COVID-19 Guidance for Re-Opening Schools JK to Grade 12

The following recommendations are intended to help JK to Grade 12 schools reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is based on provincial Ministry of Education guidelines. As each site will be different, it is ultimately the responsibility of every school to review their own policies, procedures and site-specific circumstances, and assess their ability to operate while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures are implemented and maintained.

For publically-funded schools (i.e. Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), CS Viamonde, and CS Mon Avenir, where there is a difference between this guidance document and your school board’s re-opening plan and internal policies and procedures, your school board's plan should take precedence.

Updated information about COVID-19 can be found in Toronto Public Health’s COVID-19 Fact Sheet.

Recommendations for schools to reduce the spread of COVID-19

Before Re-Opening

The Ministry of Education has released a Guide to Re-opening Ontario’s Schools. The guidance and requirements outlined in this document build on the guidance released by the Ministry on June 19, 2020, and will be re-evaluated regularly, and updated as needed, based on public health advice.

The current community spread of COVID-19 requires schools to prepare a range of delivery circumstances for the 2020-21 school year, including full re-opening with public health measures in place, voluntary learn-at-home options, and full remote delivery. There is also an adapted delivery model (i.e. small cohorts, in-class attending on alternate days) should public health conditions require them. Toronto English secondary school boards will open on an adaptive model (i.e. Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)). Designated school boards will be given notice to move to conventional delivery when it is determined safe to do so. Non-publically funded schools should plan for reopening in the safest way possible.

Develop/update IPAC policies and procedures

- Develop and/or update administrative and IPAC policies and procedures to include mitigation measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- COVID-19-related policies and procedures must address the following topics:
  - Screening
  - Attendance reporting
  - Cohorting staff and students, including the use of supply teachers
  - Guests/volunteers in school setting
  - Transportation of students (i.e. school buses)
o Physical distancing
o Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
o Mask requirements for students and staff
o Isolation/exclusion of ill staff and students
o Return to work/learn for symptomatic staff and students
o Enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection
  ▪ Cleaning and disinfection of toys, equipment and other shared materials
  ▪ Food safety practices
  ▪ Use of personal protective equipment
  ▪ Occupational health and safety
  ▪ Communication with families/guardians and other stakeholders
  ▪ Management of cases and outbreaks of COVID-19, with the guidance of Toronto Public Health (TPH) and the provincial Ministry of Health, including:
    ➢ Management of symptomatic staff and students; including testing and those who choose not to be tested.
    ➢ Management of cohorts exposed to a symptomatic/confirmed case of COVID-19.

  • Develop an attendance policy for staff to ensure staff do not come to work sick. For more information, refer to the Toronto Public Health (TPH) COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses.

Train staff
  • All school staff must be aware of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
  • Train staff to ensure they are aware of and can implement COVID-19 related policies and procedures.
  • Train staff on proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Refer to Public Health Ontario resources or Public Services Health and Safety Association.
  • Encourage staff to download the COVID Alert app so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

Prepare physical space
  • Designate drop-off and pick up location(s) outside near the entrance of the school. Pick-up and drop off of students should happen outside of the school unless it is determined that there is a need for parent/guardian to enter the setting.
  • Designate and clearly mark specific, separate entrances and exits and only permit entry and exit through these doors.
  • Download, print and post signs in visible locations to raise awareness about COVID-19 and encourage healthy behaviours:
    o How the Virus can Spread
    o Physical Distancing
    o How to Protect Yourself
- Designate an area outside near the main entrance as a screening station.
- The area should be clearly identifiable as the screening station.
- Post signs at all entrances instructing students, parents, staff and others not to enter the school if they are sick.
- Post signs in highly visible areas that clearly explains the screening process, and the rules and conditions for entry.
- The screening station must allow a minimum of two metres/six feet distance between staff conducting screening and the individual being screened. Alternatively, a protective barrier (e.g. plexiglass) may be equipped around the screening station.
- If physical distancing or a barrier is not possible, then staff conducting the screening should wear masks and other PPE if required.
- Make hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available at the screening area.
- Use visual markers/cues spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to help students and anyone else entering the school to maintain a two metre/six foot distance from each other if waiting to be screened.
- In order to avoid long line-up’s to enter into the school, consider having students line up by class and having the teacher or another designated staff screen the students by class prior to entry. Staggered start times can also be considered.
- If possible, prepare the classroom so that students can maintain physical distancing while seated.
  - Remove extra chairs, tables and furniture to increase space to allow students to spread out.
  - Arrange furniture a preferred two metres/six feet apart and have desks forward facing.
  - Mark furniture locations so that they may be repositioned easily (e.g. tape/paint on the floor).
  - For JK/SK classrooms increase space between seating and play areas so that children and staff can practice physical distancing (i.e. two metres/six feet).
  - Place tape, signs or other visual markers on floors, tables, seats and in play areas.
  - Provide physical cues or guides by placing markers such as tape, stickers, safety cones or painted lines every two metres/six feet where appropriate (e.g. entrances, washrooms).
- Consider installing cues such as stickers or signs at frequently touched surfaces (e.g. water fountains, doors) to encourage students to avoid directly touching with their hands (e.g. use your elbow or the back of your hand).
- Where appropriate, design and implement a walking flow for the school, such as one-way routes with prominent signs and/or floor markings to prevent crowding (e.g. entrances, hallways, classrooms).
• Designate a room(s) in the school as an isolation room/wellness room for sick individuals. Schools with large populations can consider more than one room for this purpose. This room should only be used as an isolation/wellness room and not for other purposes. It should contain only minimal items and equipment so that cleaning and disinfecting is easy to perform after an ill individual leaves the room.

