



New Heights
school & learning services

School Re-Entry Plan

2020-2021



Introduction

On July 21st, the government announced that all schools in Alberta will be in Scenario 1 as of September. New Heights has been open for in-person classes as of September 2020.

As we continue the re-entry of our students to New Heights, we have taken our direction from Alberta Health Services (AHS) and have considered a number of areas to promote health and hygiene in the building. We have also ensured that we are taking into consideration how our students learn best, working on social communication and emotional regulation in a practical learning environment. The New Heights 2020-2021 re-entry plan is subject to change as more information becomes available from AHS and Alberta Education. We will continue to update you with more details during the school year.

School and classes look different than they did before, as we all follow new health measures. It is important to note that many of these measures are for a time, and are intended to enable us to keep our students and staff as safe and healthy as possible. We will be re-evaluating these measures through the year, and look forward to when we can put back in place some of the programming pieces that we are putting on pause this year in order to best follow the guidelines.

Updated: October 19, 2020

A Quick Summary

The safest return to school possible during a pandemic is our shared responsibility. Families, students, and staff are all in this together to do our part to protect each other's well-being.

New Heights is implementing the Government of Alberta's safety plans to reduce the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- routine health screening for all staff and students
- a stay-at-home policy for anyone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- mandatory masks for students from Grades 4-12 who are able and all staff in settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained, as outlined in provincial guidelines
- cleaning standards, which include:
 - disinfecting in the school, classrooms and washrooms
 - limited sharing of supplies and equipment
- physical distancing, including:
 - reorganizing rooms to allow more physical space, when possible
 - directing foot traffic
 - limiting large gatherings
- cohort classes
- hygiene routines, including
 - hand hygiene, including handwashing and sanitizing
 - respiratory etiquette, such as covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue or sleeve and then washing hands

What's new: Cleaning & Physical Building

Our COVID-19 cleaning standard aligns with the provincial directives around cleaning and disinfecting. These increased measures mean:

- More frequent cleaning and disinfecting throughout the school, with specific attention to washrooms, high-traffic areas, and classrooms.
- Frequently cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces such as water fountains and door handles.
- Removing soft furnishings and area rugs from classrooms and common areas that cannot be cleaned to provincial standards.

Physical Building

- Desks, tables, and equipment that are used by more than one student will be sanitized before and after each use.
- Visuals and directional arrows will be present on the floors and on the walls to guide movement in common areas and hallways (something we already do at New Heights).
- Visitors to the school will be minimized. Anyone entering the building must complete the self-screening tool and wear a mask. Parents/Guardians must remain outside the school to pick up and drop off students.

What's new: Physical Classroom

Our class size ratio will remain the same, with no more than 11 students in a class (8 students in ECS), with one teacher and one educational assistant in each classroom. These classrooms will be designated *cohorts* that stay together throughout the day until further notice. A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. Cohorting will decrease the number of close contacts a case of COVID-19 would have in a school and assist public health officials in their efforts to trace contacts and contain an outbreak. A cohort at New Heights is a class. Each class will have an assigned New Heights psychologist, Occupational Therapist, and Speech Language Pathologist in their cohort.

- Some seating and furniture will be removed from the classroom or rearranged for a time to encourage distancing.
- Classrooms will utilize outdoor learning spaces more frequently, especially for physical activity. Students should come dressed for the weather.
- Math manipulatives and other non-technological equipment will be organized per student. Materials will be cleaned and/or quarantined for 10 days prior to redistribution.
- Classrooms will be cleared of much of the shared toys and supplies, etc to allow for cleaning.
- Rugs and soft furnishings that are difficult to clean and disinfect will be removed.
- Windows may be open more often, even on cooler days. Students should dress accordingly.
- Desks will be arranged so they are not facing each other (ie in rows instead of groups).
- New Heights will continue our practice of having a seating plan for all classrooms.
- In High School, students will remain in their homeroom classrooms and teachers will travel back and forth between the rooms instead of students. Teachers who travel between cohorts will be masked.

What's new: Programming

Teachers will plan learning activities to reduce or minimize the need to share equipment, books, or materials. If items are shared, they must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Students will wash their hands both before and after using the shared items. Gym equipment use will be limited to items that are easily cleaned.

- When possible, physical education will be done outside instead of inside.
- Assemblies and other school-wide gatherings will be held virtually during this time.
- Teachers will work to choose activities or sports that support physical distancing (ie badminton).
- New Heights will continue to provide each student with a laptop for school use. Laptops are assigned to students and not shared.
- There will be no food sharing or drink sharing between students and/or staff.
- Programming that includes food sharing will be put on pause this year.
- Students will need to bring their own utensils for lunch/snack.
- New Heights will continue to have students eat lunch/snack in their classrooms at their desks, with their cohort.
- Field trips and outings that require transportation will not occur during the Fall of 2020. High School work experience classes will focus on the theory component of the course during the Fall. This will be re-evaluated through the year.

