

Pacific School of Innovation and Inquiry

Return to School Plan

September 2020

As you know, the BC Ministry of Education has determined that schools will move into Phase 2 of the COVID re-opening plan as of this September.

Phase 2 means that learners will have the option to attend school in-person full-time starting in September. Guidelines have been set out regarding the size of “learning groups” (cohorts of students who can be grouped together) intended to limit the amount of contact each learner has with others at school. There is still an expectation that spacing between learners will be increased (though no specific guidelines are given on the specifics of that spacing) and that there will be more individual and small-group activities, as opposed to large gatherings and large-group interactions. In addition, as of August 17, the Ministry of Education added to their guidelines that masks must be worn in “high traffic areas” – again, not defined.

For secondary schools, the learning group maximum number is 120. For PSII, with a total enrollment less than the size of one learning group, we do not have to limit who learns together at the school. Having said that, we have taken measures to ensure that if all 97 enrolled learners attend at the same time, we can accommodate everyone safely, and in a way that does not impede their ability to learn or the school’s ability to employ its inquiry model.

Arrival at School

Upon arrival at the school learners are asked to do the following:

1. Please check to see if there is space for you to enter the school space. If the entry area is full (i.e. if all the marked standing spots are filled), please wait just outside the main doors to the building along the sidewalk by the school windows. You will see standing spots on the sidewalk as well to show you where to stand and how far apart.
2. Upon entry to the school, you will see our welcome desk. Here, a teacher will ask you some health screening questions. If all is OK, you can enter the school for the day.

3. **Please do not come to school if you have cold or flu-like symptoms or a fever/temperature.** If a learner is not going to attend school on a particular day (for any reason) please notify the school by sending a short note to attendance@learningstorm.org.



Welcome Desk, Front Door

4. Once inside the school, the learner will be directed where to go (at least on the first few days as we establish routines). Each learner has a cubby where they can place belongings and lunch. We ask that people keep the number of items at school to a minimum as cubbies are small and we do not want to accumulate too much personal stuff that is not needed for learning. Some personal items can also be taken to the learner's "home base" as needed.

How the PSII Space is Arranged

One-way flow

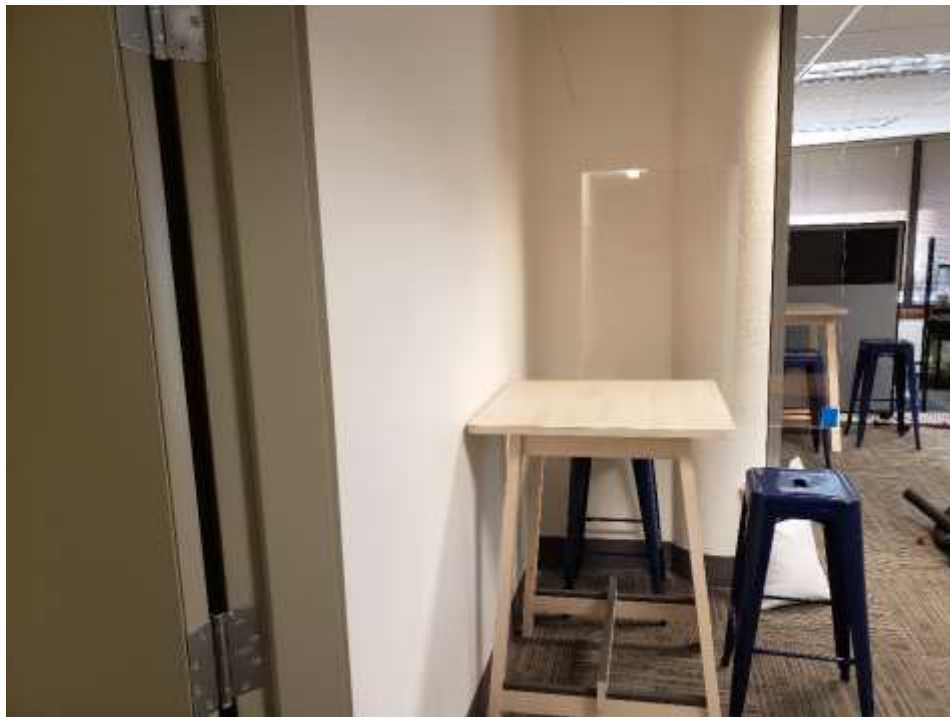
The school has been set-up for one way flow. The floor is marked throughout the school with directional arrows, indicating the flow direction in each space. The front door is only an **in** door, and the two back doors (in the art/maker space and near the nook) are only **out** doors. There is a hallway outside the school space that learners will follow to get from the washrooms back to the **in** door at the front.