• Increase ventilation and air flow in areas, if possible.

Maintain documentation
• Schools are required to maintain and have available the following documentation in case it is needed for case and contact tracing:
  o Class list, attendance record and seating chart for each cohort. The class list should include each student's name, date of birth and contact information.
  o Staff list, attendance record and schedule, including information if teachers move from classroom to classroom. These lists should include the staff name, date of birth (if possible) and contact information.
  o List of students in each bus cohort taking school transportation and a seating chart.
  o List of students in each cohort for any extracurricular activity, and indicating the type of activity (e.g. sport, art club)
  o Staggered lunch/recess schedule for each class cohort.
  o Staggered lunch break schedule for staff.
  o Record of essential visitors that include name, company, contact information, date, time in/out, areas visited, and if screening was completed.
  o Ensure contact information is up-to-date for both students and staff. This includes emergency contact information of an individual who is able to pick up a student whenever needed.

During School Opening

Stay home when you’re sick
• Remind staff, students and their families to stay at home and not attend the school if they are sick.
• Provide education about COVID-19 symptoms and to stay home and get tested.

Screen staff, students, and visitors for COVID-19
• Students should be given this screening questionnaire to complete each day before arriving at school.
• Staff and visitors should be given this screening questionnaire to complete each day before arriving at school.
• It is strongly recommended that all school staff, students and visitors complete the required COVID-19 screening questionnaire before entering the school. The questions can be completed on a paper-based questionnaire (i.e. asked directly and answers recorded), electronically, or verbally. Consider the use of smartphone applications, stickers or other innovative methods to indicate that individuals have completed their screening. If completion of the questionnaire is done
at home before arriving, it is important to ensure that it was completed. If children do not have the questionnaire completed when they arrive at school, contact the parents to complete the screening.

- Daily temperature screening is not required.
- No individuals who answer YES to any of the questions should be permitted to enter/attend the school.
- Students and parents who answer "yes" to any of the screening questions should be directed to this webpage to learn what to do next.
- Staff, volunteers and visitors who answer "yes" to any of the questions in the screening tool should be directed to this webpage to learn what to do next.
- Ensure individuals maintain two meters/six feet from others while waiting in line if being screened at entry.

Enhance attendance reporting practices for staff, student and visitors

- Maintain daily attendance records of all individuals entering the school. This includes, but is not limited to, staff, students, parents/guardians, and maintenance workers. There should be comprehensive attendance reporting of sick and well staff and students.
- Records should include the following information: name, company, contact information, date, time of arrival/departure, reason for visit, rooms/areas visited, screening completed, etc.
- Records must be updated when a school staff is absent.
- Schools should follow-up with all individuals to determine the reason for any unplanned absences, and determine if the absence is due to illness and to note any symptoms (e.g. fever, sore throat, cough).
- Encourage parents/guardians of ill students and ill or unwell staff to seek COVID-19 testing at assessment centres, and/or to call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 or their primary care provider to determine if further care is required.
- Non-essential visitors must not be permitted to enter the school.
- Monitor attendance records for patterns or trends (e.g. students and staff in the same group or cohort absent at the same time or over the course of a few days).
- Attendance records for the last 30 days must be maintained and available on-site for all common school areas used by staff and students (e.g. staff lunch rooms, departmental staff rooms, school transportation, in-person attendance or work at a physical school location, before/after school programs located at a school, or other facilities shared with the school).

Assign staff and students into designated cohorts.

