

RETURN TO LEARN

Thames Valley District School Board

*Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees
August 12, 2020*



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Prioritize health, safety
and well-being of
students and staff



Ensure high quality
instruction and equitable
access



Collaborate with
stakeholders

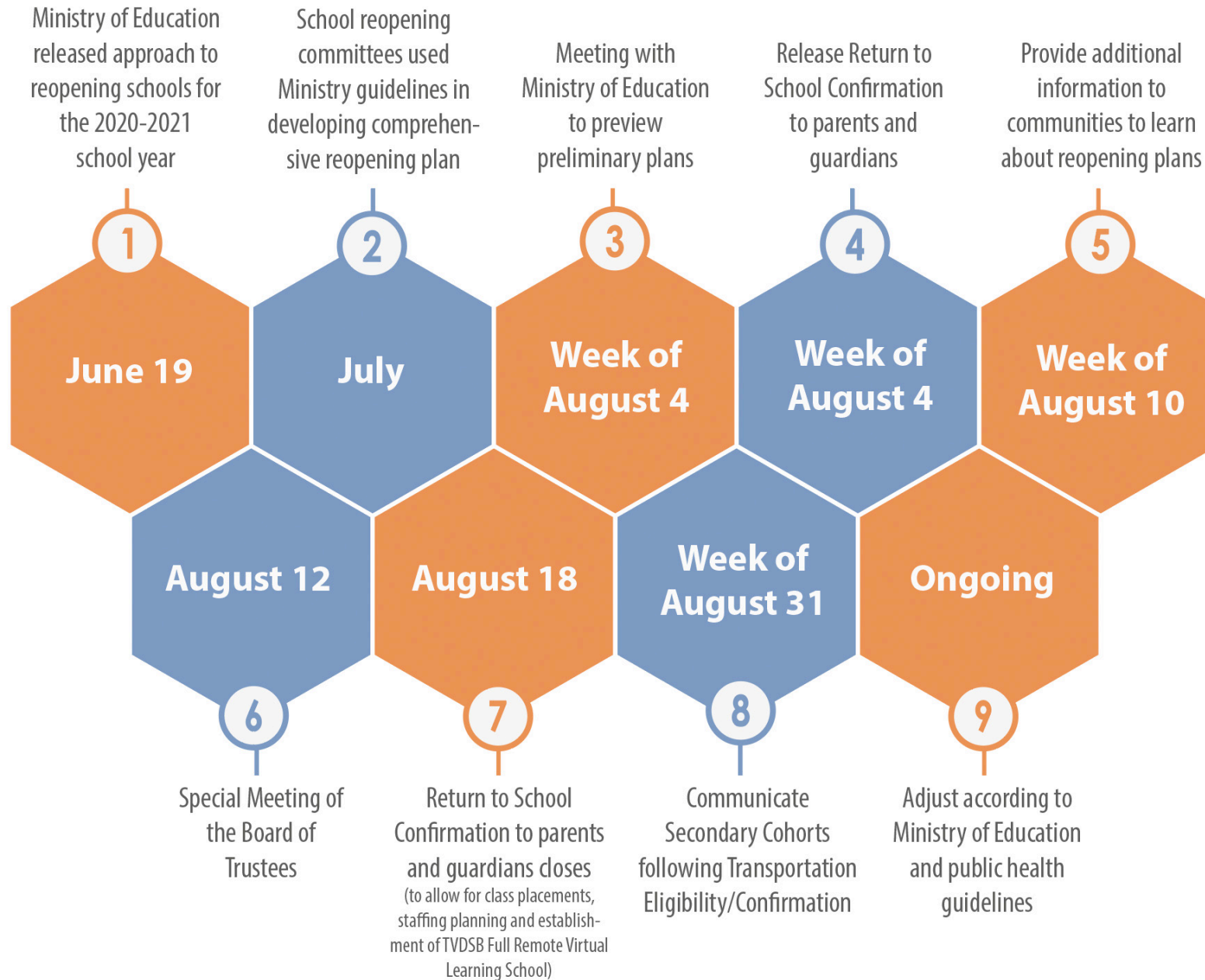


Be adaptable and
flexible



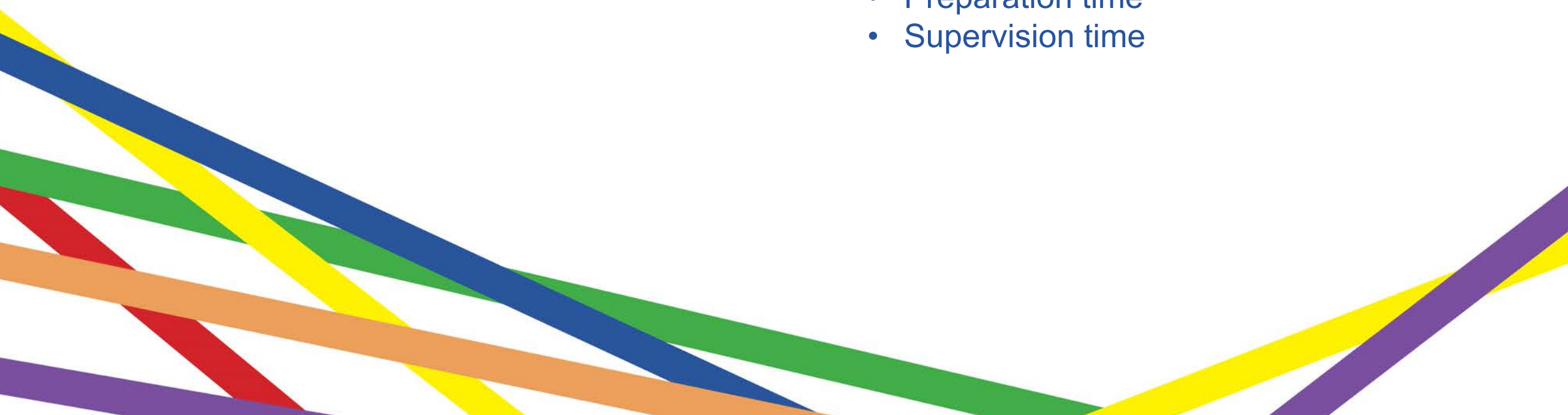
Be financially feasible
and sustainable

TIMELINES




PARAMETERS IN DEVELOPING OUR RETURN TO LEARN PLAN

- Ministry expectations and directions – *Guide to Reopening Schools*
- Public health guidance
- Transportation parameters
- Alignment to co-terminus Boards
- Adherence to collective agreements
 - Instructional time
 - Lunch break
 - Preparation time
 - Supervision time



PARTNERS IN DEVELOPING OUR RETURN TO LEARN

- Ministry of Education
 - Middlesex London Health Unit
 - Southwestern Public Health Unit
 - Consultation with Teacher Federations and Union Groups
 - Municipalities
 - Community Partners
 - Child Care Operators
 - Return to Learn committee and number of sub-committees with Administrators, Teaching staff, Support staff
- 

MANDATED LEARNING MODELS

1. **Conventional** - Normal school day routine with enhanced health and safety protocols
2. **Adaptive or Adapted** - Modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery
3. **Remote Learning** - Learning at home with opportunities for students to engage with their teachers in both synchronous (e.g. live teacher lesson with students participating virtually) and asynchronous learning (e.g. teacher-recorded lesson uploaded to Google Classroom or Brightspace platform or independent learning)



OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Confirmed Models for September

- **ELEMENTARY:** conventional in-person delivery model of teaching and instruction, with enhanced health and safety protocols in place
- Students attend school full time, five days per week starting on September 8, 2020



OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Confirmed Models for September

- **SECONDARY:** adapted model that combines in-person and remote learning
- Students will be placed in groups of approximately 15 students, attending on alternate schedules
- Secondary students enrolled in Thames Valley Special Education Developmental Education classes will have the option to attend school in-person every day

OUR RETURN TO LEARN:

Confirmed Models for September

- **FULL REMOTE LEARNING:** families may elect to have their child(ren) remain at home rather than return to school in September.
- We respect and will honour these decisions and have developed a plan to support students who will be assigned “Cohort C” until such time as they are able to return to school
- Through the Return to School Confirmation (between August 5-18, 2020, families have been provided the opportunity to decide if they wish for their child(ren) to participate in Full Remote Learning

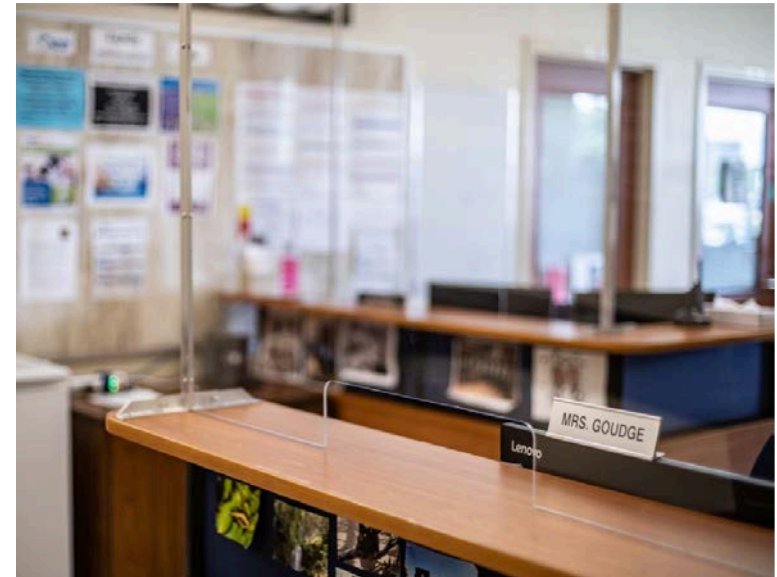
OUR RETURN TO LEARN: In-Person Model Elementary Students

- Full return to in-person schooling, five days per week
- School start and end times remain the same
- 300 minutes of instructional minutes per day
- All Ontario Curriculum areas will be taught
- Specialist Teachers will have access to a limited number of classes, where possible
- Elementary students will be grouped together in a cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch



OUR RETURN TO LEARN: In-Person Model Elementary Students

- Schedules to include staggered recess and lunch times in consistent larger teams for contact tracing
- Classrooms will be adapted to support physical distancing, where possible
- Kindergarten program will continue to support play-based, inquiry and outdoor learning opportunities



OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Adapted Model Secondary

SECONDARY

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 2	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 3	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 4	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B	Cohort B

OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Adapted Model Secondary

- Students will be cohorted into either Cohort A or B (see schedule)
- Students will attend school in-person and take two courses in a "quadmestered" schedule
- Quadmester: two courses for a 10-week period
- Period 1 (course in the morning) and Period 2 (course in the afternoon) will be two different groups of students
- The school day will consist of 300 minutes
- In-person learning will include 240 minutes of in-person instructional time (120 minutes for each course)
- At-home learning consists of working independently and connecting with teachers during scheduled opportunities
- Study Hall (60 minutes) will be available at the end of each day where students may access extra help, work independently, etc.; teachers will be connecting with their at-home cohort

OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Adapted Model Secondary

Benefits for our Students

- Limits contacts/touch points for students
- Allows students to focus on two courses at a time
- Lunch will occur in the classroom and/or in designated areas throughout the school
- Allows both in-school and at-home student cohorts to have daily contact with teachers
- Allows for students to access additional support from teachers and touch base with caring adults