Wherever there is a walkway, there is either a protective barrier between that walkway and where a learner might sit or stand or there is a minimum of 2 metres distance between the outer edge of the walkway and anywhere that a learner might sit or stand.

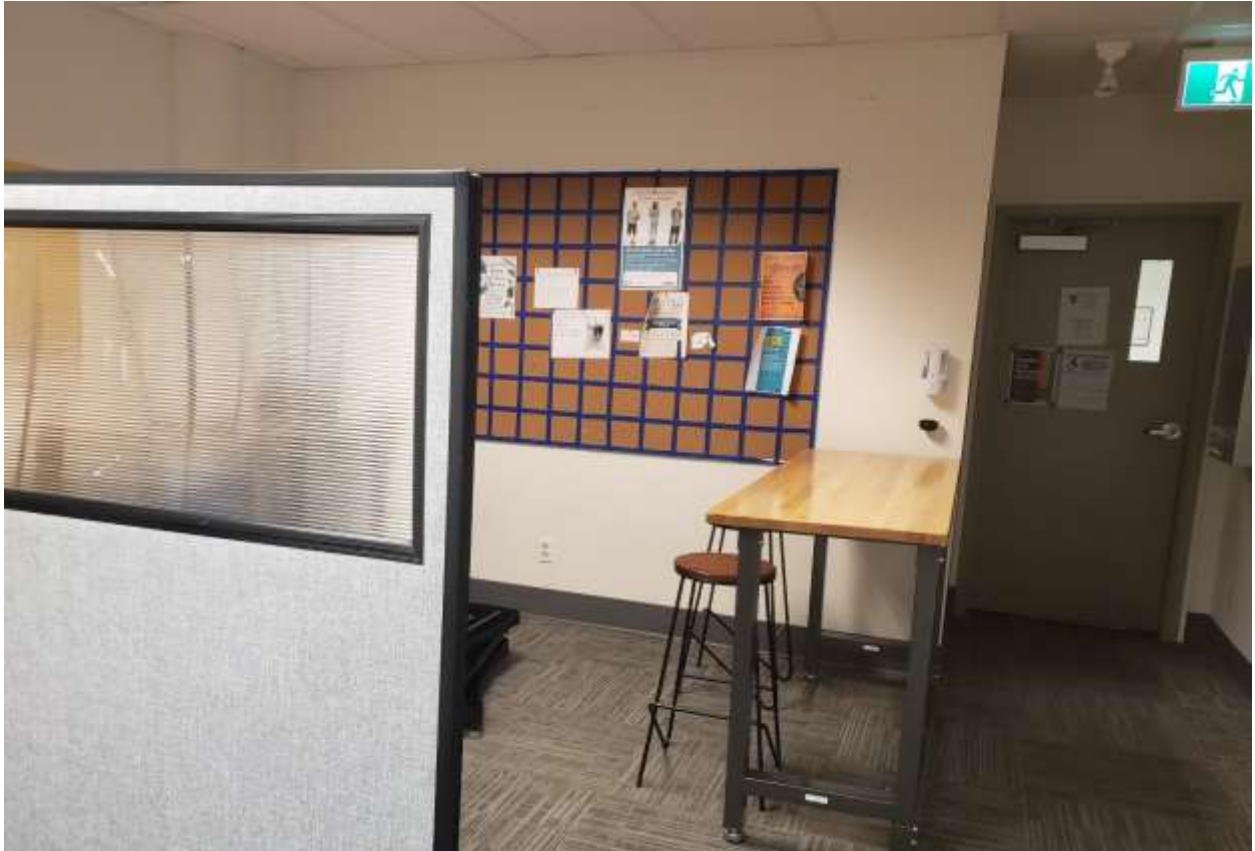
Barriers

Clear Acrylic barriers are placed strategically to divide the airspace between learners anywhere that 2 metre distances cannot be attained, or where there is a doorway or walkway adjacent to where a learner might be stationed. These acrylic barriers hang from the ceiling and do not touch the table tops, allowing for maximum airflow through the school, as well as reducing the feeling of being in a box or cell.





In some cases, room divider type barriers are used instead of clear acrylic. This is in cases where there might be a greater volume of traffic.



Common Spaces

While it is important for everyone to have a safe home base, we also want learners to be able to access common areas in the school as well. No one wants to sit all day! The music room, the art space, and the maker space will all remain common areas. Having said that, each of these rooms is booked for sessions from time to time, but by and large they are available for use by learners who need them. This year, we ask that people make room booking requests through their org teachers, allowing us to know that we are not exceeding maximum bodies for any space at any given time.

All common areas are re-designed so that 2 metre distancing can be achieved.



Social “Bubbles”

We surveyed all families earlier in August and received completed survey by approximately 85% of people. This has helped us as we make decisions about how to structure the school physically, as well as how to offer learning opportunities to people. One result of the survey showed us how many people were already in social “bubble” – groups that have been closer than 2 metres consistently in the very recent past. This information has allowed us to create more space by having some “bubble” seating without barriers for those in social bubbles already.

In order to keep this from driving social and collaborative grouping in school too much, we have limited the bubble seating to tables of two. These tables are also located near barrier protected tables, allowing bubble and non-bubble learners to interact.

