



MVEC “A Safe Return to School” Support Plan

During the Covid-19 Pandemic:

Helpful Tips for Families- Edition 1

Dear Families and Students of MVEC:

The Mi'kmaw word *Kinu* means “all of us together”. That said, I am thrilled to be together with my MVEC Family again this year, and to work alongside you to lend my support to student safety, wellness and learning during these exceptional times. As many of you know, we boast an incredibly knowledgeable and caring staff who stand alongside one another, you and I to make the very best of a unique situation; TOGETHER IN TEAMWORK!

While we hope you are enjoying the beautiful summer weather and family time, it also is natural for you to begin to have questions about the coming school year. Admittedly, we do not yet have answers for everything, but I want you to know that work is underway to provide you with information that you will find useful and supportive. In the meantime, please be encouraged to familiarize yourself with the EECD's “Nova Scotia Back to School Plan” (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/back-to-school-plan.pdf>).

Beyond this, I thought it might be helpful to share what seem to me to be some highlights, and provide specific details about what these expectations and guidelines mean in our school for our shared health, bearing in mind changes may happen as we adjust to new information from Public Health. This is a LENGTHY DOCUMENT, and I apologize in advance for this; you'll understand the reason by the end. As we are beginning to move through the many layers of this return to learning for MVEC, I want to assure you we are committed to offering our students and staff a return that respects all guidelines for safety, and are excited about welcoming students back to our school community.

Many of you have asked for more information about how the school will respond to a COVID-19 outbreak. We understand that further direction will be provided to all schools by the province, and like you, are eager for more details. What we do know is that self-monitoring and staying home if you feel unwell are **essential** strategies. Additionally at the school, we will be keeping records of classes, including seating charts, bus cohorts, and daily records of any approved visitors to the school, including occasional teachers, itinerant staff and custodians/operations staff for contact tracing purposes. Check out other ways to stay healthy at the following link: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/staying-healthy/>.

BEFORE COMING TO SCHOOL

- Each day before sending your child to the bus, families will need to monitor their child's symptoms using the "Covid-19 Daily Checklist" (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Daily-COVID-checklist-en.pdf>) for any symptoms of cold, flu or other symptoms that may be associated with COVID-19, prior to sending their child to school. Again, **self- screening will be one of the more powerful strategies we have** toward keeping everyone safe, so thank you in advance for your vigilant support with this.

***Useful Tips:** When in doubt, keep your child home; there is no better time to apply the adage: it is better to be safe than sorry. When you feel your child may be ready to return to school, please consult with your physician or 811.*

- Ensure your child is wearing a mask before entering the bus.

***Useful Tips:** Consider placing your child's mask on a lanyard so they do not lose it and have it at the ready when not in use, and have a couple spare ones in their bookbag. Alternatively, a "Covid Care" fanny pack (with sanitizer, tissue, a small supply of clean masks and a baggie for soiled masks) is also a great idea! Where possible, consider transporting your child to school to minimize contact with those outside of their classrooms. Please also help them understand that, if they ride the bus, they will be sitting in assigned seats, with their siblings, where applicable; our drivers thank you for this support! Families are also encouraged to help their children get used to putting on and removing their mask safely, as this takes some getting used to for us all.*

- There will be no onsite parking for families this year. **If transporting your children, please plan on dropping them off in the parking lot nearest the DNR doors for drop-off only; avoid entering our bus loop and schoolyard.** Students will join their class lines from there. Thank you in advance for respecting and understanding the value of this measure.

ENTERING THE SCHOOL

- When your child arrives at school, they will line up at their designated spot (details to follow below) in socially distanced fashion (about an arms' length apart). Their teacher will greet them each morning **starting at 8:40 (no drop offs before then please)**, supervising them as they stand in line. Then, students and staff will wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitizer (they will do this each time they enter and exit the school and the class, before and after the washroom, and before and after eating times. (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Hand-Washing-Poster.pdf>). Students will keep their masks on while entering the building and cleaning their hands.

Useful Tips: Pack a brown paper bag in your child's book bag to keep their mask in when not in use, if not using a lanyard or fanny pack. Bring the **bare minimum of personal items** to school, including **only their lunch can, water bottle and, for our younger learners, a change of clothes, and spare masks; ensure all items fit in their book bag.**

- To minimize close contacts, we anticipate that **coat hooks will not be used** and we will not worry about changing to indoor shoes for now. Students will hang their bags and coats on their chairs for the day.
- **Students will only bring to school their backpack, lunch box, full water bottle, spare masks and, for those who benefit from it, a change of clothes.** They will keep **all of their resources at their desks/bags with no sharing**. Please ensure their book bag easily accommodates these items. (**I realize this was said above as well but cannot be stressed enough 😊*)

Useful Tip: Be encouraged to keep a small amount of school supplies at home in the event of an unexpected school closure.