LEARNING MODELS: Adapted Model Elementary

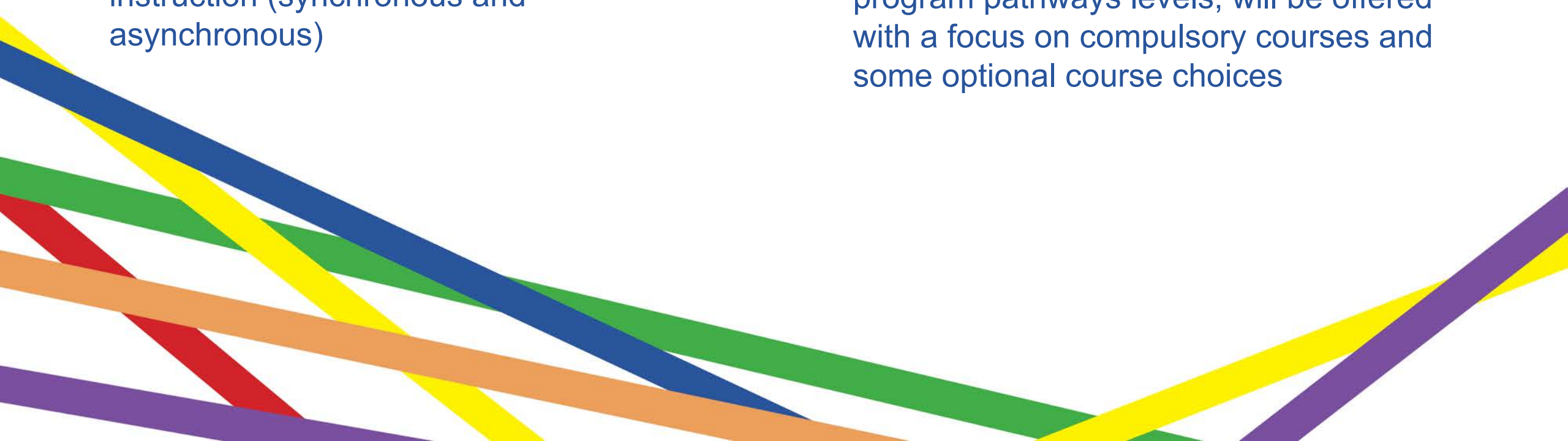
ELEMENTARY

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 2	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 3	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B
Week 4	Cohort A	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort B	Cohort B


OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Full Remote Learning Model

- For families who select the option of Full Remote Learning, we are developing a district-wide Full Remote Learning School for elementary and secondary
- Students in Full Remote Learning School will be taught by qualified Thames Valley teachers
- Students who select Full Remote Learning will be placed in classes with other students from across Thames Valley
- All Full Remote Learning teachers will establish an online classroom using Board-approved platforms (Brightspace or Google)
- A combination of live real-time instruction and independent learning (synchronous and asynchronous) will be provided
- Families will be provided a schedule of live real-time (synchronous and asynchronous) instruction
- Learning Support Teachers and Educational Assistants will provide live real-time instruction (synchronous and asynchronous) and independent support to students with Individual Education Plans
- Attendance will be monitored and student participation and engagement is expected

OUR RETURN TO LEARN: Full Remote Learning Model

- Creating a sense of belonging for students will be foundational to all remote learning
 - 300 daily minutes of learning opportunities will be provided including guided large group, small group and individualized instruction (synchronous and asynchronous)
 - Programming will be based on the full Ontario curriculum
 - Secondary students will be learning in a quadmestered schedule (aligned to in-person learning)
 - A range of secondary courses, in all program pathways levels, will be offered with a focus on compulsory courses and some optional course choices
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- A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide consists of several thick, overlapping diagonal lines in various colors: blue, yellow, green, red, orange, and purple. The lines create a sense of movement and depth, extending from the left side towards the right.

RETURN TO SCHOOL CONFIRMATION

- Thames Valley has initiated a pre-registration process to plan for September for all models available to students/ families
 - **Return to School Confirmation** is open on the Parent Portal from August 5 to August 18
 - Parents and guardians are requested to confirm their decision for each child for In-person or Full Remote Learning
 - Including confirmation of access to internet and technology
- 

FAMILY REQUESTS TO CHANGE LEARNING MODELS

- As per Ministry direction, students may not necessarily be able to move between learning models (in-person and full remote learning)
- There may be a waiting period for admission to school depending on scheduling and availability of class placement
- If a family/ student requires a change of learning models to occur at a time that is different than those stated, the change will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis; if the request is able to be accommodated, there will be a necessity to provide transition time for planning purposes

- **Elementary Learning Model Change Date #1 for Term One:**
November 2, 2020
- **Advance Notice deadline:**
October 16, 2020
- **Elementary Learning Model Change Date #2 for Term One:**
February 8, 2021
- **Advance Notice deadline:**
January 22, 2021
- Secondary students will have the opportunity to change learning models at the end of semester one
- **Secondary Learning Model Change Date is Semester Two:**
February 4, 2021
- **Advance Notice deadline:**
January 15, 2021
- Secondary course selections may not be available when switching between learning models

PLANNING FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

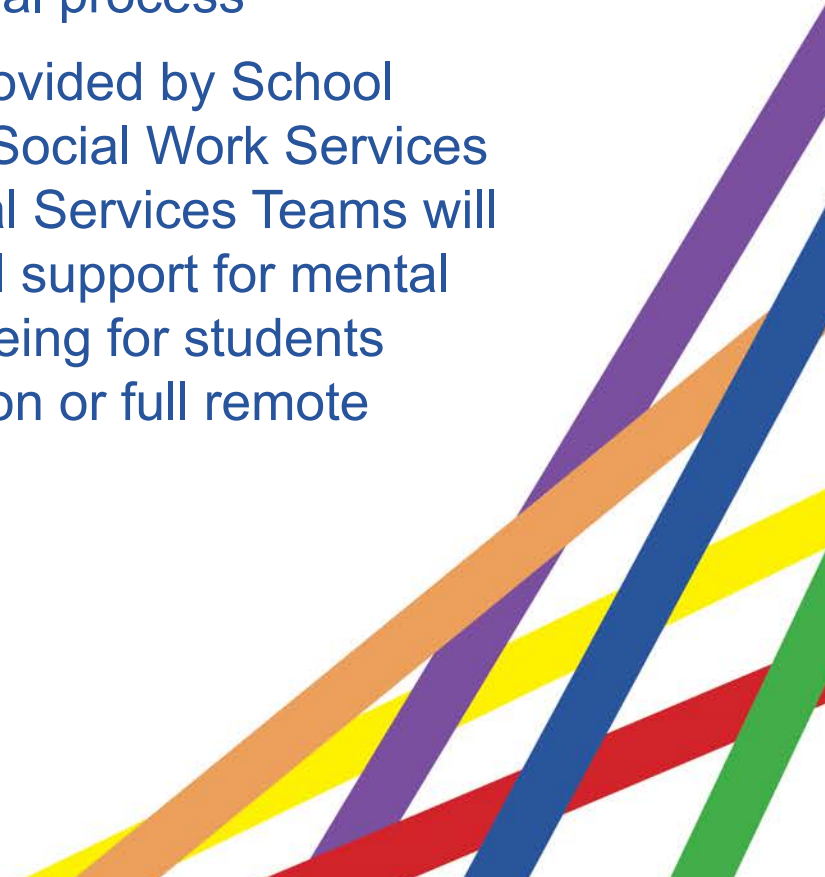
- Meeting the needs of our students with special education needs will continue to be our priority
- Transition supports will be provided prior to the start of the school year
- Connecting with families of students who are medically fragile and where possible, consulting with health care providers to ensure needs are met
- Learning Support Teachers will continue to collaborate with classroom teachers to develop Individual Education Plans
- Students and families selecting Full Remote Learning will have access to the full range of special education supports and services

SECONDARY

- All students with a placement in Thames Valley's Special Education Developmental Education Classes in the adapted model will have the option to attend school on a full-time basis, five days per week
- We will review the needs of our students formally identified through the IPRC process to determine if they would benefit from daily, in-person attendance

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- Focus will be on rebuilding of community using a trauma-sensitive lens to support conditions of psychological safety, belonging, inclusion and connection
- Staff will be supported in providing a trauma-sensitive perspective in all aspects of student interaction, whether in-person or virtually
- Professional learning is planned for one of the three PA Days prior to the start of the school year with additional opportunities throughout the year
- Every student will continue to have access to services and interventions to address mental health concerns through our existing referral process
- Direct service, provided by School Counselling and Social Work Services and Psychological Services Teams will provide additional support for mental health and well-being for students attending in-person or full remote learning




OUR FOCUS ON EQUITY


- We are committed to meeting the needs of all students
- A differentiated approach will be provided to students and communities to best meet their needs
- We are connecting and working with the three First Nations communities and urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit families to support the best model of learning for students
- Thames Valley will continue to support families with technology requirements (device and connection support, where appropriate)




TECHNOLOGY, WIFI & DATA-ENABLED DEVICES

- 12 236 devices were loaned to Thames Valley families (March - June 2020)
 - 617 data-enabled devices were also purchased and deployed to families requiring internet access
 - 5 531 students who accessed their Special Education (SEA) devices
 - Families continue to utilize loaned devices during the summer months
 - Additional devices have been purchased which will be available for families in September 2020
 - Our Return to School Confirmation asks families opting for full remote learning and all secondary students to indicate technology and internet requirements
 - The board continues its partnerships with our Counties and the City of London to have free exterior Wi-Fi services enabled for Thames Valley students and staff
 - Ensuring staff access to technology to support full remote learning
 - Paper resources will continue to be provided as required
- 

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Working with the Before and After School child care operators to ensure Programs are provided when school opens
 - Before and After School Programs will operate at full capacity if the child care operators have adequate qualified staff
 - Parents can drop off and pick up students at designated locations and will not enter the school building
 - Cleaning and disinfecting practices to ensure rooms are cleaned prior to the Before School program and prior to the After School Program
 - Child care operators will provide all materials for Before and After School programs
 - Classroom materials will not be used during Before and After programs
- 

ENHANCED HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES

- **Health & Safety practices for students and staff that include:**
 - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
 - Physical distancing – student movement, arrival and departure
 - Use of masks/face coverings
 - Daily pre-screening of students by families
 - Responding to students who are symptomatic while at school
 - Health & Safety practices will be shared with students, staff and families in accessible formats including translations
 - Enhanced cleaning developed to include additional custodial staff for disinfection of high-touch, high-traffic areas
 - Disinfection products for staff use in all classrooms
 - Electrostatic sprayer for disinfection of high-touch surfaces
- 

ENHANCED HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES

- Proactive touch-reduction measures such as keeping doors open, keeping lights on
- Lunches and recesses staggered
- Reduction of porous materials in classrooms
- Maximizing use of outdoor learning spaces
- Engaged in planning for delivery of curriculum outdoors with activities designed for each grade level
- Every classroom that is already equipped with a sink will have soap and paper towels
- If sinks are not already in place in a classroom, hand sanitizer dispensers or portable sinks will be available
- Hand hygiene signage available in all classrooms and washrooms



HEALTH & SAFETY – SIGNAGE

Two pilot schools staged for planning for adaptations

Signage in all buildings includes:

- Physical distancing
- Hand hygiene practices
- 'Stand Here' markers
- Designated entrances
- Bottle filling stations
- Visitor/Limited access signage
- Washroom capacity limits
- Directional arrows



HEALTH & SAFETY – PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Thames Valley will have non-medical masks available for all students Kindergarten to grade 12
- Based on Ministry of Education guidelines in consultation with the Ministry of Health, masks are required for students in grade 4 to 12 and encouraged for students in Kindergarten to grade 3

STAFF

Thames Valley completed a risk-assessment based on job function and risk-level which determine required PPE such as masks, face shields, gowns and gloves