What's new: "Shared" Spaces

- Water fountains will be used as water bottle filling stations only. Reusable water bottles will be an important item on the school supply lists for families. Water fountain buttons will be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Playgrounds will remain open, used on a scheduled basis (ie Classroom A on Mondays, Classroom B on Tuesdays). Handwashing will take place before and after playground use. Playgrounds will be off limits for students before and after school.
- Rooms such as the life skills workroom, auditorium, activity room, and multipurpose room will be available on a scheduled basis for classrooms/students. (ie Classroom A has access to the life skills room on Mondays). Each evening the room will be cleaned and prepared for the class entering the next day.
- Session rooms will be cleaned throughout the day, in between uses.
- There will be a maximum number of students permitted in the washroom at one time. There will be visuals to promote distancing while waiting your turn.

What's new: Hygiene Routines

- Handwashing is the best practice when facilities are available. Handwashing will be practiced frequently throughout the day. If unavailable, sanitizer will be provided. Student handwashing/sanitizing will occur:
 - every time they enter or exit the building;
 - before they enter classrooms;
 - before and after they use shared equipment;
 - before eating;
 - and regularly throughout the day.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided and available in all entrances/exits to the building, and entrances/exits from the classroom, as well as near high traffic equipment (by microwaves, water fountains, etc). It is also encouraged that families send their children to school with personal hand sanitizer.
- As of August 4th, AHS and Alberta Education are requiring staff and students grades 4-12 to wear non-medical masks during the school day in common areas such as hallways, and throughout the day when physical distancing is not possible. Students in grades K-3 are encouraged to practice mask wearing throughout the day as well, especially in common areas such as hallways. Wearing a mask may be difficult for many of our students due to sensory sensitivities and challenges. The New Heights team, including our OTs, will work with each student to find a solution and practice through this mask-wearing period. Students who are unable to wear a mask will be practicing physical distancing.

Some important things to know about the use of masks are:

- individuals who are physically, psychologically or developmentally unable to wear a mask, or any protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, may be excused from this health protocol
- families will work with New Heights to discuss this relative to their child. We know that every child is working on different things. Student who are unable to wear a mask will be practicing physical distancing.
- masks are required for staff who wear face shields
- masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction **IF** following the physical distancing guidance. If close contact between students or staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used for the duration of this activity.

- Individuals wearing non-medical masks may still be considered close contacts if they are exposed to a case of COVID-19.
 - masks will be an important item on the school supply lists for families
 - Alberta Education or New Heights will provide students with two reusable masks
- Toys from home will not be allowed out of backpacks. Families will work with New Heights to discuss this relative to their child, in the case of transition toys or items.

What's new: Student Pick Up and Drop Off

- Parents/Guardians must remain outside the school to pick up and drop off students. Those who need to enter the school must book an appointment with the office. Individuals without an appointment will not be able to enter the school. Those with an appointment will be required to complete the daily COVID-19 screening questionnaire and wear a mask.
- More information on drop off and pick up times and entrances will be sent to each classroom in August. Entrance and Dismissal times are staggered **slightly** by division. These will not interfere with Access Calgary schedules.
- Students will follow the entrance routine and go straight to their classrooms after screening and handwashing on arrival. New Heights will create a video that will be sent in late August for students and families to familiarize themselves with the entrance routine.
- Students will wait in designated areas with their cohort outside for pick up. Students should come dressed for the weather.
- Physical distancing must be practiced by parents, students, and staff during drop off and pick up.

What's new: Additional Health Measures

Daily Screening

- Before coming to school each day, all staff and students must complete the Government of Alberta's COVID-19 screening questionnaire to determine whether they can attend or must stay home. Families will receive a copy of this provincial questionnaire from New Heights in late August. Staff and students who have any symptoms noted on the questionnaire cannot attend school.
- Anyone else permitted in the building will also need to complete the daily COVID-19 screening questionnaire before entering the building. Anyone showing symptoms listed on the pre-screening tool will not be allowed in the building.
 - If a student has a fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, runny nose, sore throat: isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from when symptoms started or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. A COVID-19 test is recommended. The student can return to school before 10 days only if a COVID-19 test is negative, symptoms are gone, and the student is not a close contact of someone with COVID-19.
 - If a student has chills, painful swallowing, stuffy nose, headache, muscle or joint aches, feeling unwell/fatigue/severe exhaustion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite, loss of sense of smell or taste, pink eye: stay home from school until symptoms go away (not required to isolate for 10 days). A COVID-19 test is recommended. If test results are positive, isolate at home for at least 10 days and follow instructions received from AHS.
- New Heights must keep a records of student's known pre-existing conditions. If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (ie allergies), the child should be tested at least once for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to school. This will be considered the student's baseline health.

Illness at School

- If a student becomes ill while they are at school, staff will bring them to a designated room to isolate. The student will wear a mask if they are able. Parents/guardians will be called and must have their child picked up within one hour. New Heights parents/guardians will need to provide an alternate emergency contact for student pick up.
- School staff will follow health protocols around personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning and disinfecting the area.

If there are probable or confirmed cases of COVID-19 identified within New Heights, the AHS Zone Medical Officer of Health will work directly with administration to provide follow-up recommendations and messaging for staff, parents/guardians, and students. The decision to send a cohort/class home to isolate or to close the school will be made by the AHS Medical Officer of Health. If students are required to self-isolate, New Heights will support students to learn from home during the isolation period.