Social bubbles have been tracked on a spreadsheet and groups will be identified by colour-coded bracelet, so teachers know who is permitted to be nearer one another and who is not. So for example, at the table pictured below, only social bubble people wearing the same coloured wristband could be seated together.



Extra Space – Legacy Art Gallery

Another measure PSII has taken is to rent the Legacy Gallery studio space (upstairs from the gallery proper), located 3 blocks from the school. This space can safely accommodate up to 20 people at 2/metre distancing. This additional space will be available to us for the month of September each day from 9:30 until 12:30. Learners may have sessions or org meeting scheduled there from time to time, and will be accompanied by a teacher to and from the gallery.

It is a lovely space and we are going to try it out for a month to see how it goes. We think it will work just fine, as the city has always been a part of the extended campus of PSII.



Hand Washing and Sanitizing Stations

We have placed hand sanitizing stations at each entrance inside the school space, and the Nootka Court management has placed sanitizers at each entrance to the building and in a few other spots around the school. PSII also has 5 hand-washing areas – 3 washrooms, and 1 in each kitchen area. All hand washing areas have soap, hot water, and paper towel.



Other Protective Measures

Masks

We ask all learners to bring a non-medical mask to school each day. PSII has also purchased two cotton masks for each learner, just in case people are having a difficult time finding masks to buy, or if they need a few extras in their stockpile. The cotton masks are pleated, have adjustable ear straps, and a pouch for an additional filter if someone prefers to add that extra layer of protection. The Ministry of Education has asked that masks be worn whenever 2 metre distancing is not possible, and in high traffic areas. PSII has decided, based on the available science on COVID, that masks should be worn as much as possible at the school, except when eating or where a health condition prevents it. Teachers will wear masks and will also use cashier's barriers when meeting in close proximity with learners.