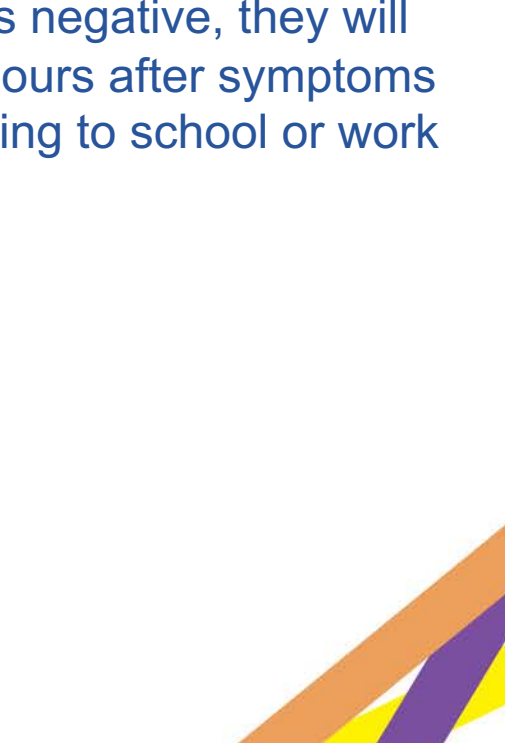
PPE kits will be provided **to all school-based staff** and includes:

- Two-month supply of mandatory medical grade masks
- One optional reusable face shield

Extra supplies will be available in school office locations

Developing a centralized staff helpline to address PPE supply concerns

DAILY SCREENING

- All students and staff must undergo a passive screening for COVID-19 symptoms prior to arriving at school or work
 - Any students or staff with symptoms of a suspected case of COVID-19:
 - Will be placed in a supervised separate area away from others;
 - Will be required to be picked up from school as soon as possible/staff will return home;
 - the separate area will be disinfected
 - If the student or staff tests positive for COVID-19, they are unable to return until notice has been provided by their local public health unit
 - Parents and guardians are expected to have children assessed for COVID-19 if symptoms are present or self-isolate their children at home for 14 days
 - If student or staff tests negative, they will remain home for 24 hours after symptoms subside before returning to school or work
- 

OUTBREAK PROTOCOL & CONFIRMED CASE PROCESS

- Extensive health and safety training with all school-based staff prior to the start of the school year to identify symptoms
- Schools will maintain class lists, bus cohort lists and visitor log to support contact tracing

If a COVID-19 positive case is identified in a school, Thames Valley will provide further instructions based on Public Health Unit guidance on who else in the school may need testing and/or monitoring/isolation

Staff/children who are being managed by the public health units (e.g. confirmed cases of COVID-19, household contacts of cases, etc.) must follow public health instructions on when they can return to school

When notified of a confirmed case by local Health Unit:

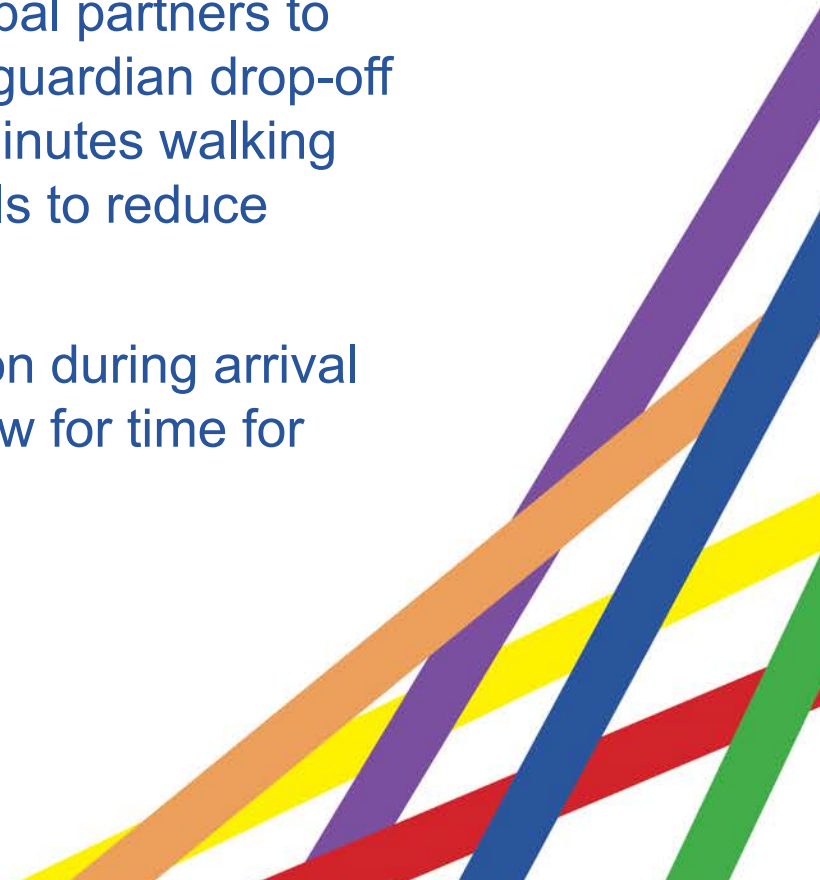
- Ensure class list is updated to support contact tracing
- Bus cohort lists support contact tracing
- Notify school Superintendent and Superintendent of HR or designate who will notify Manager, Facility Services
- Health Unit provides direction on additional required disinfection and notification

ACCESS TO SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- As directed by the Ministry of Education, public access to schools is prohibited
- Volunteer and visitor access is not permitted
- Appointments are required unless picking up a student who is unwell
- All visitors who are approved for access, must wear a mask/face covering, complete self-screening and sign-in at the school office
- Signage will be placed on all school doors to inform the public of the requirement to contact school office staff for assistance



TRANSPORTATION

- Parents and guardians have until August 14 to register for transportation
 - Masks will be worn by all drivers, bus attendants and students in grade 4-12; masks encouraged for students in Kindergarten to grade 3
 - Transportation timetables will be posted in the Student Transportation Services Parent Portal after August 25
 - Drop-off and pick-up areas marked with instructions and reminders for physical distancing
 - Working with municipal partners to develop parent and guardian drop-off zones located five minutes walking distance from schools to reduce congestion
 - Additional supervision during arrival and dismissal to allow for time for physical distancing
- 

COMMUNICATION PLAN

- Board of Trustees and Senior staff – August 11/12
- Communication to all Staff – August 12
- Thames Valley Community – August 12
- Regular updates to staff and parents and guardians by email and telephone
- *Return to Learn* area on www.tvdsb.ca with all resources and Frequently Asked Questions
- Google translate enabled
- Social media platforms
- Schools will begin to have site-based communication (First Day Routines, welcome messages, etc.)

THANK YOU



- Working together
- Adaptable and flexible
- Art of the possible

Thames Valley District School Board

Return to Learn

September 2020

Resource Document for Our TVDSB Community



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OVERVIEW

As we prepare for the return to learning in September, our priority is the safety and well-being of our students and staff. We have involved our local Health Units as part of our planning, while also following the directions of the Ministry of Education to ensure that our schools and workplaces are prepared, and our staff and students experience a successful return.

We recognize that the 'school life experience' may not be as it was prior to the school closure period and we remain committed to providing as robust of an educational program as possible, given the health and safety regulations provided.

This document will outline important information for our TVDSB community about what a school day will look like, our new health and safety practices, well-being resources and more. Ongoing contact with our community will take place throughout the school year to provide further details about specific school level information and board-wide updates.

Ministry of Education Direction on Three Learning Models

The school board was directed by the Ministry of Education to prepare three different scenarios for September:

1. **Conventional** - Normal school day routine with enhanced health and safety protocols.
2. **Adaptive or Adapted** - Modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery.
3. **Remote Learning** - Learning at home with opportunities for students to engage with their teachers in both synchronous (e.g., live teacher lesson with students participating virtually) and asynchronous learning (e.g., teacher-recorded lesson uploaded to Google Classroom or Brightspace platform).

On July 30th, school boards in Ontario were directed to open in a Conventional In-Person Learning model for our Elementary students and an Adapted Model for our Secondary students. We are prepared to transition to a different learning model as directed by the Ministry based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the local Medical Officer of Health.

The plans described in this document have been developed collaboratively with our regional public health units.

REOPENING MODELS FOR SEPTEMBER 2020

Elementary Schools: In-Person Learning

The Ministry of Education has directed all elementary schools (JK to 8) in Ontario to reopen with a conventional in-person delivery model of teaching and instruction, with enhanced health and safety protocols in place. In this model students attend school full time, five days per week starting on September 8, 2020.

Elementary students will be grouped together in a cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch. School schedules will include staggered recess and lunch times in consistent larger groups of students.

In addition to being in a cohort, students will be continually supported and reminded to practice physical distancing, proper hand washing and respiratory etiquette. Students will require significant support to understand the new routines of hand washing practices and physical distancing. Our schools will be clearly marked to support these practices and staff will provide reminders and scheduled opportunities throughout the day.

Students in grades 4 through 8 will be required to wear a mask indoors. Masks are encouraged but not required for students in Kindergarten to grade 3. School administration will maintain records of all student contacts (both peer and teachers) during instructional times and recess/lunch breaks.

Instructional Expectations

- Each day includes 300 minutes of face-to-face instructional time with students.
- Timetables will limit, as best as possible, the number of specialty teachers, while maintaining delivery of all subject areas in the Ontario curriculum.
- Kindergarten programs will continue to support play-based, inquiry and outdoor learning opportunities.
- Increased outdoor learning opportunities will be encouraged.

Operational Expectations

- School will begin and end at regular times.
- Schedules will include time for washroom use/drinks/hand washing opportunities.
- Staggering of recess and lunch will occur.
- Contact points will be minimized throughout the day.

Elementary teachers will maintain a digital learning platform for their students who attend in-person. This platform will be either Brightspace or Google Classroom. Students will be supported to become more familiar with these platforms at school during in-person learning in the event that TVDSB is required to transition to Full Remote Learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response plan.

Secondary Schools: Secondary Adapted Learning

TVDSB has been directed by the Ministry of Education to open all secondary schools with an adapted model that combines in-person and remote learning. Students will be placed in groups of approximately 15 students, attending on alternate schedules.

Secondary students enrolled in TVDSB Special Education Developmental Education classes will have the option to attend school in-person every day.

Quadmester

Secondary school courses will be timetabled using a “quadmestered” approach. In a quadmester, students **take two courses** at a time for a **10-week period**. Students will then take their next two courses for the subsequent 10 weeks to complete a full semester. Where the secondary school year was previously two (2) semesters, this year the two (2) semesters are each divided in half, which establishes the Quad (4) breakdown of the school year.

Cohorts of Students

Students are assigned into groups as either Cohort A or Cohort B and each cohort will have approximately 15 students. Students will be a part of 2 cohorts, one in each of the 2 courses they attend in each quadmester (i.e., a student assigned to Cohort A will attend one course with one cohort of classmates and the second course with potentially another cohort of classmates); this scheduling is supported by local public health units.

- Schools will be open every day to students in their assigned cohort. Start and end times for the instructional day remain the same; however, periods are extended to 120 minutes from 75 minutes.
- Each cohort will be scheduled for both face-to-face and at-home learning.

[View the Secondary School Calendar.](#)

Instructional Expectations

- Each day includes 240 minutes of face-to-face instructional time with students.
- Teachers will determine breaks within each period.
- Longer course periods will support science labs, tech classes, practical courses, etc.
- Half courses (such as Careers/Civics) will run for 5 weeks within each quadmester.
- Study Hall (60 minutes per day) will provide an opportunity for the classroom teacher to connect with students during their at-home learning time.

