



Learning groups

16 Can you explain how physical distancing works in learning groups?

A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year and who primarily interact with each other.

Within a learning group, K-12 students and staff do not need to maintain physical distancing. All staff must still make efforts to minimize physical contact within learning groups.

Outside of their own learning group, middle and secondary students and all K-12 staff need to practice physical distancing of two metres, and other safety protocols like frequent hand washing and covering coughs. Most importantly, anyone who feels unwell must stay home.

Extracurricular activities will likely involve students interacting outside of their learning groups and appropriate physical distancing is required in those circumstances.

17 What safety plans are being put into place when staff from outside a learning group enter the group?

As stated in the BCCDC guidelines, outside of a learning group, all K-12 staff as well as middle and secondary students, need to practice physical distancing of two metres, and implement other safety protocols like frequent hand hygiene as identified by the PHO and BC Centre of Disease Control. Staff from outside of the learning group must practice physical distancing at all times in all interactions at work.

Find all FAQs at
bcschools.cupe.ca

Health and safety

18 What PPE will EAs have access to when working with complex-needs children, who have a tendency to spit or bite?

Appropriate PPE must be provided to those who would normally require it, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. WorkSafeBC guidelines on working under infectious conditions state that employers must develop and implement an exposure control plan. The guidelines also say that workers should know how to select appropriate PPE, how to put it on, and how to take it off. WorkSafeBC includes the following PPE to be used under infectious conditions: gloves, respirators, face shields, gowns, foot covers, and eye protection.

During the announcement about the K-12 Restart, Education Minister Rob Fleming specifically mentioned face shields as well as reusable masks as being available for teachers and support staff working in schools. Districts have been directed by government to provide reusable face masks to staff when requested.

19 Will every district be required to have a safety plan in place before school starts?

All districts are required to submit their safety plan to the Ministry by August 21. Districts are also required to consult with unions prior to developing their plan. The K-12 Presidents Council has recommended that locals meet with their district now to give input on the safety plan. Many locals have started these meetings and will continue to do so as they work towards the August 21 deadline.

Please bring your safety concerns to your site health and safety committee.

Other

20 Are there enough trained custodians to meet the requirements for cleaning schools as set out by the PHO?

CUPE advocated for funding to hire additional staff and the government has allocated \$23 million to immediately hire additional qualified custodians to fulfill the cleaning requirements in schools. BCCDC's requirements include general cleaning and disinfecting of the premises at least once every 24-hours (includes items like an individual desk and locker that only a single student uses); cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces at least twice every 24 hours (e.g. door knobs, light switches, toilet handles, tables, desks and chairs used by multiple students, keyboards and toys); and cleaning every surface that is visibly dirty.

We have received questions on many topics including: the impact on family bubbles with multiple children in different learning groups; WorkSafeBC coverage for COVID; and what happens in a family if their child's learning group is quarantined.

CUPE and the K-12 Presidents Council continue to seek answers and clarity on many issues from government and the PHO. We will include them in upcoming FAQs as we get information.

Please visit bcschools.cupe.ca for the most updated COVID-19 questions at the top of our home page. The numbered questions are listed in the following four categories: duty to accommodate, learning groups, health and safety, and other.

Warren Williams

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