

January 8, 2021

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

**From:** Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister

**Subject:** Ministry of Education Updates

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Thank you for your continued support for students, families and staff during this challenging and uncertain time. We are encouraged by the efforts that have been made to accommodate students as they engage in remote learning.

As a result of worsening trends in key public health indicators, the Ontario government in consultation with our Chief Medical Officer of Health, has announced ongoing public health restrictions. In alignment with these restrictions and to contribute to efforts to minimize the spread of COVID-19, our government directed that in-person learning for elementary school students in southern Public Health Units (PHUs) will be deferred to January 25, 2021. This date aligns with the planned return of in-person learning for secondary school students in these PHUs.

Elementary students and secondary students in northern PHUs may return to in-person learning on January 11, 2021.

Schools should continue to provide access to on-site child care and the provision of emergency child care will continue during this time.

For school boards in southern PHUs, student transportation services and PPE deliveries will resume on January 25<sup>th</sup> when schools reopen for in-class instruction.

Public health data shows that the transmission of COVID-19 in schools has remained low, and schools remain a place for students to learn safely. However, given the rapidly escalating COVID-19 situation, we are taking action now to contribute to provincewide efforts in stopping further spread of COVID-19.

In order to continue to support remote learning, the ministry is working with the federal government to negotiate the second half of federal funding under the Safe Return to Class Fund, and is looking to provide additional technological devices, such as laptops and tablets, to support school boards in procuring additional devices provincewide and additional mental health supports.

## Supports for Students and Families

As per previous ministry communications, boards must continue to have plans to support students with special education needs, including supporting these students to learn remotely or making provisions for in-person instruction for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

School boards are expected to also have safety plans in place for students who may be experiencing mental health challenges, including providing access to resources such as Kids Help Phone, School Mental Health Ontario, and child and youth mental health agencies.

Remote learning resources available for students include [TVO Learn](#) and [TFO IDÉLLO, apprendre à la maison](#). 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](#).

Financial support is available for families during this temporary remote learning period through the Support for Learners program. Starting on January 11, 2021, an expanded Support for Learners program is providing:

- \$200 for each child/youth up to Grade 12, and;
- \$250 for each child/youth up to age 21 with special needs.

Applications will be open until February 8, 2021. Please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-support-learners> for more details.

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)