Semester 1 - Quad 1
September 8, 2020 to November 11, 2020

Semester 1 - Quad 2
November 13, 2020 to February 2, 2021

Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Regular Start Time	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B
Block 1 (60 min.)	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1
Block 2 (60 min.)	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1
40-60 min.	Break/Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Block 3 (60 min.)	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2
Block 4 (60 min.)	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2
Block 5 (60 min.)	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Regular Start Time	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B
Block 1 (60 min.)	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1
Block 2 (60 min.)	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1	Period 1
40-60 min.	Break/Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Block 3 (60 min.)	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2
Block 4 (60 min.)	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2	Period 2
Block 5 (60 min.)	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall

Semester 2 - Quad 1

February 4, 2021 to April 21, 2021

Semester 2 - Quad 2

April 26, 2021 to June 25, 2021

Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Regular Start Time	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B
Block 1 (60 min.)	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
Block 2 (60 min.)	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
40-60 min.	Break/Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Block 3 (60 min.)	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4
Block 4 (60 min.)	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4
Block 5 (60 min.)	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Regular Start Time	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort A	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B	Student Entry Cohort B
Block 1 (60 min.)	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
Block 2 (60 min.)	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
40-60 min.	Break/Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Block 3 (60 min.)	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4
Block 4 (60 min.)	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4	Period 4
Block 5 (60 min.)	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall	Study Hall

Operational Expectations

- School will begin and end at regular times.
- Schedules will include time for washroom use/drinks/hand washing opportunities.
- Staggering of recess and lunch will occur.
- Contact points will be minimized throughout the day.

Teachers will be required to use a Google Classroom and/or Brightspace platform to support the extension of learning for students who are learning at home on days when their assigned cohort is not in school. Through each of these digital platforms, students will have access to learning materials (online resources, class/course content), as well as the opportunity to demonstrate learning.

Full Remote Learning

We recognize that some families may elect to have their child(ren) learn from home rather than return to school in September. We respect and will honour these decisions and have developed a plan to support students who will engage in Full Remote Learning until such time as they are able to return to school.

Through the [TVDSB Return to School Confirmation on the TVDSB Parent Portal](#), available between August 5-18, 2020, families will be requested to communicate if they wish for their child(ren):

1. To attend school in-person (Elementary In-Person Learning and Secondary Adapted Learning), or
2. To participate in Full Remote Learning from home.

Elementary and Secondary students who choose Full Remote Learning will participate in real time, synchronous learning every day. Classes will be led by qualified teachers at scheduled times during the school day. The amount of time students will spend in Full Remote Learning will be equal to the same amount of time as students who chose In-Person Learning. It will be expected that students in the Full Remote Learning Model participate every day; attendance will be monitored.

Families/students who require support with technology or Internet access to engage in Full Remote Learning should indicate this in the TVDSB Return to School Confirmation survey. If you have any difficulty with completing this confirmation, please contact the Help Line at 519-452-2005 or servicesupport@tvdsb.ca.

Students in this model will be assigned to a qualified TVDSB teacher (one who may not be from their school) and with other peers (who may not be from their school) in a Full Remote Learning class. This Full Remote Learning class will have its own digital learning platform and instruction will occur online through asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. Ontario curriculum will be taught, assessed and evaluated. Full Remote Learning Teachers will provide synchronous learning opportunities which may include individual or small group support (video conferencing via Google Meet / Teams, phone calls), mini-lessons and content/skill-based instruction, as appropriate. It will be expected that students participate every day and attendance will be monitored.

Timetable For Full Remote Learning Students

Families of elementary and secondary students in the Full Remote Learning model will be provided with a schedule of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (independent) learning opportunities. This schedule will be provided in advance to support families with planning.

Secondary students who elect Full Remote Learning will participate in online courses within a Quadmestered schedule, to align with our Secondary Adapted model.

Digital Learning Platforms

All students in TVDSB in both the In-person Learning model and Full Remote Learning model will be connected to a Digital Learning Platform (Brightspace or Google Classroom). Students will be provided with support, if required, to use these platforms.

To support parents and guardians with understanding how to use these platforms, we have created several resources, which include videos, user guides and FAQs. These resources can be found on our website under [Supports for Parents and Guardians](#) and are available in multiple languages. TVDSB will be providing more learning opportunities about how to use these digital platforms.

Requests to Change Learning Models

We recognize that planning for the return to school in September has required families to make decisions. We appreciate the support of our parents and guardians to complete the [TVDSB Return to School Confirmation](#) prior to August 18, 2020. That information is required so that students' timetables/classes can be established, and staffing can be completed in order to start the 2020-2021 school year on Tuesday, September 8th in all preferred learning models.

Once school begins, if parents and guardians/students wish to change from Full Remote Learning to Elementary In-Person Learning/Secondary Adapted Learning (or vice versa), they will be permitted to change learning models at set points during the school year with advanced notification.

Elementary students will be permitted to change models on:

November 2, 2020 (with advanced notification by October 16, 2020)

February 8, 2021 (with advanced notification by January 22, 2021)

Please note: These dates were determined to align with the Ontario Elementary Reporting Periods. Advance notification is required for staffing purposes.

Secondary students will be permitted to change models on:

February 4, 2021 (with advanced notification by January 15, 2021)

Please note: These dates were determined to align with the Ontario Secondary Reporting Periods (end of Semester One). Advance notification is required for staffing purposes.

If a family/student requests a change of learning models at a time that is different than those stated above, the change will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the request is able to be accommodated, transition time will be required for planning purposes.

PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Music, physical education, technological studies, the arts, etc.

The safety of students and staff will require additional procedures for classes and musical bands, including the disinfection of equipment, tools, instruments, etc. as well as classroom layout considerations during face-to-face learning opportunities:

- Equipment, tools and instruments should be assigned to individual students or have a disinfecting process in place between each use.
- All shared equipment, tools or instruments must be cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Classroom layout must adhere to physical distancing, where possible.
- Vocal classes /choirs will be scheduled in large spaces or outdoors whenever possible.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Supporting our students with special education needs will continue to be a priority. All staff in the TVDSB Special Education Department will actively support students in all learning models. School-based staff (e.g., Learning Support Teachers and Educational Assistants) will work as a multi-disciplinary team to collaborate with the classroom and Full Remote Learning Teachers, students, and their families to ensure our students with special education needs receive the support they need to be successful in any learning model.

Plans have been developed at each school to ensure that students with special needs are supported as they transition back to learn. Professional Services Staff will also work with individual school teams to develop and implement programs and services designed to meet students with special education needs, in support of their transition back to school.

The IPRC process will be followed as per the TVDSB's Special Education Plan 2020-2021. The completion of all deferred Annual IPRC Reviews and new IPRCs requiring re-scheduling from Spring 2019-2020 will proceed either in-person or in a virtual format (as per parent(s)/guardian(s) preference).

Secondary

- In an adapted model, all students with a placement in one of Thames Valley's Special Education - Developmental Education Classes will have the option of attending school on a full-time, five days per week basis.
- The needs of other students, formally identified through the IPRC process, will be reviewed to determine if they need to attend school, in-person and on a daily basis, as they are unable to have meaningful access to education through distance learning.

Students will have access to their Special Education Assistive (SEA) Technology during the Full Remote learning model. This includes computing devices (iPads, Chromebooks, and laptops) as well as mobility devices, sensory equipment, etc.

SUPPORTING STUDENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our students, their families and our staff. We are prioritizing the building of school community and connection using this lens. It is important for the conditions of psychological safety, belonging, inclusivity, and connection to be established as our students return to learn in all learning models. We will support our staff to focus on a trauma-sensitive approach in all aspects of student interaction.

In all learning models, our TVDSB Professional Staff will continue to support and provide service to students. This may be through in-person, phone or virtual means. Professional Services staff will provide in-person consultation and support for teachers on social-emotional and mental health and well-being strategies in the classroom. TVDSB will also support school staff with additional information that will be provided in the School Mental Health Ontario learning framework and toolkit.

PARENT AND GUARDIAN RESOURCES

Parent and guardian learning opportunities are being developed to provide information, resources and strategies to support their child(ren) with their return to learn. There will be a wide variety of learning options available, and parents and guardians will be consulted around topics they would like to see presented.

Parents and guardians are always encouraged to be involved in their child's learning by communicating regularly with their child's teacher regardless of the learning model. TVDSB parents and guardians can also find information on our TVDSB Parent Engagement webpage at <https://www.tvdsb.ca/en/parents/parent-engagement.aspx>

STUDENTS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS

Some students will not be able to take part in the In-Person Learning model due to health conditions or other reasons. For this group of students, the Full Remote Learning model will be provided and TVDSB will support these students in this model of learning.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY, WIFI AND DATA-ENABLED DEVICES

Student Device and Bandwidth Access

We are committed to ensure that all families have access to technology and the internet to support their child's learning. As part of our [Return to School Confirmation](#) we will ask families of students opting for full remote learning and all secondary students about technology needs. **If you have any difficulty with completing this confirmation, please contact the Help Line at 519-452-2005 or servicesupport@tvdsb.ca**

ACCESS TO SCHOOL SITES

Parent and Guardian/ Visitor Access

Our Health & Safety practices, in addition to the Ministry of Education's recommendations, limit parents/guardians and visitors within the school. Parents and guardians who require essential access can arrange it through the school administration. Signage has been developed to limit entry to buildings, and provide information on how to contact the school to arrange for approved essential access. Unscheduled visitors and family members may not be able to enter the location. Any approved visitors to schools will be required to self-screen, sign in at the office and to wear a mask while on the school premises.

Child Care Centres and Before/After School Programs

All of our Child Care Centres and Before/After School Programs are operated by Third Party Operators. Please check with your child care provider for more information about their re-opening details. It is important to note that students who participate in Before and/or After School Programs are in established cohorts that may differ from those developed at the school level. To support contact tracing, school administrators will have cohort lists for these programs.

Community Use of Schools

Indoor permits through Community Use of Schools will continue to be on hold until further notice.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Return to School Confirmation

Parents and guardians are asked to complete the Return to School Confirmation on the TVDSB Parent Portal (www.tvdsb.ca/parentportal) and indicate whether or not their child(ren) will return to in-person learning in September. A separate entry must be completed for each child and is required for both elementary and secondary students. The deadline to complete this form is Tuesday, August 18, 2020. If you are new to the Parent Portal, instructions can be found on our [Technology and Software Support page](#). For families experiencing difficulty with completing this confirmation, please contact the Help Line at 519-452-2005 or your school office.

New Students – Early Registration

We request that families register their child(ren) by September 1, 2020 to ensure appropriate placement and planning. After September 1, families will be required to complete the online pre-registration and make an appointment at the school to complete the registration for their child.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Areas

Drop-off and pick-up areas at schools will be equipped with reminder signs to parents/ guardians regarding the need for physical distancing. Schools may provide more information closer to the start of the school year with respect to specific locations or “staging areas” for student drop-off/pick-up. We recognize how important it is to provide safe drop-offs for students and appreciate parent/ guardians’ adherence to these new routines and processes.

In addition, our board continues to work with our municipal partners to develop community-based drop off locations to support reduced traffic congestion.

Personal Student Belongings

Personal belongings brought to school by students should be minimized. All personal belongings should be clearly labelled. Secondary students may not have access to lockers and may need to keep all belongings with them.

Water Bottles

Students will be encouraged to bring their own **labelled** water bottle to school each day. Students will be directed to use filling stations. Opportunities to fill bottles will be scheduled for elementary students. All drinking fountains with mouthpieces will be shut off.

Daily Screening of Students

Students must not come to school if they have symptoms/feel sick, or if they have come in close contact with someone with a suspected or positive case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, including individuals within their household. Parents/ guardians will be provided with a checklist to perform daily screenings of their child(ren) before arriving at school. More information will be provided on this screening process prior to the beginning of the school year.

Signs will be posted at entrances to schools to remind students, staff, parents/guardians, and essential visitors of health and safety guidelines. Teachers and other staff members will be provided with information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children so that appropriate action can be taken if a student develops symptoms during the day.

Picking up Students Who Are Exhibiting Symptoms

As part of our process to ensure the health and safety of staff and students, it will be important to monitor signs and symptoms of students and staff during the school day. As such, if a student exhibits a COVID-19 symptom while at school, they will be relocated to a supervised designated location in the school. Staff will immediately contact the parent or guardian. We request that parents and guardians establish a process for the retrieval of their child in the event that they are notified during the school day. Students will not be able to take school transportation if they have been isolated with symptoms.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL SITES

Pilot Schools

Two pilot schools have been staged as examples of how TVDSB has planned for physical adaptations to support additional health and safety measures. In these model schools, all classrooms are staged with labelling of student desks for cohorts (to support our Adapted Model), in addition to floor markings and directional arrows which have been placed to support physical distancing. Hallways have been staged to include directional flow of traffic and physical distancing. The physical adaptations that have been implemented in our two pilot schools will be replicated in all schools.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

As a commitment to ensure the health and safety of students and staff, we have hired additional temporary custodians to support the disinfection of high traffic areas in schools and touch points that are regularly used by students and staff.

