

February 16, 2021

**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 of Education

**Subject:** **Update: Expanded Targeted Testing in Schools**

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

As you know, our greatest priority is the safety and well-being of our students, staff and their families. We are grateful for the support you have provided as we have reopened schools across the province and strengthened health and safety measures, including expanded COVID-19 testing. We are writing today to provide you with updated direction on targeted testing in schools.

As students and staff across the province are returning to the classroom and new COVID-19 variants emerge, we recognize we need to stay vigilant to keep our schools safe and to continue the downward trend of case counts across the province. We want to ensure that processes and protocols are robust enough to keep students, staff and their families healthy and our schools open for in-person learning.

As you are aware, in our last communication on asymptomatic targeted testing dated February 1, 2020, the Ministry of Education announced plans to expand targeted COVID-19 testing in schools for students, children and staff across the province.

In response to feedback received, a new approach has been established to respond to the urgent need to increase access to testing.

### **Updated Approach for Expanded Testing in Schools**

Under the new approach, school boards will undertake asymptomatic targeted testing in at least 5% of the elementary and secondary schools within their jurisdiction each week. School boards with less than 10 schools will not be subject to the target of 5%. The ministry will work with these boards to develop an appropriate testing plan for their school communities.

School locations will be selected by school boards with support from the Ministry of Education. Local Public Health Units and Ontario Health Regions will also be invited to participate in school selection.

School Boards are encouraged to prioritize schools in areas of high transmission, high case numbers, and schools where access to current testing programs may be challenging. While the 5% target is on the number of schools where testing will occur, boards are also asked to reach 2% of their student population per week.

School boards are encouraged to include children and staff from child care centres in their schools in their testing plans.

To determine who will do the testing, school boards should undertake the following steps:

1. Assess whether there are any school board staff who could undertake the testing if appropriate training is provided
2. Liaise with their Public Health Unit on planned testing in schools to meet some or all of the testing to meet the school board target
3. Contact the Ministry of Education to have a vendor assigned to the board to undertake the testing

Testing will use a combination of rapid antigen and PCR testing and will look to use less invasive methods of testing where possible.

The testing will be voluntary and consent will be required. Testing will be for asymptomatic students and staff only. Household members of students and staff, and anyone with symptoms, should seek testing at an assessment centre.

Implementation will begin February 16, 2021 for school boards in Toronto, York and Peel and February 22, 2021 for all remaining school boards.

School boards will be required to submit weekly or multi-week testing plans identifying the schools where testing will take place to their Regional Office contacts. Schools will also be asked to report back weekly on testing activity. A reporting template for this purpose will be sent in the coming days.

School boards will also share their testing plans with their Public Health Units to facilitate continued collaboration and their continued responsibility for investigation, contact tracing and case management support in confirmed cases.

The ministry will be setting up meetings with school boards over the course of the next week to discuss testing plans.

## **Pharmacy Testing for Asymptomatic School Staff**

Supporting the health and well-being of staff remains a top priority. We are pleased to inform you that voluntary in-pharmacy testing for asymptomatic school staff will be available across much of the province starting February 19, 2021. Please visit the pharmacy section of the following website that provides a list of participating pharmacies in your area: [COVID-19 testing locations \(ontario.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/covid-19-testing-locations).

This will be particularly important for those staff working in multiple classes, schools or school boards.

Targeted testing for students and staff in schools is an important and additional layer of protection that is helping to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss testing options for your schools' communities, please contact: Shannon Fuller, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Planning, at [shannon.fuller@ontario.ca](mailto:shannon.fuller@ontario.ca).

Thank you for your ongoing partnership as we continue to ensure the safety of students and staff in this unprecedented school year.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce  
Minister

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister

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Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health  
All Local Medical Officers of Health

## Appendix A: Asymptomatic Testing Target By School Board

DSB No.	DSB Name	Total Number of Schools	Targeted Testing School Requirement*
1	DSB Ontario North East	33	2
2	Algoma DSB	45	2
3	Rainbow DSB	46	2
4	Near North DSB	37	2
5.1	Keewatin-Patricia DSB	23	1
5.2	Rainy River DSB	15	1
6.1	Lakehead DSB	25	1
6.2	Superior-Greenstone DSB	15	1
7	Bluewater DSB	50	3
8	Avon Maitland DSB	43	2
9	Greater Essex County DSB	68	3
10	Lambton Kent DSB	62	3
11	Thames Valley DSB	159	8
12	Toronto DSB	536	27
13	Durham DSB	127	6
14	Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB	87	4
15	Trillium Lakelands DSB	47	2
16	York Region DSB	214	11
17	Simcoe County DSB	101	5
18	Upper Grand DSB	76	4
19	Peel DSB	251	13
20	Halton DSB	103	5
21	Hamilton-Wentworth DSB	100	5
22	DSB of Niagara	95	5
23	Grand Erie DSB	69	3
24	Waterloo Region DSB	119	6
25	Ottawa-Carleton DSB	139	7
26	Upper Canada DSB	97	5
27	Limestone DSB	60	3
28	Renfrew County DSB	29	1
29	Hastings and Prince Edward DSB	45	2
30.1	Northeastern Catholic DSB	13	1
30.2	Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic DSB	12	1
31	Huron-Superior Catholic DSB	17	1
32	Sudbury Catholic DSB	20	1
33.1	Northwest Catholic DSB	5	0
33.2	Kenora Catholic DSB	6	0
34.1	Thunder Bay Catholic DSB	20	1
34.2	Superior North Catholic DSB	8	0
35	Bruce-Grey Catholic DSB	13	1
36	Huron Perth Catholic DSB	18	1
37	Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB	43	2

38	London District Catholic School Board	52	3
39	St. Clair Catholic DSB	25	1
40	Toronto Catholic DSB	199	10
41	Peterborough V N C Catholic DSB	36	2
42	York Catholic DSB	102	5
43	Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB	151	8
44	Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB	50	3
45	Durham Catholic DSB	47	2
46	Halton Catholic DSB	54	3
47	Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB	56	3
48	Wellington Catholic DSB	21	1
49	Waterloo Catholic DSB	48	2
50	Niagara Catholic DSB	59	3
51	Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic DSB	31	2
52	Catholic DSB of Eastern Ontario	48	2
53	Ottawa Catholic DSB	98	5
54	Renfrew County Catholic DSB	22	1
55	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic DSB	38	2
56	CSD du Nord-Est de l'Ontario	17	1
57	CSD du Grand Nord de l'Ontario	22	1
58	CS Viamonde	71	4
59	CÉP de l'Est de l'Ontario	49	2
60.1	CSD catholique des Grandes Rivières	36	2
60.2	CSD catholique Franco-Nord	16	1
61	CSD catholique du Nouvel-Ontario	39	2
62	CSD catholique des Aurores boréales	11	1
63	CS catholique Providence	35	2
64	CS catholique Mon Avenir	73	4
65	CSD catholique de l'Est ontarien	39	2
66	CSD catholique du Centre-Est de l'Ontario	69	3
	James Bay Lowlands SSB	1	0
	Moose Factory Island DSAB	1	0
	Moosonee DSAB	1	0
	Penetanguishene PSSB	1	0

**\*Note:** The ministry will work with boards with less than 10 schools to develop an appropriate testing plan for their school