- Classes must be cohorted to limit the mixing of students so that if a student or employee develops infection the number of exposures are able to be managed.
- Elementary school students will remain in a single cohort with the same classmates and teacher within the one class with limited contact with other subject teachers. Smaller elementary cohorts
are preferred to maintain as much physical distance as possible and to reduce contacts with many students.

- Students that are part of before and after school programs would be part of two cohorts.
- Secondary schools in Toronto English school boards (TDSB, TCDSB) will open in the adaptive model with cohorts of approximately 15 students on alternating schedules, with at least 50% of in-class instructions days, and the remainder on-line.
- Secondary students are encouraged to be kept in a maximum of two in-person class cohorts, such as in a quadmester model. Designated school boards will be given notice to move to conventional delivery when it is determined safe to do so.
- At any given time, the size of a student’s cohort should be limited to approximately 50 in elementary and 100 direct or indirect contacts in secondary schools. Limiting the size of the total contacts will reduce the student's risk of transmission for COVID-19 and helps with contact tracing.
- The same teacher should remain with the same class as much as possible. Where different teachers are required, have staff come to the classroom and maintain physical distancing with the students so that students do not have to change rooms. When possible, arrange for the same supply teacher to cover the class during longer absences.
- Close contact may be unavoidable between members of cohorts. General IPAC practices and, for older students, measures such as physical distancing should be maintained where possible.
- The use of shared supplies, equipment and materials should be limited, where possible, to individual students or to one cohort at a time. Clean and disinfect supplies, equipment and/or materials between use or a change in cohort.
- Students/staff should be encouraged to limit the personal belongings they bring to school. All personal items (e.g. backpack, clothing, water bottles, food) should be labeled and kept in an area designated for the student, such as a cubby or locker. Students should be reminded not to touch or share each other's personal items or storage areas.
- Cohorts that utilize a room/space that is shared by cohorts or has other user groups must ensure that the room/space is cleaned and disinfected before and after the space is used.
- Plans should be made to prevent mixing of cohorts while using washrooms/change rooms. If mixing should occur, individuals are to maintain a physical distance from one another.
- Play structures should be used by one cohort at a time.
- In shared outdoor spaces, two meters/six feet should be maintained between cohort and other individuals outside of the cohort.
- Students to remain in their cohorts at recess and remain physically distant from other students outside of their cohort.

**Practice physical distancing**

- **Physical distancing** means keeping a distance of two meters/six feet from others.
- Physical distancing must not compromise supervision or the students’ safety.
- Schools can maintain physical distancing by limiting the number of visitors allowed in the school.
- Provide visual cues/guides on floors or sidewalks and signs and posters on walls to guide appropriate distances in lines/queues at all times.
- Stagger periods of student movement and common activities (e.g. lunches, recess) around the school and discourage students congregating in the hallways.
- Encourage the use of stairs, when possible. Where required, elevator use should be limited to where can maintain a safe distance.
- Staff should remind students to greet each other using non-physical gestures (e.g. wave or nod), not to share items, including food, toys, arts and crafts, costumes, hats, hair combs, make-up, masks etc., and encourage everyone to keep their distance as best as possible during the school day.
- Plan activities that encourage individual play and increase space between children.
- Do not use sensory or water tables.
- Avoid activities that include shared objects or toys.
- Avoid activities involving singing, shouting or speaking loudly indoors.

Support and encourage proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Educate staff and students on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70 – 90% alcohol concentration), provided hands are not visibly soiled. Remind staff and students to avoid touching their face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue.
- Monitor supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel, (air dryer if paper towels are not available), hand sanitizer, tissues and waste receptacles with lined plastic bags.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) in dispensers near entrances, service counters and other high touch locations for staff, student and visitor use. Monitor and refill as needed.
- Schools must ensure that staff/students have the ability to practice hand hygiene when needed:
  - Incorporate hygiene into breaks/recess and timeouts between school activities and before and after snacks and lunchtime/meals.
  - Provide additional hand sanitizer stations in supervised areas (e.g. hand sanitizer dispensers near school entrances and classrooms), if possible.
- Staff must wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) before and after touching any student personal belongings.

