



Understanding Back to School Options

Per the announcement on August 26 by Minister Rob Fleming, remote learning and flexible options are expected by the Minister by all 60 school districts to those families who need it. Whether it's noted in their plans or not, school districts must comply - it is not optional and it's new.

While most students will be returning to school and in-class instruction, the Ministry understands that some families, for medical, health OR other concerns, are looking for options. Minister Fleming has now set the expectation that school districts be flexible and work with families to provide remote options that keep children connected to their school community.

The Minister has directed school districts to contact all families in their school communities to share their safety plans and to confirm if they are planning for their child to attend school classes in September, or if they need alternative learning options. Districts will be doing this parent outreach between Aug 26 thru to Sept 4 to confirm attendance. This has already begun and takes varying forms from calls, emails, surveys etc.

Students who normally attend their school and in-class instruction do not need to de-enroll from their bricks and mortar school nor do they need to provide a medical note. When contacted, they just need to confirm they will not be returning to in-class instruction at this time.

The Ministry has given school districts the flexibility and funding certainty to find options that work for families. This includes the authority for all school boards to offer remote options to students within their districts, as well as the tools they need to increase their existing programs to meet demand. It is not based on demand but on need. If it's needed, it's to be provided.

Parents with students enrolled in school can expect to hear (Aug 26 - Sept 4) from their school district or school to find out if their child will attend in-class or will need alternative options. Flexibility will be key for a safe school restart and schools will work to support student needs. **IF parents don't hear from their district or school** in the coming days, it may be they don't have accurate contact details for you. Contact your school to provide updated information.

We strongly encourage families NOT to de-enroll their child from their current bricks and mortar school and to take the time to connect with their school and district to better understand the flexible remote options (per the Minister's announcement on Aug 26) for their child or alternatives to in-class instruction such as distributed learning or homeschooling.

The Ministry is providing both funding protection and net new funding to school districts to enable this remote learning, extend distributed learning if needed etc. The Ministry is committed to ensure districts can deliver what is needed to ensure all students remain connected to their school communities and are provided the remote options needed by families.

The Province is providing a range of supports for remote learning for school districts:

- Extended the authority to all school boards to offer online programs to students within their districts
- Gave districts the ability to expand their local distributed learning programs to include additional grades and services to students and district schools to meet local needs
- Provided a provincial learning management system for districts to support online learning

- Upgraded internet access to all schools in the province through the K-12 Next Generation Network
- Provided a provincial license for Zoom for all schools as a secure platform for real-time videoconferencing

Remote learning may look differently across different districts as there are many variables including size of student population, demand for remote learning, age/grade of students needing remote options etc.

Please read the [full announcement AND the informative backgrounder](#).

Please watch the [recorded announcement from Minister Fleming](#) here: (starts at 5 min, runs to 17 min when media ask questions).

Students with Diverse Abilities/Disabilities

Per instructions from the Ministry to all school districts on August 10 the template states: “In alignment with the Equity and Inclusion Guiding Principles, describe how your district is planning for students with diverse abilities/disabilities ensuring students and communicating to parents on the following, to ensure students will:

- Be able to attend school full time or have a plan to ensure supports and learning continue if a student needs to learn at home
- Have access to the necessary health and safety supports
- Continue to receive supports and services as identified in their IEP, including 1:1 supports
- Not be grouped in segregated settings as a part of the establishment of cohorts”

There are more details in these documents:

[K-12 Health and Safety Guidelines](#)

[K-12 Operational Guidelines](#)

Students with Complex Medical Conditions

Parents of students who are immuno-compromised or have underlying medical conditions are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine their level of risk regarding return to school. Parents with children (or families) who are immuno-compromised will receive accommodations and do not need to pull their child from in-class instruction/local school.

There are more details in these documents:

[K-12 Health and Safety Guidelines](#)

[K-12 Operational Guidelines](#)

FYI Homebound Program

During a regular school year districts also accommodate students that cannot attend in-class instruction through the long-standing BC Homebound Program. This enables students to continue their education program if they are absent from school for periods during the school year because of medical reasons, such as injury, illness, surgery, pregnancy, or mental health reasons.

Online & Distributed Learning

During the regular school year, this is an option for parents. In this style of learning, students can connect with their teacher from anywhere in the world on their own schedule and their own terms. This approach is called distributed learning (DL). Teachers use a wide variety of electronic tools to teach their students including voice and video conferencing over the Internet, email, telephone calls and others. Every DL school provides a teacher who works with each student to:

- Plan and deliver a course of study
- Get course textbooks and resources
- Assess student progress and complete a report card

Students can choose to complete an entire program via distributed learning or partner it with other learning options like in-person classes.

[More details are online.](#)

Homeschooling

This is an alternative method of teaching offered outside the BC educational system. Typically, a family member delivers the entire educational program to children at home. Homeschooling programs are not:

- Supervised by a B.C.-certified teacher
- Required to meet provincial standards
- Inspected by the Ministry of Education

Homeschooling comes with great responsibility – choosing this option means parents must provide and supervise their child’s entire educational program, including curriculum and learning materials.

[More details are online.](#)

[BC Home Educators Association is also a valuable resource.](#)
