

COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

The pandemic has dramatically changed the way teachers and students interact. As a visiting artist working with students and teachers, you will need to be prepared for a variety of scenarios.

Is the Artists in Schools program still operating during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. Our students and teachers need arts experiences, now more than ever! They need the joy, imagination, and inspiration that your work creates.

Professional artists, arts/cultural professionals, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, professional arts groups, and professional arts organizations can apply to complete short-term projects, which must be completed in a single school year. The review of new applications for three-year projects, however, has been temporarily suspended.

How are classrooms in Manitoba functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The very notion of a classroom has changed. We tend to think of a classroom as one physical room with a teacher and a set number of students. Over the 2020-21 school year, however, the typical classroom setup has changed dramatically to include social distancing, smaller numbers, and online learning.

For example, think of a typical classroom with 24 students in one room. In 2020-21, that same classroom may have been:

- separated into two cohorts of 12 in two different rooms; or
- separated into two cohorts of 12 with one cohort in class and the other tuning in from home; or
- separated into two cohorts of 12 attending in person, but on separate days of the week (i.e. one group Mondays and Wednesdays, and the other on Tuesdays and Thursdays); or
- any combination of the above.

What is the impact of physical distancing in schools?

All schools have had to increase the physical space between students. As a result, many schools have seen the following changes:

- The number of students per room has dropped to allow two meters between desks.
- Students are spending most of their days seated at their own individual desk.
- Some gyms, music rooms, and art rooms have been converted into classrooms.
- Some music and arts teachers who previously had their own dedicated rooms are now teaching “off a cart,” meaning they move their supplies and equipment from class to class.

- Some art teachers have been re-deployed as general teachers to accommodate the extra classrooms. Some school administrators have taken on extra duties as well, such as contact tracing duties.
- Some classes are being held outdoors.
- Be sure to speak with your teacher or school partner to plan your project around your classroom's COVID-19 protocols.

As an artist wanting to work with students, how do I plan for all these changes?

Incorporate flexibility into your project. You may need to provide your program to multiple cohorts of students. You may need an in-class version and an online version, depending on the instruction delivery systems the school is using. You may need to switch things up mid-way through your project. Designing your project so that it can move with students will help provide continuity.

Ask your teacher or school partner how they worked in 2020-21 and what they anticipate for the 2021-22 school year.

What are some alternatives to being face-to-face in a classroom?

You may want to consider:

- an outdoor classroom setting;
- a land-based project;
- providing kits for students learning from home;
- snail-mail projects over a long period of time;
- live online projects and interactions.

Can my project be delivered entirely online?

Yes, as long as your project creates a meaningful and engaging experience for the students.

What platform should I use for projects delivered online?

Schools are using many different online platforms for online teaching, such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and Seesaw. The Manitoba Government has set up a Remote Learning Support Centre with tutorials on each of these platforms. Visit mbremotelearning.ca for more information.

Note: While Zoom is a popular video conferencing tool, some school divisions do not allow Zoom. Speak with your school contact to find out which platforms they are working with.

What kinds of projects are suitable for these changing times?

- Arts activities that foster wellness, resilience, and joy.
- Arts activities that allow students to express their experiences and perspectives.
- Longer-term projects that help build trust and engagement.
- Arts activities that can incorporate safe, seated movement.



ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS

- Projects that include individual sets of materials for each student.
- Projects that include equipment or instruments that can be easily disinfected.

How can I let teachers know I'm interested in working in schools?

MAC has an online artist listing at artistsinschools.ca that we are promoting to educators. You can upload details about yourself, your arts practice, and the kinds of programming you would like to do with students. We encourage you to upload your details as soon as possible.

You can also speak with parents of school-age children or members of school parent councils to let them know you are interested in bringing an arts project to their school. They may be able to put you in contact with interested teachers.

What is MAC doing to accommodate so many changes?

- Online Artist Listings for teachers to find artists: We have created a dedicated website at artistsinschools.ca for artists to promote their willingness to, and experience with, working with students. MAC will be actively promoting this site to teachers and schools to help them find artists.
- Little to no cost for schools: School budgets are tight. MAC can fund up to 100% of the project. If able, schools are encouraged to contribute 20% of the project cost, but it is not required.
- Increased flexibility: We know projects can change mid-stream. We have a dedicated staff person for the Artists in Schools program you can speak with if you need to incorporate changes into your project. She can also help you through the application process, answer questions, and preview your application.

Where do I find information on COVID-19 safety protocols for schools?

Manitoba's COVID-19 Education Plan site edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html contains the latest information for educators. It is an extensive site with a lot of resources.

Note: Some school divisions in Manitoba have additional measures in place. Visit manitoba.ca/covid19/restoring/school-divisions.html for links to each school division.