



What will Returning to School during the COVID-19 Pandemic look like:



Life during the COVID-19 Pandemic is difficult for parents and children alike. The return to school is an important and hopefully welcome step, but you and your children likely have many questions, and for sure parents are concerned.

As the Ministry of education stated “Our government’s foremost priority is the safety and well-being of every child and every student, and those who nurture and support them. In considering any options for welcoming students back to an in-class model of learning, our decisions will be based on safety, consistency and the guidance of public health officials”.

What questions should I be asking my child’s teacher or school administrator?

During such a worrying and disruptive time, it is natural to have a lot of questions. Here are some helpful ones you may want to ask include:

- What steps has the school taken to help ensure the safety of students?
- How will the school support the mental health of students and assist with any stigma against people who have been sick?
- How will the school refer children who may need referrals for specialized support?
- Will any of the school’s safeguarding and bullying policies change once schools start to re-open?
- How can I support school safety, can I be on the parent-teacher committee?

What should I do if my child has fallen behind?

Students are showing how much they want to keep learning. They have persisted with their lessons under difficult circumstances, with the support of their dedicated teachers and parents.

But many children will need extra support to catch up on their learning when schools reopen. Schools may be making plans for catch-up lessons to help bring students back up to speed. This might include starting the year with refresher or remedial courses, after-school programs, or assignments to be done at home. Given the possibility that many schools may not open full time or for all grades, give extra support to your child at home by creating a routine around school and schoolwork. This can help if they are feeling restless and having trouble focusing.

You may want to contact your child’s teacher or school to ask questions and stay informed. Be sure to let them know if your child is facing specific challenges, like grief over a family loss, not adjusting to the classroom settings, missing their friends or heightened anxiety due to the pandemic.

What should I do if my child is struggling to get back into “school mode?”

Remember that your child will be dealing with the stress of the ongoing crisis differently from you. Create a supportive and nurturing environment and respond positively to questions and expressions of their feelings. Show support and let your child know that it is not only okay, but normal, to feel frustrated or anxious in times like this. Help your children to stick to their routines and make learning playful by incorporating it into everyday activities like cooking, family reading time or games. Another option could be joining a parent or community group to connect with other parents who are going through the same experience to share tips and get support.

It will be a learning process for all involved, so let’s ease in gently.