Modify food practices for snacks meals/lunch time
- To ensure chances of contact and transmission are minimized during lunch, students are encouraged to remain seated and eat lunch in their classroom with their cohorts while physically distancing. When possible have lunch outdoors.
• Students can also sit in chairs around the classroom if this allows for better physical distancing.
• Encourage quiet lunches to reduce the potential for spreading respiratory droplets.
• Close communal spaces such as cafeterias, if possible or stagger their use ensuring physical distance and cleaning and disinfection between use.
• Ensure students and staff perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating.
• Ensure students have their own drink bottle that is labeled, kept with them during the day and not shared.
• Ensure students have their own individual meal or snack with no common food items.
• Remove self-serving food items
• Reinforce no food sharing policies.
• Do not plan activities that include students in the communal preparing or serving food.
• Clean multi-use utensils after each use.
• Third party food services, including nutrition programs, must be delivered in a way that any student who wishes to participate can do so. A "Grab and Go" format is preferred. All surfaces, bins and containers for food must be disinfected prior to and after use.
• Offer a variety of nutritious foods that are minimally processed, pre-wrapped or ready-to-eat, including fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products and whole grain products. Portion foods in the food preparation area. If not feasible, food can be portioned with minimal food handling in the area where it will be served.
• Student nutrition programs to review Toronto Public Health Student Nutrition Program Guidance

Maintain water fountains and bottle filling stations
• Water fountains and bottle filling stations can be used provided they are cleaned and disinfected twice per day, or more often if needed.
• Fill water bottles rather than drinking directly from the mouthpiece of water fountains.
• Post signs near water fountains emphasizing public health measures.

Consider alternatives for:

• Student placements and co-operative education
  o Limit unnecessary student's placements and movements to and between facilities/locations.
  o Consider alternative ways to facilitate learning than in-person attendance.
  o Co-op placement should be offered virtually, where feasible.

• Health and physical education
  o Consider holding classes outdoors.
  o Gymnasiums should only be used when physical distancing measures can be followed.
  o Capacity in change rooms should be limited.
  o Activities should be planned that support physical distancing and limit the use of shared equipment.
Shared equipment should be disinfected between cohort use (e.g. balls, hula hoops, hockey sticks and exercise mats). If equipment (e.g. balls) are difficult to disinfect, they can be quarantined for three days before being used by another cohort. Students should practice hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment uses.

Outside of shared equipment, the whole gym itself does not need to be cleaned after each cohort, unless visibly dirty, but high-touch surfaces should be cleaned regularly throughout the day.

The whole gym does not need to be cleaned.

Playground structures do not need to be cleaned or disinfected between uses, but it is recommended that they be used by one cohort at a time. Hand hygiene should be practiced before and after using playground equipment.

It is not advisable to wear a mask during intense cardio vascular endurance activities. Plan accordingly to ensure that vigorous intensity activities are only done in areas where masks would not be required such as when physically distant outdoors.

As of October 10th, new restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 were put in place in Toronto, some of which TPH is recommending for schools:

Any elementary/secondary schools that have weight rooms/fitness rooms that students or staff use should close those facilities.

The gymnasium in a school can continue to be used for Health and Physical Education classes. Gyms classes should follow the guidance for gyms, including keeping a physical distance as much as possible, and having intense cardio activity occur outdoors. If equipment is used, it should be appropriately cleaned and disinfected or quarantined between uses.

Additional leisure fitness classes must be cancelled (e.g. spin classes, staff exercise classes).

Limit team sports to training sessions (i.e. no games or scrimmages). Try to maintain physical distance and limit contact with others.

Music education

A variety of delivery options can be considered, including full distance learning.

Consider in-person teaching and instruction with lower risk creative performance opportunities (i.e. school instruction in larger spaces, restricting the type of instrument in a group setting).

Instruments should not be shared between students.

Choir practices/performances and band practices performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher risk of transmission:

- Toronto Public Health recommends that singing and the playing of wind instruments both indoors and outdoors be cancelled for the present time.
- If they must continue, for both indoors and outdoors, everyone who is singing or playing must be separated by plexiglass or another impermeable barrier, and a two metre distance must be maintained for teaching and instruction (no exceptions).
- If there is no plexiglass or an impermeable barrier, these activities should be cancelled for the immediate future. Virtual options can continue.
- Live performances are to be suspended at this time.
If the ensemble includes non-wind instruments (i.e. guitar, drums) students must wear a mask and can maintain a physical distance without use of an impermeable barrier. If they are humming or singing while playing, they must be separated by plexiglass or another impermeable barrier, and a two metre distance must be maintained for teaching and instruction (no exceptions).

- Refer to the Ontario Music Educators Association resource.
- Additional guidance on music education will likely be available as more scientific evidence on safer ways to learn music is available.

