

BACKGROUND

Urgent Items Addressed in Letter to Honourable Minister of Education Dustin Duncan

- Breakthrough cases in vaccinated school staff due to in-school transmission, as confirmed by public health officials.
- Inconsistent approaches to declaring outbreaks.
- Inconsistent isolation requirements for close contacts.
- An apparent reluctance to protect student health by enacting measures such as smaller classes or transitioning to remote learning. Despite the more contagious and deadly Delta variant of concern contributing to an increasingly dangerous situation in schools, few schools have moved online. Provincewide mandatory masking was only introduced on September 17. For comparison:
 - During the last week of March 2021, all schools in Regina and Moose Jaw, along with several more in Saskatoon and throughout the province, moved online due to suspected outbreaks.
 - For the week of March 29 to April 4, 634 COVID-19 cases were detected in children and youth aged 0-19, with a test positivity rate of 8.6 percent.
 - For the week of September 20 to 26, 1,665 COVID-19 cases were detected in children and youth aged 0-19, with a test positivity rate of 14.3 percent.
- Increasing difficulties securing substitute teachers, leaving teachers and other school staff scrambling for coverage, resorting to combining classrooms and, therefore, increased chance of transmission.
- Significant delays in contact tracing. Teachers and parents report that by the time they are notified of their status as close contact, the 14-day isolation period is almost over.
- Teachers, principals and vice-principals are taking on the role of contact tracers, spending their evenings notifying parents of classroom cases.
- Inaccurate school case counts. Teachers and parents are reporting routine occurrences of school cases omitted on the province's dashboard.

The Education Sector Response Planning Team

The RPT included representatives from across the education sector, including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, the League of Educational

Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan, and the Ministry of Education. This team was assembled in March of 2020 and worked in consultation with health officials to provide guidance and ensure effective implementation of COVID-19 measures in schools. This team was disbanded in July 2021. The Business Sector Response Planning Team was reintroduced September 17.

Teacher Stories

Collected here are several quotes from concerned teachers received by the STF in recent weeks:

“We are working in crowded conditions, initially without mask mandates and with COVID sick days removed from our options for leave. This is contrary to our understanding that if someone is ill, they should stay at home. The messaging is mixed, and teachers have learned that the unspoken message is stronger than the spoken one.”

“Three classes have been affected by Covid, but none have moved to online learning, nor has an outbreak been declared. There are medically vulnerable children in our school, and I also worry for them and their families.”

“We are trying but there is nothing left in the tank for many of us... ..I am very afraid our death toll won't stay at two.”

2021-22 School Year COVID-19 Timeline

The content below highlights the major dates and events from the end of the 2020-21 school year to today. This paints a stark picture of the cumulative effect of the decisions being made over the past five months.

- June 21** The Government of Saskatchewan announces all public health measures will be lifted July 11, even though its own target of 70 percent vaccination rate to do so has not been met.
- 335 new cases in Saskatchewan in the week of June 21, 2021.
- June 30** Premier Scott Moe says there will be no proof of vaccination requirement in Saskatchewan.
- “We most certainly don’t have the ability then to demand that people would show a proof of vaccination for whether or not they would attend any large event.” Sourced from [Global News](#).
- July 8** The Government of Saskatchewan holds final public weekly COVID-19 update, declares state of emergency to end.
- July 11** All public health orders are removed; no restrictions in place. On Twitter, Premier Moe encourages everyone to “enjoy a great Saskatchewan summer.” Response Planning Team is disbanded, as its creation was tied to the public health orders.
- August 16** The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation Executive calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to make vaccines mandatory for all eligible staff and students.
- August 20** The Government of Saskatchewan releases recommendations for schools, leaving all decisions on COVID-19 measures to local school divisions, and by extension schools, despite calls for more strict measures from the [Saskatchewan Medical Association and Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians](#).
- August 23** Minister of Education Dustin Duncan defends the government’s decision not to require masks, despite doctors’ recommendations.
- 1,577 new cases in Saskatchewan the week of August 23, 2021.
- August 25** Minister Merriman pushes back against restrictions, mandatory vaccines amid rising COVID-19 cases. Minister Merriman states mandating vaccines in any way would be an infringement of personal freedoms.
- “I don’t know why it has to be a government mandate, the individual should make the choice whether they want to be vaccinated or not ...

if people don't want to be vaccinated, that's their choice." Sourced from [CTV Regina](#).

- 949 active cases in 0- to 19-year-old individuals, 16.2 percent weekly test positivity the week of August 30 to September 5, 2021.

September 7 A number of school divisions implement mandatory masking within elementary and high schools.

September 8 Saskatchewan continues to have one of the lowest vaccination rates in the country, no remaining public health restrictions and climbing hospitalizations. Due to the current situation doctors plead for changes as shared in a [StarPhoenix](#) article.

- 1,217 active cases in 0- to 19-year-old individuals, 15 percent weekly test positivity the week of September 6 to 12, 2021.

September 10 New measures put in place, requiring mandatory isolation for those testing positive for COVID-19. The Saskatchewan Health Authority announces reduction in non-critical and elective services.

September 10 Premier Moe reiterates his position against a provincewide vaccine mandate, while developing a system that will help municipal governments and businesses impose their own.