CLASSROOM LEARNING TIME

- Most instruction happens in the classroom to minimize unnecessary travel through the halls, and where possible, classes may be lead outside!

***Useful Tips:** Encourage your child to avoid touching objects as they travel through the halls of the school, noting, again, that students will be at individual desks rather than group tables, because **NOT SHARING is caring** for awhile.*

- Our initial learning time will always focus on building relationships and creating a safe and welcoming class community; instructional time will focus on all curriculum areas.
- As usual, staff will immediately begin gathering assessment information, and students will receive ongoing feedback from their teachers.
- These are unique times, requiring more traditional teaching practices than the ones we have implemented over the past decades. Staff will aim to create engaging activities that do not require partners, moving around to different stations in class or the sharing of material and equipment. *We will try our best and appreciate your patience while we adjust!*
- Where possible, classroom windows will remain open for improved air quality. **Send your child dressed with a sweater or vest as needed.**
- Students will remain in one classroom with the same group of students all day, with the exception of PE, which may occur in the gym if inclement outside. French, Music, Library and Resource instruction will happen in their class, with the teachers applying hand-hygiene before and after visiting each class.
- **Students will have an assigned seat;** seating plans will be maintained.
- **Furniture and resources** are kept to a minimum in class to maximize the space between the desks, all **fabric items** (upholstered chairs, mats) are to be removed (as far as we know at this time), and we will do all we can to facilitate the **cleaning process**. *All these items will be stored in the school for later use.*

EATING/PLAYING AT SCHOOL

- Breakfast Program offerings will consist of pre-packaged/individually wrapped items such as granola bars, fruit leathers and hand-held fruit. Each class will receive their own basket of goodies each day. Students will eat their snacks and lunches at their desks, and will **not be able to access microwaves**. We offer no hot lunch or milk programs this year, however, the Breakfast Program basket will be available all day, every day, and replenished each evening.
- **All items coming in the lunch box will be returned home** for composting and recycling.

***Useful Tips:** Encourage your child to practice opening all their containers, as staff will not be able to assist with this, ensure they have required utensils, and consider providing a full water bottle that has a closed, covered spout.*

- Recess and Lunch Playtimes will be **staggered** and scheduled. For instance, Grades 1/2 and 4/5 may have the same recess and lunch playtimes, but will only be able to access certain, separate areas of the playground, where 1/2 may be assigned to the equipment, while the 4/5 may be assigned to gaga ball that day. **Visiting friends in other cohorts is disallowed.**

***Useful Tips:** We anticipate having two recess snack times at times (one in the mornings and another in the afternoons), so please be encouraged to pack a little extra.*

OUTDOOR LEARNING TIME

- We will work to maximize our time learning outside. We will need to be creative about the use of our space as all our Physical Education classes will take place outside.
Students will stay in designated areas with their cohorts.
- Please plan to dress your child for the weather, considering cooler fall days and potential wet areas of the yard/field.
- **Children should wear comfortable shoes suitable for Physical Education activities** (no flip flops, sandals, etc.).
- Check the weather forecast in the morning (raincoat, rain pants and extra socks as needed), as we will spend **time outside, rain or shine (unless pouring or freezing!)**. Any changes of clothing, or extra clothing, will need to be stored in your child's backpack.
- As far as we know now, the play structure will be open and part of our playtime schedule.
- We also plan to teach students games and activities that do not require equipment, though we hope to be able to provide each class a small supply of playground toys denoted by an assigned colour (P/1- yellow ball, etc.).
- Students from one class will be assigned to a play 'area', and will be permitted to neither leave the area for another, nor interact with students from other classes.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Some of you may be wondering: what are the class sizes? Here is some information about our class sizes at this moment, bearing in mind things may have changed since registration month last February, and the number of students per class could be adjusted once we know more about the number of students attending school:

PP- 6 students P/1- 19 students 1/2- 20 3/4- 24 4/5- 24 6- 23

- To date, we are able to provide 1m of space between students' desks in Grades P/1, 1/2 and 3/4, and will also use an adjacent classroom to 3/4 so there will be ample opportunity to take off masks.
- 2m distancing is possible in Grades 4/5 and 6 now that their classes are in our music and cafeteria rooms respectively. This may change following late registration and after the first day when we learn better about who arrives to attend school 😊

Below is a pic of our Primary/One Classroom, and will share more pics over the next few messages to home so you can see our progress!



- Visitors to the School will be **limited** to only those who are essential, including external program providers, licensing and/or public health officers, and delivery and/or maintenance employees.

Useful Tips: *If you need to speak to a member of the MVEC Team, call or email us; direct visits to the school will be declined.*

A PARTING MESSAGE

I will endeavour to keep you apprised as we move forward, and encourage you to ask questions in the meantime at rlegge@hrce.ca. Though I may not yet have all the answers, I believe we can puzzle through just about anything in partnership 😊

Together in Teamwork- Robin Legge, Principal