Suspend large gatherings
- Keep up to date on and comply with various provincial and City of Toronto emergency orders, directives and bylaws related to specific amenities.
- Large gatherings/assemblies should be cancelled. Virtual options should be offered.
- Control the use of common spaces (e.g. gymnasiums) if possible or reconfigure to ensure physical distancing.
- Consider structural barriers and cordonning off of areas to restrict access to closed areas.
- Limit and discourage non-essential student gatherings.
- Cancel group activities and outings that require close contact between individuals, unless they are essential. Schools should not plan field trips and activities requiring group transportation.
- Assign staff to dedicated work areas as much as possible and discourage staff from sharing phones, desks and other tools and equipment. Consider virtual staff room.

Establish protocols for the safe transportation of students
- Encourage active forms of travel (e.g. walking, biking) or private transportation by parents and caregivers, where possible to ease pressure on transportation demands.
- Students/bus drivers should complete their COVID-19 screening at home before boarding the bus.
- Where possible, the seat directly behind the school bus driver should remain empty to maintain physical distancing. If possible, a physical barrier should be used to separate the bus driver and students while ensuring compliance with all federal and provincial legislation and not interfering or effect the safe operation of the vehicle.
- School bus operators should have a reduced number of drivers per vehicle, and ensure that the same driver uses the same vehicle and keeps the same work schedule to limit the number of contacts they have as much as possible.
- Students should have assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be maintained for contact tracing purposes. Bus capacity and seating arrangement should support physical distancing between students and the driver on the school bus, which can include:
  - One student per seat. Students in the same household or classroom cohort can share seats.
  - Student of the same cohort sit in the same area.
  - Seating charts should be kept and maintained as well as attendance for the bus cohort.
Boarding/exiting strategies are considered (e.g. fill seats back-to-front or front-to-back to reduce student interactions).

- Practices to support adequate ventilation and air circulation (e.g. opening windows) should be implemented.
- Bus drivers should wear appropriate PPE, including a medical mask. Students must wear non-medical masks when waiting for, boarding, sitting on, and leaving the bus.
- Review Transport Canada’s Federal Guidance for School Bus Operations
- Review the Ministry of Education: Approach to Re-Opening Schools for the 2020-21 school year Student Transportation Guidance and Guide for Re-opening Schools (Transportation) for further recommendations.
- Student transportation service providers should also consider the Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 for Student Transportation Employers released by the Public Services Health and Safety Association.

Maintain heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to school staff and students.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are adequately maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Increase air-exchanges if possible.
- Rooms where ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.
- Schools without HVAC systems should increase ventilation by opening windows (when possible) and classroom doors.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
  - Seating should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.
- For more information please see our fact sheet COVID-19 Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation.

Plan for heat alert days

- Make plans for days when the school may be hot and without air conditioning.
- Consider holding classes outdoors in shaded tents or in areas where ventilation is improved, and where physical distancing can be maintained, so that masks can be removed.
- Using face masks during periods of extreme heat may be difficult.
- Consider cancelling classes during heat alerts for schools without air conditioning due to the reduced ability for students and staff to properly wear a mask while at school.
Implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection practices

- Assign dedicated facility staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and shared objects (e.g. doorknobs, water fountain knobs, light switches, toilet and faucet handles, electronic devices, tabletops) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty. If the same student is using the chair and desk all day it can be cleaned once daily at the end of the day
  - Review Public Health Ontario’s Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings fact sheet.
  - Refer to Health Canada’s list of hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for use against coronavirus (COVID-19) for approved products.
- Clean and disinfect individual items handled by more than one individual such as electronic devices, toys, sporting equipment, balls and mats after each use. If items are difficult to disinfect consider not using them, or placing in quarantine for a minimum of three days until they can be used again.
- Clean and disinfect the area used by an individual suspect of having COVID-19. This includes all surfaces within two metres/six feet of the ill person. Remove all items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, etc.) and store them in a sealed container for a minimum of three days.
- Educate facility staff on how to use cleaning agents and disinfectants, and ensure:
  - Required disinfectant contact times are followed (i.e. amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection).
  - Use of safety precautions and required personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - Directions for where and how to securely store cleaning and disinfectant supplies.
- Clean and disinfect staff/student washrooms and other areas as necessary throughout the day to maintain sanitation.
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary.
- Monitor and clean the parking lot and school outdoor grounds daily and as necessary (e.g. for discarded gloves, masks, litter).

