

August 25, 2021

Dear parents, teachers and staff:

As we enter the final days of the summer break, we turn our attention toward the return to school on September 8.

On August 12, we released details on the plan for back to school this year. The approach this year is based on a “low risk/high risk” model that sees relaxed measures in low-risk areas. In the event that public health increases the risk level at a school or in a group of schools, many of the measures we saw last year masking, busing, extracurricular activities, social distancing and in-person versus online learning could temporarily resume in these schools until the risk level returns to low.

We’ve put together a fact sheet that lays out what each scenario looks like, which can be found here: www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/Return-to-School-Plan-Fact-Sheet-2021.pdf.

The full back to school plan, including the public health advice it is based on, can be found here: www.gov.nl.ca/education/files/K-12-School-Plans-September-2021.pdf.

We recognize that last year was a challenging year, and that we have an opportunity at the start of this year that we can’t take for granted. The value of in-person education is clearer than ever, and we must all take the necessary steps to reduce risk of COVID-19 in our communities.

While the school districts, the Provincial Government and Public Health will focus on administering the plan and responding as issues arise, you too can play a role in maintaining a school year that is as close to normal as possible. Steps you can take include:

- **Get vaccinated:** Vaccination remains the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in schools and communities. Everyone who is eligible and able is encouraged to get two doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Keep doing the daily health check:** Families should use the screening questionnaire for schools and to stay home when sick or showing symptoms. The screening questionnaire can be found here: www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Covid-Questionnaire-Schools.pdf.
- **Determine if you need testing:** In instances where students stay home, the online COVID-19 Assessment Tool should be used to determine if testing is required. It can be found here: www.811healthline.ca/covid-19-self-assessment/.

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- **Follow public health guidance:** While no longer required by public health, mask wearing is still recommended, especially in high traffic areas and while taking the bus. Everyone should continue practicing hand hygiene and other public health guidelines.

Enjoy the last few days of your summer break, and I look forward to getting out into the school communities this year to meet as many of you as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Osborne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being more prominent than the last name "Osborne".

Hon. Tom Osborne
Minister of Education