/Housekeeping staff to have access to PPE
- Employment of deep cleaning specialists to support house-keeping with regular cleaning services incorporated into routines
- Increased cleaning of high traffic, high touch surfaces, and residential facilities

Academics/Arts

- Increased separation of desks in classes
- When applicable, look for opportunities to create learning 'bubbles'
- Adapt other spaces across the campus as spacious classrooms
- To reduce density, limit class sizes
- Within the classroom, limit student movement and put stringent routines in place for break-times and classroom changes
- When collaborating, use physical barriers and face coverings
- To avoid transition congestion, allow more time between classes
- Use Learning Commons and libraries but ensure twice a day cleaning / sanitizing of common touch areas including keyboards
- Potentially shift some classes into the evening
- Maintain distance learning infrastructure
- At least twice daily, high touch area cleaning

Athletics/PE

- Limit groupings and contact
- Avoid some sport offerings e.g. contact sports
- Develop sporting and outdoor activities programs to support exercise (and physical distancing)
- Increase hygiene protocols pre and post activities
- Frequent cleaning of equipment and spaces

Bus driving

- Implement physical barriers
- To increase physical distance, limit the capacity of ridership

Administration/Operations

- To reduce on campus density, encourage those that are able, to work from home
- Where appropriate, use physical barriers
- Develop clear protocols for parents, guests, deliveries
- Ensure strong sick pay policies are in place to encourage staff to stay at home if unwell
- Using WorkSafe BC Guidelines, create a COVID-19 safety plan that will be shared and posted

Community engagement

- A boarding school community is defined as students, staff, parents and guardians, alumni and supporters, local community members and regular visitors to the school (contractors, vendors, etc.)
- Invite the school and local communities to review our restart plan
- Develop staff confidence in the plans for restarting education on our boarding campuses including training
- Fully brief parents regionally, nationally and internationally about our plans to re-open as a boarding school
- Prioritize field trips to outdoor spaces and/or areas with strong COVID-19 precautions
- Reduce field trips that result in increased contact with people outside of the students' usual circle
- Limit the number and times of off-campus access

- Ensure safe protocols, including as required the use of non-medical masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained and other protocols are not in place when interacting in the local community
- To continue to build the trust and confidence of local communities, develop community engagement plans (including regular communications)
- Commission a member of staff to be responsible for regular communications and to be the point of contact for the local community and other local schools

Restart Plan Diagram

As the diagram below outlines, the safety of the students and staff is imperative. However, we recognise that, alongside our medical support structures and controls on campus, we need to build in exceptional mental health provision for our community. Students will be returning to campus, either as boarding or day students, after an extended period of time at home and away from the usual routines of school life. Mental health challenges have manifested in different ways during the Spring Term and it is strongly recommended that boarding schools build in extra provision in terms of mental health and wellbeing support systems for the next academic year. These measures should include developing resources such as internal and external counselling for individuals, a deliberately designed pastoral care program, greater access to on-line support and resources, BC Ministry of Health recommended support systems for high school age students, etc.



Concluding Remarks

Boarding schools take seriously the safety and wellness of our students, staff, parents, and local community. We believe we can successfully navigate our return to on-campus learning (and stage 1 of the BC Ministry of Education’s five stage flow diagram) by putting in a measured and safe framework in September and support the Ministry of Health’s recommendations during this pandemic - and, at the same time, inspire the confidence of the community, both internal and external.

We have prepared these guidelines for boarding schools' return to campus, with the support of Dr. Perry Kendall, for our partners at the Ministries of Education and Health with the aim of developing confidence through the rigorous preparation for re-opening our boarding campuses. We also plan to share our plans with the other BC 'full boarding schools' and day schools with boarding populations through our ISABC and FISA networks.

As part of our preparation, we are also consulting other boarding schools across the world and sharing resources in order to deliver best practice - alongside consulting with the BC Ministry of Education and Health and schools across Canada. We appreciate the support and encouragement received from the Ministry of Education and Health (and ISABC and CAIS) as we look towards creating safe and supportive boarding school campuses here in BC.

Boarding schools are seeing strong re-enrollment in response to the pandemic with families identifying our campuses as safe spaces for the continued education of their children. We are committed to ensuring that our campuses are safe and protected with robust plans in place for both restart and in response to the risk of a second wave - with the flexibility built into the plans, if necessary, for boarding schools to move from the BC government's stage 1 return to full in-person learning (and boarding provision) to any of the 5 stages and associated protocols.

Through conversations with and detailed feedback from the BC Ministry of Education and Health in the drafting and revising of this restart plan, we believe that this set of recommendations will serve BC boarding schools as they put together their detailed and comprehensive action plans which will underpin this overview.

Together, our entire community is committed to working through these challenging times with confidence.