Practice proper use of cloth and non-medical face masks

- Non-medical/cloth masks or face coverings are strongly recommended in settings when physical distancing (two meters/six feet) cannot be maintained. They are also recommended in all indoor settings. Masks do not replace the need for physical distancing, hand washing, and staying home when sick.
- Students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth mask indoors in school, including the hallways and during classes with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.
- Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be strongly recommended to wear masks in indoor spaces.
- Students (over the age of 2) will be required to use non-medical face masks if taking public transportation to school.
• Teach students on the **proper use** of masks, and **how to safely put on and take off a mask**.
• The City of Toronto's **mandatory mask bylaw** does not apply to schools. Schools and school boards should develop policies regarding non-medical mask use.

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**Plan mask breaks during the school day:**
- If students are wearing masks for long periods of time, consider mask breaks. Mask breaks are best to occur outdoors while maintaining physical distancing as best as possible.
- If students must take masks off when they are indoors, ideally they should be seated, not moving in hallways, and keeping two meters from others. If this is not possible, they should be seated with their cohort.
- If children/students are taking a mask break during recess, it is advised that the mask is taken off while they are outdoors and they are physically distant from others. If they are unable to maintain a physical distance from others outdoors, it is advised that they keep their mask on. If this is not possible, then mask breaks can be taken outside while students are with members of their cohort.
- Students should practice proper hand hygiene before taking off their mask and before putting it back on.
- Students should remove their face covering by un-tying it or removing the loops from the ears. Avoid touching the front of the mask when removing it.
- A face covering or non-medical disposable mask can be re-used in one day if it is not damp, damaged or visibly dirty and has been stored appropriately between each use. If it is damp, damaged or visibly dirty a fresh mask should be used. At the end of the day, a face covering should be washed.
- The face covering should be stored in a paper bag, envelope, or something that does not retain moisture if it will be worn again. If using plastic bags, they should only be used for short periods of time. Containers can also be used but they should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. During recess, students can place their masks in these items (ensure they are labelled) and then place it in a fanny pack for safe keeping, so they are able to carry it on their person. Bags/envelopes should be disposed after use. Fanny packs should be labelled with the child's name. If the mask is put directly into the fanny pack, without a paper bag, envelope etc., then the fanny pack will need to be laundered. Mask should be put on before going inside.

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**Ensure protocols are in place for personal protective equipment for staff**
- Schools must provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for use of staff when necessary.
- All school staff are recommended to wear medical masks i.e. surgical mask (preferred for school staff over non-medical masks) with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.
- Staff should consult with their Occupational Health and Safety lead on which PPE is required and when and how to wear PPE. This would include wearing a mask and other PPE if required at other times when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including, but not limited to:
  - Providing direct care (e.g. feeding, assisting a student with hand hygiene).
  - Consoling an upset child.
- Assisting a student with dressing or changing clothes.
- Cleaning up bodily fluids with the risk of splashing.
- A medical mask may be recommended if teaching in a classroom where students are not masked and physical distancing cannot be maintained to allow for two-way protection for the staff.
- A face shield does not provide equivalent protection to a mask. A mask should be worn, and then if needed, a face shield or goggle on top of that. See Ministry of Labour guidelines.
- Train staff on the proper use of masks, and how to safely put on and take off a mask.
- Staff must wear a surgical mask and eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield) when:
  - Cleaning and disinfecting blood or bodily fluid spills if there is a risk of splashing or droplets.
  - Caring for a sick student or a student showing symptoms of illness.
- Gloves are not required for COVID-19 prevention as proper hand washing is sufficient. However, gloves must be worn when it is anticipated that hands will come into contact with mucous membranes, broken skin, tissue, blood, bodily fluids, secretions, excretions, contaminated equipment or environmental surfaces.

Isolate students and staff that become ill while at school
- It is recommended that school staff and students with symptoms of COVID-19 go to an assessment centre for testing as soon as possible, and to self-isolate at home until their result is available. (See the School Decision Guide for students and staff to determine when students/staff are required to go for testing.)
  - Students/staff who are COVID-19 positive cannot return to school until they are cleared by public health (typically 10 days after symptoms started).
  - Students/staff who test negative can return to school as long as their symptoms are improving for 24 hours, and they are not a close contact of a positive case.
  - For students/staff who do not go for testing and receive an alternative diagnosis not related to COVID-19 from a health care provider, they can return to school once their symptoms are improving for 24 hours.
  - For students who do not go for testing and who do not have an alternative diagnosis (i.e. a new or worsening symptom not related to an existing medical condition), if they have:
    - **ONE of the following symptoms**: fever, cough, difficulty breathing or loss of taste/smell.
      or
    - **ONE of the following symptoms that does not improve in 24 hours**: sore throat, stuffy/runny nose, headache, nausea/ vomiting/diarrhea, muscle ache/fatigue.
      or
    - **TWO of the following symptoms**: sore throat, stuffy/runny nose, headache, nausea/ vomiting/diarrhea, muscle ache/fatigue.