In addition, we are supplying all classrooms with disinfection products to allow for staff to use as needed. In the evening, electrostatic sprayers will be used to disinfect high touch points within school buildings.

As preventative measures to reduce the amount of contact to surfaces, classroom doors will always remain open so that doorknobs are not repeatedly touched, and light switches will remain on in classrooms and common areas.

Physical Distancing

It will be important to support our students to understand the added element of physical distancing that will now be part of their experience at school. Our staff is committed to assist students with this practice. Signage and floor markings throughout classrooms and school hallways are also in place to remind students to maintain physical distance from one another.

In addition, where possible, other physical distancing measures will be used. These can include:

- Removing non-essential items from hallways and high traffic areas.
- Incorporating more individual activities.
- Avoiding activities involving shared objects/toys that cannot be easily cleaned.
- Maximizing physical distance between chairs and tables/desks, where possible.
- Creating designated routes for students/staff to get to and from classrooms.
- Moving activities outside to allow for more space.
- Staggering periods of student movement around school and discourage student congregating in hallways, where possible.
- Staggering periods of student movement around school including lunch, breaks and recess times, where applicable.
- Having pre-set 'staging' locations for drop-off/pick-up routines.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

TVDSB has prepared for staff to have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which includes masks, face shields, gowns and gloves, as required. Parents and guardians can support our younger students by helping them to understand that staff will be wearing PPE as part of the re-opening of schools.

Non-Medical or Cloth Masks

The Ministry of Education, in consultation with provincial health officials, has prescribed the use of non-medical or cloth masks for all students in grades 4 through 12 when indoors, including hallways, during class and on school transportation.

If students are able to bring these masks from home, we would encourage parents and guardians to send them each day. However, we will have extra masks at each school in the event that a student requires a replacement mask.

Students in Kindergarten to grade 3 will be strongly encouraged (but not required) to wear a mask when indoors and on school transportation. If parents or guardians wish for their child to wear a cloth mask and they are able to bring these masks from home, we encourage them to do so. Extra masks will be available in the event that a student requires a replacement mask during the day.

Hand Washing

Schools will ensure that hand hygiene (cleaning) products are available in all rooms and at school entrances (e.g., hand wash sink with soap dispenser or hand sanitizer). All staff, students and essential visitors will be expected to practice proper hand hygiene, washing hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer, at the following times:

- Upon entering the school
- At regular time intervals throughout day
- Before/after eating food
- After using the washroom
- Before/after outdoor play
- After sneezing or coughing
- Before putting on and after removing PPE and/or non-medical masks/face coverings

SYMPTOMS, CONFIRMED CASES AND OUTBREAKS

Designated Area

Each school will have a designated area should a child become ill at school. This room/area will be used for the temporary placement of any individual who becomes ill during the day. Hand sanitizer, gloves, surgical/procedural masks, eye protection, tissues and a gown will be available for use by the ill individual and staff member supervising them.

COVID-19 Symptomatic Students

As mentioned in the Parent/Guardian Responsibilities, family members will be notified immediately if a child becomes unwell during the day. Symptomatic students must be immediately separated from others and supervised in a designated room/space. Parents (or designate) must immediately come to the school to pick up their child. Students from the same family will need to be picked up as well.

Parents and guardians are expected to have children assessed for COVID-19 if symptoms are present or self-isolate their children at home for 14 days.

Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

When a student or staff member has been diagnosed as positive for the COVID-19 virus, the school and board will follow the directions of our regional public health units.

Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 must provide medical clearance before being allowed to return to in-person instruction.

Outbreak Protocol

In consultation with our regional public health units, the following will be in place in all TVDSB schools:

Class Lists

School administrators ensure that class lists are maintained.

Bus Cohort Lists

Bus cohort lists will also be maintained for each school that has students accessing school transportation.

Testing Sites

As a board, we are in regular consultation with two public health units, London Middlesex Public Health Unit and Southwest Public Health Unit. Specific locations of Health Units and testing sites will be provided to school communities through school communications and on our TVDSB and school websites. The regional public health units will indicate if on-site testing at a school is required if an outbreak is confirmed within a school setting.

Privacy

Staff will follow the directions from the regional Health Units in terms of what medical/health information can be shared related to students or their families and that of TVDSB staff. TVDSB is appreciative that parents and guardians understand that not all personal information can be shared due to privacy concerns.

SCHOOL DAY OPERATIONS

Student Transportation

Our busing service, Southwestern Transportation Services (STS), has informed families that students who are eligible for transportation must register for busing in order to allow them to plan for routes. This registration process closes on August 14, 2020. Those who miss the deadline for registration should prepare for a delay in accessing transportation and may be waitlisted in some circumstances.

STS reminds parents and guardians that bus stops are unsupervised and physical distancing is the responsibility of the students and their caregivers at the bus stop. For more information, including STS's COVID-19 safety protocols, visit www.mybigyellowbus.ca

Attendance

Attendance will be taken for all students attending In-Person Learning, and a record will be maintained when students are in areas of the building other than their classroom. This will assist us with contact tracing should a positive case of COVID-19 be determined. Daily attendance will also be taken for any student participating in Full Remote Learning as there is an expectation by the Ministry of Education that student attendance in this learning model be monitored.

Sharing of Resources/Materials

Staff will limit the sharing of supplies, equipment, and textbooks that cannot be easily cleaned. Adequate supplies for instruction will be provided to each student, and where it is not practical to give each student their own resources, then the shared equipment will be cleaned or disinfected between use.

Parents and guardians can support younger students who are participating in In-person Learning by reminding them that sharing of personal belongings and school supplies is not suggested.

We recognize that the start of the school year often prompts some families to purchase individual student learning materials in preparation for school. **This is not required, and schools will be equipped to provide necessary materials to students.** However, if parents or guardians are interested in purchasing school learning items, the following could be used at school:

- An individual refillable, clearly labeled water bottle
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Pens for older students
- Scissors
- Glue/glue stick
- Pencil crayons
- Pencil case

In addition to these learning items, technology will continue to be used in our In-person Learning Model. Students who participate in the In-person Learning Model may opt to bring a computer device to school for their own personal use. This should be labelled and will be the responsibility of the student.

Emergency and Preparedness Response Drills

Practice drills will continue for students participating in the In-Person Learning model. Drills will be done in both Cohort A and B in Secondary Schools to ensure all students take part. During these drills, classes will move throughout the building while maintaining physical distance between students in the classroom, hallway and at all exits.

Student Nutrition Programs/Hot Lunch Programs

Student nutrition programs will continue where pre-packaged items are able to be provided to students. Hot Lunch Programs organized at schools will not be provided at this time.

Field Trips

In the initial stages of re-opening, field trips will not be permitted.

Intramural and Extra-Curricular Sports

TVDSB is awaiting further clarification/direction from the Ministry of Education, Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) and regional health units. Low/no contact sports and activities may be considered for a shortened season if approval is granted.

Clubs

School clubs that can maintain physical distancing or run virtually may continue.

Contactless Payments

To reduce the handling of cash, families are encouraged to use [SchoolCash online](#).

Garbage

Classroom garbage will be collected and disposed of daily.

Recycling

Students will be asked to bring home all lunch and snack containers and to recycle in their own home rather than at school. Schools can continue to recycle items such as paper and cardboard boxes from school-based activities.

Fitness Rooms and Equipment

Schools can use fitness rooms and equipment for in-class instruction when physical distancing can be maintained. Schools must ensure that proper cleaning procedures are in place for all equipment that is used. Staff/students must agree to clean and disinfect all equipment before and after use and maintain physical distance from others who may be in the room simultaneously.

Washrooms

Signage will be placed inside washrooms to remind students of room capacity, physical distancing and proper hand cleaning practices. All school washrooms will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the school day and again every evening.

Outdoor Space

Staff will be encouraged to maximize outdoor space for learning opportunities for students. Physical distancing practices will be in place during such activities. TVDSB has engaged in planning for the effective delivery of curricular activities that could be supported in outdoor environments and using our outdoor spaces.

Recess/ Lunch

Elementary students will be grouped together in one designated larger group for outdoor recesses and lunch breaks. Recesses/lunches may be staggered based on the size of the outdoor space and the availability of supervisors. Principals will develop a schedule and routine that allows for students to maintain appropriate physical distancing while still having an opportunity for fresh air and physical activity. Students will be taught about the importance of distancing, but it's recognized that this is challenging to enforce.

Elementary students will be encouraged to stay at school for lunch and will eat lunch in assigned classrooms/desks.

Secondary students are also encouraged to stay at school for lunch and will eat lunch at desks or in designated areas.

Playground Structures

Elementary school playgrounds will be permitted for student use at recesses and lunch. Students will all be required to clean their hands before and after each recess/outdoor time.

Common Spaces – Library Learning Commons/Cafeterias/Auditoriums

Common spaces, like Library Learning Commons, may be required to be equipped with plexiglass at circulation desks and floor markings for traffic flow and physical distancing. Cafeterias and auditoriums will be clearly marked to ensure physical distancing and schedules will be developed for the use of these spaces. The physical adaptations that have been implemented in our two pilot schools will be replicated in our Thames Valley schools, as needed.

Large Group Gatherings and Assemblies

During the early stages of school re-opening, all large gatherings and assemblies will not take place in person. Schools will be encouraged to consider virtual options instead.

CONCLUSION

We remain committed to our Thames Valley community and will provide regular updates on our Return to Learn plans over the next month. The health and safety of our students, their families and our staff is our priority. As we work together to plan for our return to learn and work, we value the collaboration of our stakeholders and partners. Our Thames Valley priorities of relationships, equity and diversity, student achievement and well-being and these will continue to drive our work together as we plan for the safe Return to Learn at Thames Valley.

Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools

This document constitutes a return to school direction issued by the Ministry of Education for the purposes of section 5 to Schedule 1 of O.Reg 364/20 (Rules for Stage 3 Areas) originally made under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act and continued under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020. This direction has been approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Introduction

The guidance provided in this document is intended to support the safe reopening of schools for the 2020/21 school year and has been developed under the following principles:

- Providing a safe and healthy school environment for students, teachers and staff, and safeguarding the broader communities in which they live
- Providing a consistently high-quality education for every student in Ontario
- Addressing potential gaps in student learning, mental health and well-being, arising from the school closures in 2019-20
- Maintaining close communications with and respecting the opinions and authority of parents and reducing barriers to returning to work

On June 19, 2020, the ministry released the Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020/21 School Year. Since that time, the public health data has changed considerably, with daily confirmed cases significantly declining. This is a positive public health development, and the ministry is now in a position to direct various protocols and procedures for the resumption of school.

The guidance and requirements outlined here build on the guidance released on June 1⁹, 2020 and will continue to be re-evaluated regularly and, where required, updated based on public health advice.

Executive Summary

Ontario's students, parents, and staff have demonstrated their commitment to learning and resilience ever since the COVID-19 outbreak required everyone involved to embrace new ways of teaching, learning and connecting. However, it was clear that steps needed to be taken to ensure that student and parents' evolving expectations will be met for the Fall.

Over the summer, students and families took advantage of additional learning opportunities offered through expanded summer learning programs across the province. Over 150,000 students enrolled in summer school offerings, including more than 21,000 students who obtained Reach Ahead credits, representing an increase of approximately 70% compared to last summer. While additional enrolment numbers continue to be shared with the Ministry of Education, these preliminary numbers indicate an increased interest on the part of students and families to continue their learning over the summer.