- 3,388 new cases in Saskatchewan in the week of September 13, 2021.
- 1,517 active cases in 0- to 19-year-old individuals, 14.1 percent weekly test positivity the week of September 13 to 19, 2021.

September 15 New Public Health Order announced making isolation mandatory for unvaccinated close contacts. Students are exempt for the purposes of attending school, including riding the bus.

September 15 New Public Health Order begins to make masking mandatory in indoor places across the province. Proof of vaccination required starting October 1.

September 15 147 schools had active recorded cases; 78 schools listed as active outbreaks.

September 16 The STF issues a [public call](#) for improved measures to protect children from COVID-19.

- September 17** The SHA announces they have hit a critical point in the pandemic and must temporarily slow elective procedures across the province.
- Sourced from [CTV Regina](#).
- September 17** At the STF local association Presidents' Gathering a unanimous motion passed for an immediate request for reinstatement of the Education Response Planning Team.
- September 17** Business Sector Response Planning Team reinstated.
- September 20** The STF sent a letter to Minister Duncan requesting the reinstatement of the Education Sector Response Planning Team. A letter was received from the Minister's office confirming receipt, but to date no additional response has been provided.
- September 20** 198 schools had active recorded cases; 104 schools listed as active outbreaks.
- 1,665 active cases in 0- to 19-year-old individuals, 14.3 percent weekly test positivity the week of September 20 to 26, 2021.
- September 22** The STF states that isolation exemption for schoolmates of COVID-19-positive students is "illogical."
- Sourced from [CBC](#).
- September 22** 229 schools had active recorded cases; 117 schools listed as active outbreaks.
- September 23** Organ donations are suspended due to COVID-19 surge.
- 1,527 active cases in 0- to 19-year-old individuals, 15.1 percent weekly test positivity the week of September 27 to October 3, 2021
- September 26** 172 schools had active recorded cases; 82 schools listed as active outbreaks.
- September 28** Minister Merriman declines pandemic-related support from the federal government.
- September 30** Public Health Order is amended, requiring students who are close contacts due to an exposure at home to isolate; students who are

close contacts as a result of all other settings are still exempt.

- 3,400 new cases in Saskatchewan in the week of October 4, 2021.

- October 4** 1,562 positive cases recorded in Saskatchewan children and youth. A more than ten-fold increase from 129 on July 5, 2021.
- October 6** Saskatchewan continues to be a leader in COVID-19 cases and hospitalization. It is only one of two provinces without gathering limits in place.
- October 8** Intensive Care Specialist, Doctor Hassan Masri informs the public that 200 surgeries per day have been and continue to be cancelled across Saskatchewan.
- Sourced from [CBC](#).
- October 10** 159 schools had active recorded cases; 70 schools listed as active outbreaks.
- October 11** 80 active COVID-19 outbreaks in Saskatchewan schools.
- October 14** Cases continue to rise at a rapid pace within schools across the province. More than 100 Saskatchewan schools declared COVID-19 outbreaks.
- October 18** According to the analysis of Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan, there is a significant COVID-10 surge in wastewater from Thanksgiving Day long weekend.
- October 18** Government announced that six Saskatchewan ICU patients were being sent to Ontario for care.

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 Tracker for Children and Youth

Location	Population	Vaccinations	% Fully Vaccinated	July 5, 2021	July 12, 2021	July 19, 2021	July 26, 2021	August 2, 2021	August 9, 2021	August 16, 2021	August 23, 2021	August 30, 2021	September 6, 2021	September 13, 2021	September 20, 2021	Mask Mandate	September 27, 2021	October 4, 2021
				Positive Cases in Children and Youth		Positive Cases in Children and Youth	Positive Cases in Children and Youth											
Far North West*	29813	12613	42.31%	18	20	33	33	27	24	25	21	55	73	78	72		69	61
Far North Central	2649	1103	41.64%	0	2	6	6	12	14	4	5	4	7	5	3		2	4
Far North East	24249	11193	46.16%	30	9	15	15	14	53	34	63	97	139	168	98		70	86
North West*	82386	47524	57.68%	6	2	9	9	5	13	22	76	122	150	212	223		213	263
North Central*	88991	52345	58.82%	10	11	8	8	24	30	49	84	176	216	206	182		154	145
North East	41560	26523	63.82%	3	1	1	1	1	11	72	58	44	77	114	77		59	55
Central West*	36962	22607	61.16%	1	5	0	0	6	4	2	13	19	18	26	52		35	18
Central East*	98368	61565	62.59%	0	2	3	3	6	8	27	17	27	34	82	102		89	118
Saskatoon*	338106	216563	64.05%	21	22	17	17	20	40	99	165	286	291	332	384		366	366
Regina*	273351	182281	66.68%	26	10	12	12	11	15	44	33	41	58	113	176		180	198
South West*	38670	22629	58.52%	8	1	1	1	4	20	20	5	19	28	32	72		86	76
South Central	60459	38432	63.57%	1	2	3	3	8	11	21	4	12	27	42	78		100	45
South East	89294	52070	58.31%	5	4	3	3	28	35	35	20	24	39	102	79		81	127
Totals	1204858	747448	62.04%	129	91	111	111	166	278	454	564	926	1157	1512	1598		1504	1562
*Rapid Antigen At Home Pilot Schools																		