

January 4, 2022

Memorandum to: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: Ministry of Education Update

On January 3, 2022 the government of Ontario announced a range of time-limited public health actions to help curb the spread of COVID-19 variants in Ontario. As part of this announcement, starting January 5, 2022, students at all publicly funded and private schools will pivot to teacher-led remote learning until at least January 17, subject to public health trends and operational considerations.

Remote Learning

Remote learning will be provided for all students in alignment with [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) No.164: Requirements for Remote Learning](#). This PPM provides standards for synchronous learning so that parents and students know what to expect and there is a consistent approach across the province to ensure students are fully engaged in their learning. School boards are asked to distribute technology to students and staff to support remote learning, as required and to ensure that staff working from home have access to technology and the teaching materials they need. School boards should complete these arrangements as expeditiously as possible and endeavour to communicate with parents and students to ensure a smooth transition to remote learning.

All staff who are able to work from home should do so. Staff who are unable to provide remote instruction from home will be permitted to do so in schools.

Any staff required to provide remote instruction in schools must not congregate with other staff and should avoid use of school space outside the classroom. Any staff that are required to take rapid antigen screening 3 times per week must continue to do so if they are working in-person.

Student Supports

As in previous shifts to remote learning, boards must ensure that plans are in place to support students with special education needs to learn remotely. These plans should

leverage the capacity of education workers and board professionals (e.g. behavioural experts, speech language pathologists, and other professionals) to support remote learning.

School boards are expected to make provisions for in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

While students with special education needs will be learning remotely during this period, all attempts should be made to accommodate those children that cannot learn from home. In-person learning should be reserved for students who cannot be accommodated through remote learning. School boards are best positioned to determine which students with special education needs may require this accommodation. School boards have flexibility in determining how to deliver in-person instruction in such circumstances, based on local conditions. However, consideration should be given to limiting overall movement and limiting the number of sites that will be open. School boards should prioritize schools with modern ventilation to support safety.

School board staff who are supporting in-person learning will be eligible for emergency child care.

The ministry continues to encourage school boards to work closely with local First Nations and take steps to ensure continuity of learning for enrolled First Nation students who may live on reserve and/or require additional supports.

It is important that school boards have safety plans in place for those students who are experiencing or could be expected to experience mental health challenges. Safety plans should include provisions for students to have continued remote access to services, through the school, community child and youth mental health or local healthcare partners.

In addition, students and families should be provided with information about the mental health resources that are available to them, including Kids Help Phone, which offers 24/7 counselling and referral services across the province. To use this free resource, children can call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868.

School Mental Health Ontario also has a number of great resources for students, parents and families on their website at www.smho-smso.ca. In addition, child and youth mental health agencies across the province continue to provide services.

Learning Resources

The Ministry of Education's [TVO Learn](#) and [TFO IDÉLLO, apprendre à la maison portals](#) will continue to provide supports for students learning remotely by accessing additional educational resources developed by Ontario certified teachers.

In addition, secondary students can continue to access TVO's [Independent Learning Centre \(ILC\) Open House](#) and [Portes ouvertes pour les cours TVO ILC in French-language](#), which provide access to 144 Grade 9 to 12 courses. These ILC resources are designed to provide flexible learning opportunities to help students keep up with their learning or deepen their understanding of a specific subject.

[TVO Mathify](#) provides free, one-on-one online support by Ontario Certified Teachers, to help students improve their math skills. [Eurêka](#) is a service available to French-language students and families that provides resources and supports for all subjects, Grades 1-12.

Boards are encouraged to share links to these resources with all students and families, as well as educators who may choose to incorporate these resources in their lessons.

Student Transportation

While elementary and secondary students are learning remotely, student transportation services will only be provided for special needs students who cannot be accommodated through remote learning based on student needs.

Child Care Centres in Schools

The Chief Medical Officer of Health is confident our schools and childcare centers continue to be as safe as possible with strong health and safety protocols in place. Owner/operators of these facilities and parents must follow the outlined protocols.

The ministry will be working with our Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Service Administration Boards to provide Emergency Child Care (ECC) programs for school-aged children for health care and other frontline workers, free of charge for parents.

Child care centres may continue to operate for children 0-4 and we ask that school boards continue to provide access to their on-site child care centres for children ages 0-4, and for the purposes of emergency child care for school-aged children.

We also ask that you stay in touch with child care centres in your schools and make critical supplies, including N95 masks and HEPA units, available to them on a short term basis until deliveries can be fully completed.

Promoting Vaccination

Vaccination continues to represent our most effective strategy to prevent COVID-19 transmission and we are pleased to see the growing vaccination rates for school staff and eligible students.

We ask that you continue this work and promote vaccination efforts for students, families and staff. The Ministry of Education will be working with the Ministry of Health and public health units to maximize the opportunities for child care and education staff, and students, to be vaccinated in the coming weeks.

Thank you for continuing efforts and partnership to keep students safe and learning despite our current challenging circumstances.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

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