Elementary students participated in literacy and numeracy programs and students with special education needs and mental health concerns are participating in new targeted transition programs in preparation for the coming school year. These programs are helping students to remain on track and start the 2020-21 school year with the confidence and knowledge to succeed.

Students are ready to resume their learning in September, and it is our mission to maximize opportunities for achievement while protecting the mental health and well-being of students. This must be done with health and safety as the fundamental principle.

This September, all elementary schools in the province will open for conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week. This applies to all Kindergarten to Grade 8 students. Parents will continue to have the option to opt their children out of in-person delivery, which respects the fundamental role of parents in making the final determination whether they feel safe with their children returning to school.

Secondary schools in school boards designated by the province will open on an adapted model, with class cohorts of approximately 15 students, on alternating schedules with at least 50% of in-class instructional days. The designation of these school boards is based on several factors that take into account the size of the school board, the number and size of the board's secondary schools, the size of secondary grade cohorts and whether the board is predominantly urban. Co-terminous boards have also been designated wherever these criteria are met.

This will allow for a staged approach to reopening secondary schools.

Secondary schools in non-designated school boards will be permitted to open with conventional delivery, with enhanced health and safety protocols.

All school boards will adopt timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting of students as much as possible, to limit the number of direct and indirect student-to-student contacts.

Students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear masks indoors on school property. Students may wear their own non-medical masks, and non-medical masks will also be made available for students. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply.

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces.

School-based staff who are regularly in close contact with students will be provided with all appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Ontario government will provide PPE and cleaning products to school boards and will work closely with boards to facilitate appropriate supply and delivery.

Most schools in Ontario will open for students on September 8, 2020. Ministry expectation is that school boards have scheduled three days of professional activity prior to September 8. All school-based staff, including supply/occasional teachers and occasional staff, will be required to participate in a one day paid health and safety training prior to the opening of schools.

The Ontario government is supporting the re-opening of schools with \$309 million in new investments to ensure a safe return, including funding for:

- Up to 500 public health nurses, phased in, to assist schools and boards in local health protocols;
- masks and personal protective equipment;
- additional teaching positions;
- additional school custodians and enhanced cleaning supplies;
- cleaning for school buses and personal protective equipment for bus drivers;
- additional supports for students with special education needs;

- additional health and safety training for school-based staff
- increased funding for mental health supports.
- funding for testing

This funding is in addition to the \$25 million investment in mental health and technology, which will see an additional \$10 million dedicated to mental health staff, resources, and programs; \$15 million in technology funding to support the procurement of up to 35,000 devices for Ontario's students to support their synchronous learning in-school and beyond; and \$4 million in new funding for cleaning, cleaning protocols, and financial support to hire additional custodial staff.

In addition, the ministry is working with colleagues in the Ministry of Health to ensure public health capacity will be expanded to support school reopening, including public health nurses and expanded lab capacity for testing.

Elementary

Elementary schools will reopen with conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, with enhanced health and safety protocols, provincewide.

Elementary school students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 will attend school five days per week, with 300 minutes of instruction per day, remaining in one cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch. Cohorted classes will stay together and with one teacher, where possible. Students can expect to see changes in the timing of recesses, lunches, and bathroom breaks as they are staggered to support cohorting. Specialized teachers, like French teachers, will still be able to go into classrooms to provide the full breadth of programming for students. Students will also be able to leave their classrooms to receive additional supports but direct and indirect contacts in schools for students should be limited to approximately 50.

School boards will provide the full range of elementary curriculum, including the new Grades 1-8 Mathematics curriculum.

Secondary

Designation Status for Secondary Delivery

Secondary schools will open in September with conventional or adapted in-person teaching and instruction, depending upon the designation of the school board.

The designation of these school boards is based on several factors that take into account the size of the school board, the number and size of the board's secondary schools, the size of secondary grade cohorts and whether the board is predominantly urban. Co-terminous boards have also been designated wherever these criteria are met.

This will allow for a staged approach to reopening secondary schools. The designation status of school boards will be reviewed regularly to support a future transition into a conventional delivery model when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

24 school boards will have designated status for reopening in September. The list of designated school boards is below.

Designated school boards will be given notice to move to conventional delivery when it is determined that it is safe to do so. This will allow for advance notice to parents and students to ensure they are prepared for a return, and for schools to prepare for transitioning to conventional delivery.

Secondary schools in designated school boards will open on an adapted model, with class cohorts of approximately 15 students, attending on alternate schedules that would include in person attendance for at least 50% of instructional days.

Secondary school students in an adapted model would be assigned curriculum-linked independent work on remote learning days and, where possible, would participate in synchronous learning with their teacher and classmates for a period of each school day. To facilitate this, boards may wish to adjust the school day for students in an adapted model.

Even in designated school boards, students with a high level of special education needs may need daily attendance and instruction. The Ministry of Education will liaise with designated school boards in support of this goal and will review and approve requests by designated school boards to open small or specialized secondary schools or programs with full time attendance.

Designated school boards:

- Toronto
- Toronto Catholic
- Peel
- Dufferin-Peel Catholic
- York
- York Catholic
- Durham
- Durham Catholic
- Halton
- Halton Catholic
- Waterloo
- Waterloo Catholic
- Thames Valley
- London Dist. Catholic
- Ottawa-Carleton
- Ottawa Catholic
- Hamilton-Wentworth
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic
- Niagara
- Niagara Catholic
- Greater Essex County
- Windsor-Essex Catholic
- Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est
- Conseil des écoles publiques du Centre-Est

Timetabling and Cohorting

Ontario's 880 secondary schools have enrolments that range from under 50 students to over 2000.

All school boards are encouraged to adopt secondary timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting of students as much as possible, to limit the number of student-to- student contacts.

In order to reduce risk of transmission and to support contact tracing, school boards are to develop timetables that over a 1 to 2-week period:

- Limit indirect and direct student contacts to approximately 100 students in the school; and
- Are encouraged to keep secondary school students in a maximum of two in- person class cohorts

A secondary school credit is granted in recognition of the successful completion of a scheduled 110 hour course. Efforts to cohort secondary school students may impact the traditional four course delivery model in a semestered school and as a result, boards may need to adjust the school day for students. As outlined in [Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016](#), *"planned learning activities include interaction between the teacher and the student and assigned individual or group work..."*

In the conventional model, a school board should provide no less than a 5-hour instructional day through in-person or synchronous remote learning. In an adapted model, school boards may wish to implement a delivery model that includes shortening the in-class school day for secondary students, utilizing asynchronous or synchronous remote learning and independent study to achieve the 110 hours of instruction.

School boards across Ontario are preparing for this form of timetabling by introducing innovations such as a quadmester model, where students take two credits at a time, spending the morning on one subject and the afternoon on a second subject, with four segments to the school year. The model for conventional and adapted (example quadmester) should be the same model. The difference is the size of the cohort.

Another option, in smaller secondary schools, is to cohort grades of students and ensure that only students in a specific grade are in classes with each other.

The Ontario high school curriculum allows for students to typically take one elective in Grade 9, and up to three electives in Grade 10. School boards should work to restrict secondary students in these grades to cohorts and maintain students in full-time, in-class delivery.

Cohorting may become more challenging in Grades 11 and 12. Ontario school boards are introducing innovative timetables that allow students to take the same range of other classes through remote delivery.

Referred to as the "study hall model", this would allow students to remain cohorted with the same group of classmates while they take a range of courses. This would require students to have relevant technological devices to complete their studies. The teachers delivering the courses may be in the same school, but leading their students through synchronous delivery

and assigned work. A class of students in study hall might be taking a range of courses during the same class period.

Ontario school boards are preparing for the upcoming school year with a range of innovative timetabling approaches that support good pedagogy, follow public health advice and respect their collective agreements with teachers. The Ministry of Education, Ontario's school board trustee associations and Ontario's teacher unions continue to discuss implementation of these approaches.

Adult and Continuing Education

Delivery options for programs offered by boards through Adult and Continuing Education such as International Languages, Adult Credit and Literacy and Numeracy, may vary in approach - in alignment with this guidance document - to include remote, in person or hybrid models taking in to account the health and safety of students.

Protection Strategies

Building on the health and safety guidance released on June 19, 2020, school boards will be expected to employ **multiple strategies**, informed by public health advice and jurisdictional research, to ensure schools are healthy and safe environments for students and staff.

The [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#) can help prepare school boards to put controls into place that help make schools safer for everyone.

Self-Screening

All staff and students must self-screen every day before attending school. School boards should provide parents with a checklist to perform daily screening of their children before arriving at school and self-assessment tools should be made available to staff to ensure awareness of possible symptoms of COVID-19. Signs should be posted at entrances to the school to remind students, staff, parents/caregivers, and essential visitors of screening requirements. If a student or staff member is experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), they must stay home from school and should seek testing and appropriate medical attention.

The ministry is also working with public health officials to ensure a supply of public health nurses to assist schools across the province, including assistance with screening of potential cases of COVID-19.

All staff and students who are experiencing new or worsening symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must not attend school and should seek appropriate medical attention as required, including getting tested at a COVID-19 testing centre.

Staff and students feeling sick should remain at home while waiting for test results. If a symptomatic individual tests positive for COVID-19, they should continue to remain in isolation at home and follow the directions of their local public health unit.

Adapted School Environments

School boards will be expected to adapt their school environments, both physically and operationally, to support the multiple protection strategies available.

This can include posting signs to reinforce self-screening and hand hygiene, directional signage to support distancing and one-way use of hallways, adjustments to entrance and exit practices, adjustments to the use of playgrounds and school grounds, signage in bathrooms and common areas to indicate maximum capacity and availability of hand sanitizer.

Hand Hygiene

Appropriate hand hygiene is one of the most important protective strategies. Schools should be prepared to train students on appropriate hand hygiene, including the use of alcohol-based hand rub, and to reinforce its use.

This can involve scheduling breaks to allow students to wash their hands at appropriate times during the school day.

Masks

Students

Students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes. Outdoor times like recess can be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks within their cohorts.

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces.

Students are encouraged to practice wearing masks and learn what type of mask is most comfortable for them. Students may wear their own non-medical masks, and non-medical masks will also be made available for students. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply.

Teachers and Staff

Medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shield) will be provided for all teachers and other staff of school boards. All school-based staff will be required to wear masks, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.

School-based staff who are regularly in close contact with students will be provided with all appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

The Ontario government will provide PPE and cleaning products to school boards and will work closely to ensure appropriate supply and delivery where necessary, such as in leading classes with students who are deaf or hard of hearing, masks with clear sections may be appropriate.

Exceptions

Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks are expected to be put in place by schools and school boards.

Staff or students with sensory or breathing difficulties may be exempted by the school principal, guided by school board policies.

Supply of Masks and PPE

Masks and other PPE have been sourced by the Ontario government. The ministry will work closely with school boards to confirm demand and facilitate timely delivery and supply.

Cohorting

Cohorting refers to the practice of keeping students together in a small group throughout their school day, with limited exposure to multiple teachers or a wide variety of classmates.

This practice limits the number of other students that a single student is in contact with. This practice will also facilitate contact tracing should that be necessary.

School boards will be expected to implement adapted timetables at both the elementary and secondary levels that support cohorting of students to the greatest extent possible.

An elementary student should be cohorted with their classmates and their homeroom teacher, with limited contact with other subject teachers for classes such as French as a second language/Anglais, the arts and physical education.

A secondary student should be limited to approximately 100 student contacts. Boards are also encouraged to keep in-person cohorts to two classes, or with their grade, depending on the size of their high school. As discussed in the Secondary Schools section, this may require adapted timetables and a study hall or remote delivery of some classes in Grades 11 and 12 to limit the size of the cohort a secondary student is exposed to.