The student must self-isolate for 10 days from the date their symptom(s) started. They may return to school after the 10 days if they do not have a fever (without taking medication) and their symptoms are improving for 24 hours.
For staff who do not go for testing and do not have an alternative diagnosis, they must self-isolate for 10 days from the date their symptom(s) started. They may return to school after the 10 days if they do not have a fever (without taking medication) and their symptoms are improving for 24 hours.

New colds or respiratory illnesses (flu, bronchitis or pneumonia) present with similar symptoms to COVID-19. An alternative diagnosis cannot be made for an infectious respiratory condition or a cold without a COVID-19 negative test. A cold is not an alternative diagnosis, as a cold can be COVID-19. It is advised that these individuals are tested.

- Staff who become ill should be sent home immediately, and directed to this webpage to learn what to do next. They should not use public transportation.
- Using age appropriate and non-stigmatizing language, ensure students know how to identify symptoms of COVID-19, and that they should tell a staff member immediately if they feel ill.
- If a parent of a student receives a positive test for COVID-19, they are not obligated to inform the school of their test result though it is strongly recommended. If they do, and their child/children is/are in school, student(s) should be separated from the rest of their group in a designated room and supervised until they are picked up.
- If a student becomes ill with symptoms while in school, immediately separate them from the rest of their group in a designated room and supervise the student until they are picked-up. Notify parents/guardians or emergency contacts to pick up the ill student as soon as possible. They should not use public transportation, including the school bus. If it is an emergency, call 911.
- The designated room/space must have a handwashing sink or hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available.
- If there is more than one ill individual who presents with symptoms, ideally they should be placed in separate designated rooms (if more than one room has been assigned for this purpose). If this is not possible, ensure the room is large enough and students are kept more than two metres apart.
- Provide tissues to the ill student to help support respiratory etiquette.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area if it can be done so safely.
- Student’s should wear a mask (if tolerated) and they are able to use it properly (e.g. donning and doffing carefully, avoiding touching while on).
- Staff supervising the ill student should maintain physical distancing as best as possible, and wear PPE, including a surgical mask.
- Clean and disinfect the area immediately after the student with symptoms has been sent home. Before the room is cleaned, place a sign on the door indicating that it cannot be used. Remove the sign once the room is cleaned.
- School staff and students exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 will be advised by public health. Public health will complete a risk assessment and determine who had high risk exposure. They will be excluded from the school setting for 14 days from the day of last exposure to the person who had COVID-19, if they had close contact:
  - These individuals must self-isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for the next 14 days.
Individuals who have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 should get tested as soon as any symptoms develop.

If asymptomatic, individuals who have been exposed are also encouraged to get tested any time within 14 days of the potential exposure. They will need to continue to self-isolate for 14 days even if the test is negative.

Contacts of a contact (e.g. household member of a student who was exposed at school) do not need to be excluded.

School staff and students who are being managed by TPH (e.g. confirmed cases of COVID-19, close contacts of cases) must follow TPH instructions to determine when to return to the school:

- School staff must also report to their occupational health and safety department prior to return to work when applicable.
- Clearance tests are not required for staff or students to return to the school.

Students and staff who receive an alert from the COVID-19 app indicating that they have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive case, are required to go for testing and self-isolate until they receive their results.

- If public health has not notified the individual they are a close contact of a positive case and they test negative, they can return to work/school.
- If they test positive, they are to self-isolate for 10 days.

Please review the Ministry of Education operational guidance for schools on how to manage ill students, staff, and their households. The Ministry of Health has also released COVID-19 Guidance: School Outbreak Management for local public health units investigating cases, outbreaks and suspected outbreaks associated with elementary and secondary (K-12) school settings.

Please review TPHs COVID-19 School Decision Guide for students/staff, and Instructions for School Students/Staff/Visitors Tested for COVID-19.

Principals informed of a laboratory confirmed positive COVID-19 case should report it to Toronto Public Health, and while they are waiting to be contacted by a Communicable Disease Investigator they should follow the Interim Decision Guide for Principals to Dismiss Cohort.

Report cases and outbreaks to Toronto Public Health

- Schools must immediately report any laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 among staff or students to the TPH intake e-mail address: CovidSchools@toronto.ca (8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday) (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday, Sunday and Statutory Holidays) or call 3-1-1 outside of these hours.
- Please include the following information in your e-mail:
  - Name of school, address
  - Name of school contact and phone number and email
  - Name of ill staff/student
  - Contact information for staff/student (Parent name if student is under age 14), (phone number, address, and, if possible, date of birth)
- Onset date of symptoms
- Last day at school
- Lab confirmed Y/N
- Who reported the case to the school
- Any other ill staff or student reports.

