

**Wednesday, January 20, 2021**

**Memorandum to:** Chairs of District School Boards  
Directors of Education  
School Authorities

**From:** Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister of Education

**Subject:** Ministry of Education Updates

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Thank you for your continued support for students, families and staff.

Based on the most recent data and advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, elementary and secondary schools in the following Public Health Units will be permitted to resume in-person instruction on January 25, 2021:

- Grey Bruce Health Unit
- Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit
- Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit
- Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Health Unit
- Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit
- Peterborough Public Health
- Renfrew County and District Health Unit

Northern PHUs that were permitted to open on January 11, 2021 will continue in-person learning unless otherwise directed by local PHUs.

Schools located in all other PHUs will continue to learn remotely at this time. The Ministry of Education will continue to seek advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health on which PHU regions may reopen schools for in-person learning.

Boards are required to align with the direction provided for the PHU in which their schools are located. School boards should continue to follow direction provided by their local PHU.

In areas where in-person learning is not yet permitted, school board and school-based staff who can work from home will continue to be asked to do so. Schools will continue to be open so that in-person instruction of students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning continues throughout this period and to support staff who are unable to work from home.

## **Child Care**

Child care centres and home-based licensed and unlicensed child care for non-school aged children remain open during this time. In areas where in-person instruction for elementary students is suspended by the Province, emergency child care will continue for school-aged children.

Before and after school programs will reopen in alignment with the return to in-person learning in their PHUs.

We continue to ask school boards to make their school facilities available for the continuous delivery of child care, including emergency child care.

Child care centres and home-based licensed and unlicensed child care are required to align with the direction provided for the PHU in which they are located and enhanced health and safety guidelines.

## **Additional Health and Safety Measures**

On January 12, 2021, we announced the provision of additional health and safety measures to support the return to in-person learning, including:

- Mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3 and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained
- Enhanced screening protocols
- Discouraging students from congregating before and after school

Boards are encouraged to communicate to parents and guardians that new masking requirements for students in Grades 1-3 and for specified outdoor activities will take effect on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Effective January 25<sup>th</sup> for all elementary and secondary staff, and effective February 10<sup>th</sup> for all secondary students, all school boards are responsible for implementing confirmation of self-screening for staff and secondary students prior to or upon arrival to school.

Revised guidance is summarized in the attached document. An updated [Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools](#) and [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) reflecting these additional health and safety measures will be available soon for use.

We also announced the expansion of targeted testing for students and staff. Testing will be voluntary and will include child care settings. We will work with school boards and local PHUs to identify schools and child care settings.

Thank you for the ongoing partnership as we have worked to keep schools safe and contributed to stopping the provincewide spread of COVID-19 during this time.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce  
Minister

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister

- c: President, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'ontario (ACÉPO)  
Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'ontario (ACÉPO)
- President, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)  
Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- President, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)  
Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
- President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)  
Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
- Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
- President, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)  
Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
- President, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)  
General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
- President, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)  
General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
- President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)  
General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
- Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
- Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
- President of OSBCU, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
- Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
- Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)

## **Addendum to Reopening Guidance**

The following enhanced health and safety measures are being added to the *Guide to reopening Ontario's schools* following direction provided in the January 12, 2021 memo.

The *Guide to reopening Ontario's schools* constitutes a return to school direction issued by the Ministry of Education for the purposes of regulations originally made under the [\*Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act\*](#) and continued under the [\*Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020\*](#). The return to school direction and this Addendum have been approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The following enhanced measures are province-wide requirements that all school boards must implement effective immediately:

1. Mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3. This also applies to before- and after-school programs, as well as on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten are to be encouraged to wear masks.
2. Mandatory masking outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional masking measures based on local circumstances.

Effective January 25th for all elementary and secondary staff, and effective February 10th for all secondary students:

- Conduct on-site confirmation of self-screening prior to or upon arrival to school.

The following sections from the *Guide to reopening Ontario's schools* have been revised as outlined below:

### **On-Site Screening**

Schools/school boards are required to validate daily self-screening for students, staff and visitors prior to or upon their arrival as outlined below.

### **Secondary Students**

In addition to the requirement for students to perform daily self-screening, secondary schools are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of students prior to or upon their arrival at school.

- Schools are to confirm that secondary students have completed and passed their daily COVID-19 self-screen.
- The principal and those designated within the school will be responsible for ensuring all secondary students have completed and passed their daily COVID-19 self-screen.

- At a minimum, secondary students are to provide daily confirmation/proof of having self-screened, in a format deemed appropriate and accessible to all students by the local school/school board (e.g., proof of completed paper copy of screener, mobile application indicating a “pass”) prior to/upon entry to school or homeroom.
- Any student that has not completed the self-screen will be required to complete self-screening prior to entry or joining their class.
- Any student that does not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate until they meet the criteria for return.
- At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional on-site screening measures based on local circumstances.

### **School Staff**

- In addition to the requirement for school staff to perform daily self-screening, school boards are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of staff prior to or upon their arrival at the school.
- The principal or their designate are responsible for ensuring all staff have completed and passed their daily COVID-19 self-screen.
- At a minimum, staff are to complete and provide daily confirmation/proof of having self- screened, in a format deemed appropriate and accessible by the local school/school board (e.g. proof of completed paper copy of screener, mobile application indicating a “pass”), prior to/upon entry to school.
- Any staff that does not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate until they meet the criteria for return.
- At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional on-site screening measures based on local circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the school board and principals to ensure that on-site screening procedures are completed.

### **Visitors**

Any visitors to a school are required to self-screen and to wear a medical mask while on school premises.

In addition to the requirement for visitors to perform daily self-screening, school boards are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of all visitors prior to or upon their arrival at school.

- The principal or their designate are responsible for ensuring all essential visitors have completed and passed their daily COVID self-screen.
- At a minimum, visitors are to complete and provide daily confirmation/proof that they have self-screened, in a form deemed appropriate and accessible by the local school/school board (e.g. proof of completed paper copy of screener, mobile application indicating a “pass”), prior to/upon entry to school. Any visitor

that does not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate until they meet the criteria for return.

- At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional on-site screening measures based on local circumstances.

## **Masks**

### **Students**

Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on school vehicles. Where physical distancing cannot be maintained, students are required to wear masks outdoors.

Students in Kindergarten are to be encouraged but not required to wear masks.

Students may wear their own non-medical masks, and non-medical masks are to be made available for students. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply.

At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional masking measures based on local circumstances.