The ministry has been engaged in discussions with trustee associations, school boards and teacher federations on student timetables that achieve the goals of appropriate pedagogy, cohorting and respect for collective agreements.

Distancing

As much distancing as possible between students, between students and staff and between staff members should always be promoted. Physical distancing measures are to be supplemented with other public health measures supported by health and safety strategies, such as screening, adapted school environment, cohorting, hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning and masking.

Classroom sizes in Ontario schools vary in size, but schools are encouraged to remove unnecessary furniture and place desks with as much distancing as possible, and to allow

teachers as much teaching space as possible. Desks should face forward rather than in circles or groupings.

Schools are encouraged to locate larger classes in larger spaces and to use all available space in a school, including gyms and libraries.

Visitors

In the upcoming school year, schools are asked to significantly limit or even prohibit visitors, including parents.

Visits to ensure school safety, such as inspections by the Fire Marshal's office or by public health, should continue to take place.

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

Local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services should be developed with any external community-based agencies providing these supports and services. See "Special Education" below.

Pre-Registration

School boards are encouraged to undertake pre-registration given the controlled conditions for reopening schools that will be required.

School boards will be permitted to wait-list students and families who do not pre-register by a cut-off time established by the board. Boards should make their pre-registration deadlines publicly available. Boards will be permitted to offer these students and families remote learning until an appropriate class placement can be provided.

School boards may set restrictions on the ability of students to transfer between remote learning and in class learning. These restrictions may take the form of a limited number of dates in the school calendar for transfer between these forms of learning, such as the end of a semester or quadmester.

Staffing

As employers, school boards are encouraged to work with their teacher federations and education worker unions as they develop their reopening plans.

A key aspect of these plans will be defining criteria for accommodation for staff who have health conditions, or whose family members have health conditions, that would make it preferable for them to work in accommodated roles.

Boards are encouraged to develop supply lists to support continuity of learning and operations when teachers or staff complete their daily self-screening and choose to stay home.

Special Education

In order to ensure that students with special education needs are supported as schools reopen, school boards will need to consider additional planning and transition time for students with special education needs to support a smooth transition.

School boards should support attendance options including offering daily attendance to students with special education needs for whom adapted timetables or remote learning may be challenging based on student needs.

School boards should make changes in the school environment and/or remote learning needs when reviewing and updating Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and to ensure continued access to assistive technology.

The safe return of medically fragile students will be supported by boards consulting with local public health authorities on options for personal protective equipment, staff training, and potential continued remote learning where return is not possible. Students and parent/guardians should also consult with their health care providers.

School boards should work with partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services. Protocols should include support for remote delivery where in-school delivery is not possible.

Mental Health

Mental health and well-being are core elements of the school reopening plan.

Prior to school starting, [School Mental Health Ontario](#) will provide school boards with a professional learning framework and toolkit to support the mental health of all students that can be tailored at the board and school level for different audiences. The professional learning will have a strong focus on building students' social-emotional learning skills so that they can build resilience, manage their stress and build positive relationships. Professional learning will be provided for system leaders, educators and mental health professionals to support the approach to school re-entry, as well as throughout the school year.

School boards should implement a tiered approach for mental health supports that will capture all students and target intensive help to those who have been most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

School boards should collaborate with child and youth mental health agencies to support strong connections and make the best use of mental health resources and supports across the integrated system of care.

Academics

Beginning in September, students should be supported in transitioning to their next grade or course, acknowledging the prolonged absence of students from the classroom. Part of this

support should include assessments to identify students' strengths and gaps in learning at key instructional times to ensure students have fundamental building blocks in advance of new content. The primary purpose of instruction and assessment is to raise the skill level of all learners in their achievement of overall curriculum expectations across all subjects, courses, and grades.

Schools should design elementary timetables to maximize learning opportunities, including math, science, language, social studies, health and physical education, French as a second language/Anglais, and the arts in accordance with the 300-minute instructional day. Students in Grades 3 and 6 will not participate in EQAO assessments in the 2020-21 school year.

It is important that any approach allows secondary students to earn compulsory credits required for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), as well as providing access to types of elective courses that support all postsecondary pathway destinations. Timetabling of pre-requisite Grade 12 courses should consider post-secondary application and admission deadlines.

For those students graduating before February 2021 who have not yet met the literacy graduation requirement, they should be enrolled in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) or an adjudication process. Graduating students will also need to meet the 40-hour community involvement graduation requirement and can do so virtually.

Adaptations may be needed for some subjects/courses to ensure the safety of students, in line with current public health recommendations.

Music

Most overall expectations for the Music strand can be met without the use of instruments in both the elementary and secondary Arts curriculum.

A variety of delivery options may be considered to meet the music curriculum's overall expectations, which could include fully distanced learning, in-person teaching and instruction with lower-risk creative performance opportunities (e.g., in-school instruction in larger spaces, restricting the type of instruments in a group setting) or in-person teaching and instruction with no live performance.

Boards may choose to refer to the [Ontario Music Educators' Association](#) resource for suggestions on teaching music in line with current public health recommendations.

Health and Physical Education

In elementary and applicable secondary Health and Physical Education courses, efforts should be made to address the overall expectations of the Active Living and Movement Competence

strands outside, whenever possible. Gymnasiums should only be used where physical distancing measures can be followed. Capacity in change rooms should be limited.

Teachers should plan physical activities that support physical distancing while also limiting the use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be disinfected regularly and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use. Boards may choose to refer to Physical & Health Education (PHE) Canada's resource or the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea) website for suggestions on teaching physical education in line with current public health recommendations.

Cooperative Education

Co-op placements should be offered virtually, where feasible. In-person community placements can be arranged in alignment with the direction and recommendations of the local health unit, the direction of the school board, and with the safety and curriculum requirements of the Cooperative Education curriculum. Cooperative education is a key component of Specialist High Skills Majors, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and Dual Credit Programs.

Technological Education

A variety of delivery options may be considered to meet technological education curriculum expectations, which could include fully distanced learning, in-school instruction with lower-risk face to face learning opportunities in technological education classes. This will vary widely between the 10 Broad Based Technology areas in the Technological Education curriculum. Technological education classroom cohorts must be designed to meet all physical distancing practices as well as health and safety precautions. Boards may choose to refer to Ontario Council for Technology Education's website for suggestions on teaching technological education in line with current public health recommendations and in virtual environments.

Resources:

[OMEA's Considerations for Safe Reopening](#)

[PHE Canada's Return to School PHE Guidelines](#)

Field Trips

To align with physical distancing, schools should not plan field trips and activities requiring group transportation at this time, until public health data suggests otherwise.

Clubs and Sports

Schools can offer clubs and organized sports if physical distancing is possible and equipment and spaces are cleaned and disinfected between each use.

School Assemblies

School assemblies or other large gatherings (e.g., concerts or dances) should be avoided. Virtual options should be offered instead of in person gatherings.

Other Scenarios

Voluntary Learn at Home

To ensure students and families are supported and respected in making decisions that work best for them, in-person school attendance will be optional for the 2020/21 school year. If not attending in-person, students will be expected to attend school remotely.

Remote learning options will be available for all students on a full-time enhanced distant/remote learning basis with access to learning materials posted online to support both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities during the day.

For students who are engaged in remote learning, attendance should be taken according to the school's daily protocol. Students should be provided with a daily schedule of subjects/courses according to a 5-hour instructional day with opportunities for frequent, live contact with a teacher and expectations for synchronous learning. It is expected that learning will be based on overall expectations across all subjects/courses and grades.

Key times will be identified when parents can choose to reintegrate their child to in-person instruction, when they feel comfortable to do so.

The ministry will support these students being reported for full enrolment funding and boards should ensure that teachers are available and assigned to classes.

For secondary students, online courses delivered through a fully independent learning model are also available through the TVO Independent Learning Centre (ILC); over 140 courses are available in both English and French. School boards are required to approve student enrolment in ILC courses and school boards must pay a \$250 per credit fee to TVO. All reasonable requests by students for independent study should be supported and students should be able to access guidance counsellors to confirm that credits support their academic pathway.

Adapted Delivery

School boards should be prepared to implement their adapted delivery models should public health conditions require them. Under this scenario, cohorts would include approximately 15 students in each class attending on alternate days, or alternate schedules that would represent in person attendance for at least 50% of instructional days.

Full Remote Delivery

School boards should ensure that all teachers have an account on Brightspace or board selected Learning Management System (LMS).

Teachers should be prepared to load learning resources in this LMS and to deliver synchronous learning for part of each school day.

School boards should be prepared to have a calendar and timetable prepared by grade and respect that families with multiple children may need to take turns using the family's devices or broadband access.

To support teachers in teaching through remote delivery, the Ministry has developed with partners a catalogue of over 125 online courses in both English and French, in addition to the courses provided through the Independent Learning Centre. The ministry is continuing to develop new online courses and 10 new courses are being developed for September, with another 10 by January, in French and English.

Should remote delivery be required, wherever possible, schools will remain open as workplaces for teachers, to support the delivery of high-quality synchronous learning.

Boards should assess whether there are students who need access to a device or internet and take steps to distribute school resources to ensure students can stay connected, wherever possible, to learning. Boards should also make sure that students with disabilities have access to accessible online learning.

Where internet access is unavailable or limited, school boards should consider opening schools to students on a supervised study hall basis even when full school operations are not possible. Public health advice would be required to implement this.

Transportation

Active forms of travel (e.g., walking and cycling) and private transportation by parents and caregivers, are encouraged where possible, to ease pressure on transportation demand.

To support return to school 5 days a week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization of buses beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity. To the extent that physical distancing may not be possible, the use of non-medical masks for students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks on student transportation. Exceptions should be made for students with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking.

Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver contracting COVID-19. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort should be seated together.

Medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shields) will be provided for school bus drivers, school bus monitors and student aides. Eye protection for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact with students, such as during boarding and exiting

The province has enhanced funding to support increased disinfecting protocols for frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handrails, seatbacks) to at least twice daily. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be available on vehicles.

Where possible, the seat directly behind the school bus driver should remain empty to maintain physical distancing. Windows should be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.

School boards should support accommodations for immunocompromised and otherwise medically vulnerable students, and students with special transportation needs (e.g., arrange separate vehicle, assign seating at front of school bus).

Training, where appropriate, to support school bus drivers, school bus monitors, and student aides should be provided to ensure that health and safety measures are understood, followed and enforced.

Health and safety measures should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians of students to ensure their comfort with the adapted transportation system and receive their support in having students understand and follow guidelines.

Student transportation service providers should also consider the [Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 for Student Transportation Employers](#) released by the Public Services Health and Safety Association.

More Resources:

[Federal Guidance for School Bus Operations](#)

Monitoring and Responding to Reports of COVID-19 Symptoms

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Public Health will work closely with school boards to monitor and respond to reports of COVID-19 symptoms.

Any student or staff member who develops COVID-19 symptoms while in school should be immediately separated from others, in a separate room where possible, until they are able to go home. They should not take student or public transportation. Isolated students should be supervised per usual school policy, with physical distancing maintained and PPE provided consistent with health guidance.

Staff with symptoms and parents/guardians of children with symptoms should be directed to use the online self-assessment tool and follow instructions. Persons who test positive may not return to school until they are cleared according to public health guidance. Persons who retest

negative (after an initial positive test) can return to school once they are symptom-free for 24 hours.

Schools must ensure records of classes, including seating charts, bus cohorts, and daily records of any approved visitors to the school, including supply/occasional teachers or custodians are maintained and readily available to be provided to public health for contact tracing purposes.

Schools must immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school to the local public health unit and provide any materials (e.g., daily attendance and transportation records) to public health officials to support case management and contact tracing and other activities in accordance with all applicable legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Public health officials will determine any additional steps required, including but not limited to the declaration of an outbreak and closure of classes and/or schools. School boards must report on a daily basis any suspected or confirmed cases within the school community to the ministry. An online tool will be available for this purpose and no personal information will be collected by the ministry. Principals are responsible for communicating with the school community consistent with ministry guidance and relevant privacy legislation.