- An outbreak in a school is defined as two or more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students and/or staff in a school with an epidemiological link, within a 14 day period, where one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in a school (including transportation and before or after school care).

**Ensure mental health and well-being are core elements of the school re-opening plan**

- Schools should implement a tiered approach for mental health supports that will capture all students and target intensive help to those who have been most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Promote [resources](#) to support the needs of students and families.

**Plan for Fire Drills with Public Health Measures**

- The Ontario Fire Marshal is issuing a binding directive, [Fire Marshal Directive 2020-001, Total Evacuation Fire Drills in Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), to assistants to the Fire Marshal. This directive provides flexibility during fire drills so that all occupants of the school do not need to evacuate simultaneously, to ensure COVID-19 physical distancing requirements are maintained. See [Memo](#)
- The Ministry of Education encourages school boards to review and make amendments, as required, to fire drill procedures to allow for compliance with public health measures related to COVID-19, such as physical distancing and masking requirements. See the [Ministry of Education's Emergency and Crisis Response Guidelines](#).
- Please note that upon actuation of the building fire alarm system outside of a planned fire drill the total evacuation of the school will take place in accordance with procedures outlined in the approved school Fire Safety Plan.

**Communicate with students, families/guardians and other stakeholders**

- Develop and implement communication platforms to provide program information and protocols on health and safety measures (e.g. screening practices, physical distancing, staying home if you’re sick). Communication platforms may include the websites, email, or social media accounts.
- Use telephone or video conferencing when possible for meetings between school staff and parents/guardians.
- Consider alternative delivery models for activities such as parent-teacher conference and school assemblies.
- Post signs at all entrances instructing student, parents/guardians and their families not to enter if they are sick.
• Provide frequent reminders over the PA system about physical distancing and any other key messages (e.g. sanitize hands at entrance, stay home if feeling ill, no gathering/crowding in one area, ensuring two metres/six feet apart in line-ups).
• Information can also be communicated on the schools website, and through automated telephone messages and school newsletters.
• Schools should create a COVID-19 advisory section on their website:
  o They will be asked to post information if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 that involves a student or staff member in the school setting.
  o If the students or staff members withdraw from school if a family or household member has a confirmed case of COVID-19, information will not be posted.
  o For privacy reasons, information provided to school communities will not identify the student or staff that has received a positive COVID-19 test.
  o Toronto Public Health will advise if a class, cohort or a school should be closed for a period of time. Parents, students and staff will be notified immediately. Notice of any closures of classes, cohorts or schools will be posted on the school/school board COVID-19 advisory section.
• Communicate with stakeholders (e.g. child care programs, community programs that operate in shared spaces within the school) on a routine basis to provide updates about policies and procedures and to align any gaps or concerns about IPAC practices.
• Encourage families to download the COVID Alert app so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
• Toronto Public Health will provide further advice about information that should be shared with other staff and parents/guardians in the event there is a case or outbreak of COVID-19 in the school setting.
• Encourage families to go the Toronto Public Health COVID-19 School Information for Parents and Caregivers web page for more information on COVID-19.
• To get the latest updates on the status of COVID-19 in our city from a trusted source, encourage schools, parents and caregivers that have a Facebook, Instagram or Twitter to follow TPH on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram, and like, share, or retweet TPH messages on your school pages.

Workplace Health and Safety
• Employers must have written measures and procedures for staff safety, including for infection prevention and control.
• Ontario has general information on COVID-19 and workplace health and safety, where employers can learn about their responsibilities and how to protect workers at work.
• Workers can also get information about health and safety protections at the workplace.
• Go to the Ministry of Labour, Training, Health and Safety for more information.

More Information
Information changes frequently. Please visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 for updated information or call us at 416-338-7600.
Other Resources

Note: School-specific resources are available on our website at: toronto.ca/COVID19SchoolInfo

Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 School Information for COVID-19 for Parent and Caregivers
Toronto Public Health: Pandemic Planning Guide for Schools
Toronto Public Health: Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Toronto Public Health: Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Playgrounds
Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 Spread the Word (printable information cards and posters)
Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 Mental Health Resources.
Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 Guidance for In-Person Instructional Services
Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities
Ontario Ministry of Education: Guide to Reopening Schools
Ministry of Health: COVID-19 Guidance: School Outbreak Management

References


https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-reopening-schools