Cleaning

The school is cleaned well at the end of each day, and we have ensured that the cleaning products used are in line with the cleaning guidelines set out by Worksafe BC and by the BC Centre for Disease Control. During the school day, all door handles and a few other high touch surfaces will be cleaned hourly using Clorox wipes.

Food, Cooking, and Dishes

We are not permitted to cook food at the school during Stage 2 of the pandemic response. That means our Cooking classes will be theory only, plus the creation of recipes and the teaching of techniques that can be tried at home. We also ask learners not to bring foods for lunch that require cooking.

The school dishes cannot be used during Stage 2, and so learners will need to bring their own disposable cups and utensils, and/or they can use the “pack it in/pack it out” method using any combination of reusable and disposable materials.

All reusable materials must be removed from study areas as soon as eating is done and should be placed in a learner’s cubby or backpack. Any dishes left in the school will be disposed of each day. The exception is reusable travel mugs, but we do ask that they not be left around the school unattended.

HVAC System and Open Doors/Windows

Our HVAC system is, upon recent inspection, quite good. While there are a few spots in the school where the air turnover is a bit slower, on average the air replacement rate is a complete change approximately 14 to 16 times per hour. In order to further enhance the flow of air, we will leave doors and windows (we actually only have one window that opens) open as often as is practical. Because we occupy most of the first floor in this part of the building, this should be possible most of the time.

PSII will also be pursuing every opportunity to engage in outdoor activities wherever the outdoor environment is conducive to that activity.

Hand-washing and Hand-sanitizing Routine

In the first week of school, PSII will be discussing hand-washing frequency and technique with all learners. While this may seem simple and possibly even insulting to some, we want to make sure people are practising the best hand hygiene possible. We will also review best ways of

preventing sneeze and cough droplets from spreading, and a few other tips related to the prevention of droplet spread. Generally speaking, we would like people to do a full hand-washing at least twice daily at school, and hand sanitizing whenever deemed appropriate in between those washing times.

Group Sessions

Perhaps our trickiest challenge is figuring out how to offer group sessions. The Legacy Gallery space, the music room, the art space, and the lab are the only places where we can really offer a group session, and even then, only small numbers can attend. For that reason, we have acquired two [ViewSonic touch screens](#). These screens will allow people in the room to see easily what the teacher is writing or showing (the screens are large), while at the same time, others can access the same screen via their laptop using Zoom. We found that, for some learners, using Zoom in the Spring was a more comfortable way for them to participate in a group session. So there is no reason why they cannot continue to do that even while in the school building. Then, for those who really prefer to be in the same room together, there will be enough space to accommodate in most cases. This will of course be a work-in-progress, and we know we will not get the balance right immediately. Innovation works that way!

Addressing Needs of Homebound Learners

We know from our survey that there are learners who are nervous about in-person attendance. We also know that there are some learners who live with family members with fragile health or compromised immune systems. For this reason, we have decided to go beyond the Ministry of Education requirements and offer a robust simultaneous online presence. We want to ensure that, whether someone is in the same room, in the school but not in the same room, or at home, they can participate in an inquiry-based educational program at PSII.

We have purchased four Zoom Pro accounts, and we use the most secure method of access, avoiding so-called “Zoom-bombing” and other problems. After investigating the enterprise level Zoom, we realized that the weak spots are still there. So, through the use of passwords, a secure session schedule, and a “waiting room” protocol (where the host only admits those participants that are recognized as PSII learners), we will ensure the safety and security of our Zoom sessions.

The added bonus of Zoom is that we can also record sessions, allowing learners who are unable to attend even via Internet, can at least see the recorded session and hear the group discussion at a later time.

This is essentially an extension of our hospital and homebound accessibility practice that already existed prior to COVID. Only now it is much more robust, and we have now had a lot of practice at offering multi-access learning opportunities.

