

February 3, 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

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

As you are aware, schools in the seven Northern Public Health Units (PHUs), as well as eleven southern PHUs, have been permitted to reopen for in-person learning.

Based on the most recent data and advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, elementary and secondary schools in all remaining PHUs across Ontario will be permitted to resume in-person instruction on Monday February 8, 2021, with the exception of schools in Toronto Public Health, Peel Public Health and York Region Public Health, who will be permitted to resume in-person instruction on Tuesday February 16, 2021. See Appendix A for a list of PHUs and their reopening dates.

Boards are required to align with the direction provided for the PHU in which their schools are located and should continue to follow direction provided by their local PHU. Before and after school programs will reopen in alignment with the return to in-person learning in their PHUs. The provision of emergency child care for school-aged children will end on the last business day before the return to in-person learning.

As a reminder, school board office staff should continue to align with the current [Stay at Home](#) order and work from home as much as possible. In addition, school boards are encouraged to continue to monitor and adhere to broader provincial direction on workplace guidance.

On January 12, 2021, we announced the provision of additional health and safety measures to support the return to in-person learning, including masking for Grades 1-3 and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained, enhanced screening protocols, and discouraging students from congregating. We ask that you continue to reinforce and communicate the importance of these measures to students, staff and parents/guardians. See Appendix B for a summary of health and safety guidance for schools, staff and students.

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

- 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)
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- Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)

Appendix A: List of PHU Reopening Dates

PHUs that will be permitted to reopen elementary and secondary schools on Monday, February 8, 2021:

- Brant County Health Unit
- Chatham-Kent Public Health
- Durham Region Health Department
- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
- Halton Region Public Health
- City of Hamilton Public Health Services
- Huron Perth Public Health
- Lambton Public Health
- Niagara Region Public Health
- Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit
- Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

PHUs that will be permitted to reopen elementary and secondary schools on Tuesday, February 16, 2021:

- Peel Public Health
- Toronto Public Health
- York Region Public Health

Appendix B: Enhanced Health and Safety Measures

All school boards are required to have health and safety measures in place as outlined in the *Operational guidance: COVID-19 management in schools* and Jan 20 Addendum to Reopening Guidance and are required to communicate these measures consistently to parents/guardians, students and staff.

Key highlights of enhanced health and safety measures introduced to date are noted below.

Self-Screening

- All staff and students must self-screen every day before attending school.
- If a student or staff member is experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), they must stay home from school and follow the guidance in the [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#) tool regarding when they can return to school.
- Effective January 25th for all elementary and secondary staff, and effective February 10th for all secondary students, daily confirmation or proof of self-screening will be required prior to or upon arrival at school.

Masking

- Mandatory masking requirements are now in place for all students in Grades 1-3. This is in addition to the existing masking requirements for students in Grades 4-12.
- Masking requirements apply to before- and after-school programs, as well as on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten are not required but are encouraged to wear masks.
- Masks are required indoors at all times and outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Congregating

- School boards are asked to highlight the importance of students not congregating before school starts and returning directly home after school.
- Staff and students are to be discouraged from car-pooling, unless all health and safety measures can be adhered to (e.g., masking).
- Schools should minimize any gatherings in break rooms or staff rooms, and ensure that distancing and masking are maintained.
- All existing health and safety measures for staff, including consistent use of recommended PPE and physical distancing, must continue to be maintained.

Updates reflecting these additional health and safety measures will be made to the [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) and the [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) and will be available soon for use.