References

[The Ministry of Education's Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings;](#)

[The Ministry of Education's Supporting the K-12 Education Response to COVID-19 in BC -](#)

[Operational Guidelines for School Districts and Independent School Authorities; and,](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - K-12 Education](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - Restaurants](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - Health Professionals](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - Offices](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Spaces](#)

[WorkSafe BC COVID-19 Return to Safe Operation - Dos and Don'ts of Self-Isolation](#) [BCCDC](#)

[Guidelines for COVID-19 related symptoms](#)

[BCCDC Guidelines for Community -Based Health Care](#)

Appendix A - Detailed Mitigation Strategies

General hygiene

- Frequent hand hygiene
 - Thorough handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dry hands with a clean, disposable towel
 - Handwashing should be conducted when leaving from and returning to your boarding house/home; before and after eating, after using the toilet; after sneezing or coughing into hands; and whenever your hands are soiled
 - When handwashing not accessible, alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available
- Coughing/sneezing etiquette
 - Coughing and sneezing should be directed into the crease in your elbow or tissue, and away from other people
- Avoid sharing food/drinks
 - Do not share opened food, drinks, or utensils including water bottles
- Avoid face touching
 - Avoid touching any part of your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Proper diet, sleeping, general wellness
 - Maintain a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, plenty of sleep, and proper physical and mental wellness
- Directions to stay home when feeling ill
 - Follow proper School protocols regarding signs of illness
 - [Follow BCCDC Guidelines for COVID-19 related symptoms](#)
 - For boarders, contact your houseparent or the nursing staff
 - For day students, remain home and parents are to contact the School
- Easy access to hand sanitizers
 - Should soap, water, and sinks not be available, please sanitize your hands using any of the stations around the campus

Sanitizing spaces/surfaces

- Implementation of increased sanitizing of frequently touched surfaces e.g. door handles, hand railings, desks, washrooms
 - Housekeeping/custodial staff and teachers, will frequently sanitize spaces
 - Before, between, and after class periods, teachers will ensure high touch areas such as desks and classroom door handles are cleaned
 - For each boarding house, housekeeping staff will conduct daily cleaning of bathrooms, hallways, common areas, and dorm rooms, including door handles
 - For each boarding house, houseparents and students will ensure daily cleaning of bathrooms, hallways, common areas, and dorm rooms, including door handles
 - Custodians will ensure all public indoor spaces are thoroughly cleaned on a daily basis and frequently touched surfaces at least twice daily
- Enhanced laundry/housekeeping protocols
 - Using proper PPE, laundry staff will wash student clothing over a seven day period; thus, helping to reduce traffic and density to support physical distancing

Physical distancing

- Create a culture of physical distancing (2 metres)
 - Continuous education around the purpose of and methods for physical distancing
 - Through house meetings, advisor grouping, and classroom instruction, weave physical distancing education into the social contract of our campus
- Limit large gatherings
 - Ensure all staff, students, and parents understand our gathering protocols that will include a maximum size limit and physical distancing
 - Utilize online platforms for assemblies and large staff meetings
- Visible spacing markers
 - Through the campus, directional markers and physical distancing markers will be easily seen and understood
 - Well labelled maps will be available for students, staff, parents, and guests
- Reduce class size
 - Within the room, maximize the spacing between desks
 - Timetable the number of students/class according to classroom size
- Adjust boarding house protocols
 - For dorm rooms, minimize the amount of furniture required
 - For common spaces, remove most of the furniture to minimize social gatherings
 - Limit access to individual dorm rooms
 - Students will not be allowed to leave any personal effects in the bathroom spaces
 - Directional markers will be implemented to control the pedestrian flow

Engineering controls

- In key areas, such as reception and the dining hall, erect physical barriers e.g. plexiglass
 - Where possible, utilize physical barriers to ensure safe interaction between students, staff, parents, and guests
- Rather than buffet-style meals, food services staff to prepare plated or takeout meals
 - Significant use of physical barriers (stanchions, plexiglass, and physical distancing) to control movement and distribute meals

Administrative controls

- Campus protocols on entry for day students, staff, parents, guests, deliveries
 - Campus entry and exit protocols clearly communicated, understood, marked with signage, and enforced
 - Day students and staff instructed to stay home if they are feeling ill or have COVID-19 symptoms
 - Day student parents are advised to do daily screenings of their child
 - Day student drop off and pick up at a central location
 - When dropping off students, remind parents not to congregate
 - Unless absolutely necessary or invited, parents are requested to not come on campus
 - Daily campus screening for day students and off-campus staff
 - Parents, guests, and deliveries will report to a central reception for screening
- Directional signs for pedestrians
 - Clearly understood pedestrian flow on campus through maps, signage, and education

- Avoid congestions by varying timetables
 - Meal times will be staggered
 - Mid-morning break will be staggered
 - 10 minute transition between classes allows for an easy and clear transition
 - With only three academic classes in the morning, there will be limited movement of students
 - Transition between afternoon arts blocks will be staggered
- Athletic delivery modifications
 - Athletic offerings will be limited and modified
 - As much as possible, outdoor space will be utilized
 - Close contact sports will be minimized
 - High touch equipment will be sanitized daily
- Adjust yearly breaks/calendar
 - As a portion of our student body resides internationally, we will encourage local families to host during short breaks (Thanksgiving, mid-term) and allow students to stay on campus
 - The same support will be implemented for longer breaks such as winter and spring break
- Continue to have access to our distance learning platform
 - Will ensure that students and teachers can easily pivot to and from distance learning platforms
 - Teachers will support students that are unable, due to illness, self-isolation, or travel restrictions, through virtual personal contact and Google Classroom
- Health centre protocols
 - Following [BCCDC guidelines](#), we work with local health authorities to have clear and consistent protocols for monitoring student wellness
 - Multiple quarantine and isolation wards will be set up across campus
 - Increased use of PPE for health centre staff
- Testing/contact tracing processes
 - Working with local health authorities, develop testing/contact tracing protocols

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Face coverings given to all students and staff, to be used as required
 - While the BCCDC does not require the use of face coverings, if requested, we will provide these to staff, students, and guests
- Increased use of PPE for key areas of the school e.g. nurses, laundry/housekeeping
 - We will provide appropriate PPE for key departments
 - Health Centre staff will have easy access to PPE and have protocols for use
 - Laundry/Housekeeping/Custodial staff will have access to PPE