In the Case of a Possible COVID-19 Exposure

This is another area where the Ministry of Education has been quite vague. PSII has, therefore, developed the following protocol:

SCENARIO 1 - If a learner is at school and exhibits symptoms of COVID-19:

- they will immediately be escorted to a room where they can be isolated from the rest of the learners but can be monitored by a teacher.
- 8-1-1 will be called and we will also call the parent/guardian or emergency contact if the parent/guardian is unavailable.
- That learner will need to go home as soon as possible, accompanied by the parent/guardian or designate.
- Depending on the advice from 8-1-1, we may be asked to advise a small number of learners and/or teachers to self-isolate, or we may be asked to advise the entire school (really one learning group, under the 120-person limit dictated by the Ministry) to self-isolate. This is the vague part.
- Even if only a small number of learners is required to self-isolate, we will also advise all learners and families that there has been a potential exposure to the virus.

SCENARIO 2 - If a learner who has been attending the school physically develops COVID symptoms at home:

- 8-1-1 will be called
- That learner will stay home until we have advice from BC Health authorities that they can return safely to school.
- Depending on the advice from 8-1-1, we may be asked to advise a small number of learners and/or teachers to self-isolate, or we may be asked to advise the entire school (really one learning group, under the 120-person limit dictated by the Ministry) to self-isolate.
- Even if only a small number of learners is required to self-isolate, we will also advise all learners and families that there has been a potential exposure to the virus.

SCENARIO 3 – If a teacher exhibits symptoms of COVID:

- Same as above, except for the parts involving parents/guardians

We are very cautiously optimistic that we have put in place measures that provide a high level of protection against infection. We know, however, that **there is no such thing as zero risk** and we do not promise that. We are following the requirements laid out by the BC Ministry of Education, adding in our own layer of additional thinking and protection.

First Week of School

While BC schools have been given the opportunity to open later than September 8th, PSII has decided to open on the 8th, but to modify the week slightly to allow us to test our ways of doing business (things may look good on paper, but....) . Those modification involve a graduated entry, giving us a chance to spend more focused time on the new PSII learners to get them acquainted with the inquiry method, and to spend time on different items with those returning learners who already know the method but who need guidance in kicking off the new year.

Here is our schedule for the first week:

Tuesday, September 8

9:30 to 12:00 – all new PSII learners in attendance

1:00 to 3:30 – all returning PSII learners in attendance

NOTE: those who have siblings in a different category from their own are welcome to make an arrangement to stay through the whole day if desired. We know that transportation can be an issue, and we do not want to add to anyone's misery.

Wednesday, September 9

9:30 to 12:00 – all new PSII learners in attendance

1:00 to 3:30 – all returning PSII learners in attendance

Then a change....

Thursday, September 9

9:30 to 12:00 – all returning PSII learners in attendance

1:00 to 3:30 – all new PSII learners in attendance

Friday, September 10

9:30 to 12:00 – all returning PSII learners in attendance

1:00 to 3:30 – all new PSII learners in attendance

As the first week progresses, we will fine-tune our group session scheduling based on what we determine the need to be, and we will also know how to best manage things with the whole student body of 97. The second week of school will be full-time for everyone, and the detailed schedule will be available on the Google calendar.

More details about the first week will be coming soon, after teachers have had a chance to talk about something other than COVID-19 when they meet through next week.

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS?

We usually have an open-house/welcome/welcome back gathering in the summer, but not this year for obvious reasons. That is a time when people can ask questions and get to know one another. So this year, we are going to use...what else?... Zoom!

On Wednesday, September 2 at 7:00 pm Jeff will host a Zoom meeting for all **new PSII parents and learners** who have questions or concerns about this plan or about anything else that may have come up.

On Thursday, September 3 at 7:00 pm Jeff will host a second meeting for all **returning PSII parents and learners.**

Invitations will be sent early next week via email.

We will record the meetings and make them available for those who are unable to attend. We hope you understand that we can not always tend to all your emails as quickly as we would like a this very busy time of year, and that these Zoom meetings are a great opportunity to ask those questions. Once things settle down, the email method will work again.

THANK YOU!