
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

New federal funding builds on plans for a safe back to school

VICTORIA – Building on the Province’s \$45.6-million investment to support a safe restart for B.C.’s schools, additional funding from the federal government will allow schools to expand health and safety measures, purchase more personal protective equipment (PPE) and increase capacity for remote learning.

“Our province is taking the best, science-based public health advice and planning to have as many children as possible back in classrooms this fall, which is why we have been talking with the federal government about the need for more resources for our schools,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “We are appreciative of this additional support to provide more resources to districts and independent school authorities, so they can continue providing ongoing learning opportunities in a safe way.”

To support B.C.’s COVID-19 response for K-12 education, the federal government is providing \$242.4 million in one-time funding for the 2020-21 school year, with the first half of the payment expected to be received in September. Funding will be allocated to public school districts based primarily on student enrolment. B.C.’s Ministry of Education is initially allocating \$101.1 million to school districts, \$8.0 million to independent schools and reserving \$12.1 million for emerging COVID-19 related issues between September and December 2020. The ministry is expected to receive up to an additional \$121.2 million in January, which will be allocated out at that time.

On Aug. 26, Fleming directed school districts and independent schools to contact all families in their school communities to confirm if they planned for their child to attend school classes in September or if they would need remote learning options. Over the past week, schools have reported that the majority of students are returning to full-time, in-class instruction. However, some families are looking for remote options or transition programs.

The funding will support school districts to hire and train more teachers and support staff for remote learning; purchase additional software licences, electronic course materials and textbooks; purchase computers or tablets; and create Wi-Fi hubs and internet access in remote and Indigenous communities.

School districts and independent schools will be able to spend the funding in the following areas, based on local needs:

Learning resources and supports

- Implementation of online and remote learning options
- Hiring additional teachers and staff
- Training for staff

- On-call teachers costs and other on-call staff
- Mental health support for students and staff

Health and safety

- Increasing staff and covering salary costs for additional hours needed to meet health and safety guidelines in schools
- Improving air systems in schools, such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning improvements, portable air scrubbers and increased utility costs
- Increasing hand hygiene, including additional handwashing and hand sanitizing stations, installing touchless faucets or additional supplies
- Installing plexiglass and other barriers, providing outdoor learning spaces, and adapting classrooms and school buses to minimize physical contact
- Purchasing additional cleaning supplies such as sprayers or fogger machines for frequent cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces
- Purchasing additional masks, face shields or other PPE as needed

Transportation

- Cover additional transportation costs to have fewer students on buses and/or to accommodate new school schedules and additional routes
- Supporting alternative transportation strategies, such as assisting with gas costs for parents who transport their children to school

Before- and after-school child care

- Opening up more space and covering the cleaning costs for before- and after-school care so that groups can be smaller and to ensure students can remain within their learning groups
- Additional staff to support before- and after-school care during the pandemic

These one-time provincial and federal COVID-19 funding investments build on the record levels of funding schools are already receiving, with \$546 million of new money in B.C.'s Budget 2020 for K-12 education.

Quick Facts:

- The federal government has committed to provide provinces and territories \$2 billion in new federal funding to support the adaptation of the education sector to ensure a safe return to class in the fall.
- B.C.'s Ministry of Education has developed a five-stage approach to operate schools, depending on risk of transmission and guidance from the provincial health officer. This helps school districts know what to expect if there is a significant change to school operations required as part of B.C.'s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn More:

For more info on back-to-school plans, learning groups and health and safety guidelines, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school>

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