Principals must maintain a dedicated contact in the local public health unit and a list of the locations of the closest [COVID-19 assessment sites](#).

All school staff must receive training on outbreak management procedures.

Before and After School Programs

Before and after school programming will be available and students in these programs would be part of two cohorts. Schools, child care operators and authorized recreation providers in schools will collaborate to ensure that student lists and information are maintained and readily available to be provided to public health for contact tracing purposes in accordance with all applicable legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Communication to Parents

The success of the school reopening plan will depend on parents being informed about new protocols and feeling confident that the approach will keep their children safe. To that end, boards should clearly communicate expectations and provide guidelines to parents and students well before in-class instruction resumes, and ongoing throughout the year.

Provincial and Demonstration Schools

The Ministry of Education operates nine schools, including both schools and residences. These schools serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low vision, deaf-blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.

Two of these schools are in the process of transferring to being governed by Ontario's French language school boards.

Separate and detailed guidance for the re-opening of these schools is being developed and will be shared with parents and students.

Private Schools

Private schools should adopt the guidance in this document. They are encouraged to work with their public health unit in developing their school reopening plans.

Private schools must immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school to the local public health unit as required under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, and provide any materials (e.g., daily attendance and transportation records) to public health officials to support case management and contact tracing and other activities, in accordance with all applicable privacy legislation. Public health officials will determine any additional steps required. Private schools must also report on a daily basis about any suspected or confirmed cases to the ministry. An online tool will be available for this purpose and no personal information will be collected by the ministry.

Private schools located in Stage 3 regions of the province can reopen (see O.Reg 364/20 under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*).

First Nations

First Nations schools located in regions of the province in Stage 3 of re-opening should adopt the guidance in this document. Schools are encouraged to work with their public health unit in reopening their schools.

Only private schools, including First Nations schools, located in Stage 3 regions of the province are allowed to reopen (see O.Reg 364/20 under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*).

International Students

Some Ontario school boards serve international students. The decision of whether to admit international students for the coming school year rests with the federal government. Should the federal government decide to admit international students, it is expected that Ontario school boards will follow all federal guidance with respect to their admission.

Health and Safety

It is the employer's responsibility under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect a worker.

Training

Staff should be provided with a full day of training on the health and safety protocols and required adaptations before the school year begins. This training will be provided to all staff

including supply/occasional teachers and casual workers, which the government has invested \$10 million to provide.

Joint Health and Safety Committees

Joint Health and Safety Committees are required to be established, engaged and meeting regularly to inform the reopening plan and ongoing operations.

Adapted School Environment

Schools should develop school arrival and departure procedures that support physical distancing where possible. Approaches may include:

- Staggered bell times
- Maximizing the use of all possible entrances/exits to support the beginning and end of the school days

Hand sanitizer should be available in school entrances and exits and in classrooms.

Schools should create designated routes for students to get to and from classrooms, including different and separate entrance points for students in different grades.

Schools should also provide visual cues/physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs/posters on walls, to guide appropriate distances in lines/queues and at other times (e.g., guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Periods of student movement should be staggered to limit student congregation in the hallways.

Congregation of teachers/staff should be limited to minimize potential for adult-to-adult transmission.

Special consideration for physical distancing should be taken for classrooms with fixed equipment (e.g. Science labs or technological education classrooms).

Cleaning Standards and protocols

Cleaning Protocols

School boards should review their cleaning protocols and reinforce them if needed to meet current public health requirements.

Refer to Public Health Ontario's [Environmental Cleaning fact sheet \(PDF\)](#).

Refer to Health Canada's [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#) for approved products.

- **Cleaning products:** Products that provide both the cleaning and disinfection action are preferable due to ease of use (e.g., hydrogen peroxide products). Only use cleaning and disinfectant products that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). Check the expiry date of the agents prior to use. These should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions
- **Cleaning program:** School boards should develop a program for cleaning and disinfecting schools, including reviews of:
 - Existing practices to determine where enhancements might be made, including frequency and timing of cleaning and disinfection, areas to clean and/or disinfect, choice of cleaning products, child safety, staffing, signage, and PPE for cleaning staff
 - Inventory to determine items to be stored, moved, or removed altogether to reduce handling or the challenges associated with cleaning them (e.g., porous or soft items such as stuffed toys, area rugs, fabric upholstered seating)
- **High touch surfaces:** Cleaning plus disinfection twice daily is suggested at a minimum, however, more frequent cleaning and disinfection may be necessary, depending on the frequency of use and extent of soilage
 - Includes washrooms (e.g. toilet fixtures, faucets), eating areas (e.g. tables, sinks, countertops), doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, touch screens, push buttons, handrails, computers, photocopiers, sports equipment
- **Outdoor surfaces:** Routine cleaning of surfaces on playgrounds, including high touch surfaces made of plastic or metal requires soap and water but not disinfectant. Cleaning of wooden surfaces is not recommended
- **Shared objects:** Use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or the objects should be cleaned between each use
- **Where an individual is suspected of having COVID-19 at school:**
 - Establish a protocol for identification and communication of suspected/confirmed cases to administration and relevant staff to determine contaminated areas and carry out cleaning and disinfection, including timing, return to use, methods, PPE, waste disposal
 - Identify areas that may require cleaning plus disinfection (items used by the individual and all surfaces within 2 metres of the ill person) versus cleaning alone (such as a hallway or room where the individual has passed through)
 - Use disposable cleaning equipment, such as disposable wipes, where possible
 - Remove all items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, etc.) and store them in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days

Water Testing

Schools are required to follow all Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks requirements and procedures regarding water flushing in advance of schools reopening.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Refer to Public Health Ontario's [How to Wash Your Hands \(PDF\)](#) fact sheet.

Refer to Health Canada's [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#), including which sanitizers may be appropriate for different groups of staff and students.

- Hand hygiene refers to hand washing or hand sanitizing to remove or kill the virus and is the most effective way to reduce the transmission of organisms.
- Respiratory etiquette aims to reduce the risk of transmitting droplets that may contain the virus directly onto other surfaces where they may be picked up by others.
- Education: Staff and students should be provided with targeted, age-appropriate education in proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Local public health units can provide additional guidance. Age-appropriate posters or signage should be placed around the school.
- Supplies: Staff and students should have the supplies they need to conduct appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and these supplies should be easily accessible.
- **Alcohol Based Hand Rub (ABHR)** with a minimum 60% alcohol concentration (60-90% recommended in community settings) throughout the school (including ideally at the entry point to each classroom) and/or **plain liquid soap** in dispensers, sinks and paper towels in dispensers.
 - Soap and water are preferred as it is the most effective method and least likely to cause harm if accidentally ingested
 - ABHR can be used by children. It is most effective when hands are not visibly soiled
 - For any dirt, blood, body fluids (urine/feces), it is preferred that hands be washed with soap and water to remove this “organic material”
 - Safe placement of the ABHR to avoid consumption is important, especially for young children
- **Tissues and lined, no-touch waste baskets** (i.e., foot pedal-operated, hand sensor, open basket).
- **Support or modifications** allowing students with special needs to regularly perform hand hygiene as independently as possible.
- Hand hygiene should be conducted by anyone entering the school and incorporated into the daily schedule at regular intervals during the day, above and beyond what is usually recommended (e.g., before eating food, after using the washroom).
- Possible options would be to have regular scheduled hand hygiene breaks based on a pre-specified schedule
- Students may need assistance or supervision

Bathrooms

Schools should ensure that bathrooms are cleaned frequently and that there is an adequate supply of soap at all times. Paper hand towels are preferable to hand dryers.

Schools should timetable bathroom breaks in the school day to stagger use of bathrooms and should monitor physical distancing. Signage should be posted that indicates the maximum number of people simultaneously using the bathroom at any given point. Individual students should not be prevented from accessing bathrooms as needed.

Isolation Room

All schools have a room that can be used should a student or staff member become ill, including PPE available in the room.

These rooms should be cleaned after each use.

Lunch/Food Service

To the greatest extent possible, students should be encouraged to eat lunch in their classroom with their cohort to ensure chances of contact and transmission are minimized.

Lunch times should be staggered to allow students to wash hands before eating, without creating congestion in washrooms or handwashing stations.

If weather permits, consideration could be given to having lunch breaks outside.

With respect to eating and drinking at school, it is expected that:

- Staff and students will perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating.
- Each student will have their own individual meal or snack with no common food items.
- Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle that is labeled, kept with them during the day and not shared.
- Water bottles will be required to be filled rather than students and staff drinking directly from the mouthpiece of water fountains
- Schools will remove all self-serving food items and microwave use will not be permitted.
- Multi-use utensils will be cleaned after each use.
- Schools will not plan non-instructional activities that involve students in preparing or serving of food.
- Third party food services, including nutrition programs, will be delivered in a way that any student who wishes to participate can do so. “Grab and Go format” is preferred. All surfaces, bins and containers for food should be disinfected prior to and after each use.

Rules for personal belongings

Personal belongings brought to school should be minimized.

Personal items being brought to school (e.g., backpack, clothing, sun protection, water bottles, food) should be labeled and stored separately in cubbies/designated areas or lockers.

New Funding Investments

- The Ontario government is supporting the re-opening of schools through \$309 million in new funding for a range of investments, including:
 - Up to 500 public health nurses, phased in to assist schools and boards in local health protocols - \$50M
 - Masks and personal protective equipment - \$60M
 - Additional teaching positions - \$30M
 - Additional school custodians and enhanced cleaning supplies - \$75M
 - Cleaning for school buses and personal protective equipment for bus drivers - \$40M

- Additional supports for students with special education needs - \$10M
- Additional health and safety training for school-based staff - \$10M
- Increased funding for mental health supports - \$10M
- Testing - \$23.6M

This funding is in addition to the \$25 million investment in mental health and technology, which will see an additional \$10 million dedicated to mental health staff, resources, and programs; \$15 million in technology funding to support the procurement of up to 35,000 devices for Ontario's students to support their synchronous learning in-school and beyond; and \$4 million in new funding for cleaning, cleaning protocols, and financial support to hire additional custodial staff.

Ready to Roll: A roadmap for safely returning students to school by bus.



Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (STS) is a non-profit incorporation jointly owned by the London District Catholic School Board and the Thames Valley District School board. The STS service area encompasses more than 7,000 square kilometers, in Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford counties and within the cities of Woodstock, St Thomas and London.

There are 100,000 enrolled students in the service area, 50,000 of which are eligible for bussing based on distance, program, or students who have special needs. STS is responsible for transportation route planning and overseeing the daily provision of service delivered by 7 contractors. The contractors are responsible for fleet ownership and employee management, including having sufficient of bus drivers trained to meet service requirements set by STS.

As a result of COVID 19, STS will make considerable changes to the transportation system in the area so that guidelines released from public health and the Ministry of Education can be met.

The intent of this document is to outline the key operational areas for consideration when planning school bus operations for fall of 2020 and beyond. The document may be periodically amended from time to time, based on updates from the appropriate authorities.

This document was revised on July 31, 2020 to incorporate the latest Guidance document released by the Ministry of Education.

On August 7, 2020, the document was reviewed with members from the Southwest Public Health Unit and the Middlesex London Health Unit. STS would like to thank the participants for their input.

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1. Infographic

Designed to provide an overview of the service parameters for the bussed community, it will be in circulation beginning the week of August 10.


READY TO ROLL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Making the ride a safe space for everyone




1 SHARED SPACES

School buses are shared spaces & strict physical distancing is not possible on board. Students should be encouraged to practice good hand hygiene before boarding & respiratory hygiene while riding the bus. Typically, students will sit two per seat on a full sized bus. Students from the same household must sit together. Seats will be assigned and the seating plan must be followed.




2 BUS STOPS

Community bus stops are designed to pick up multiple students. Bus stops are located at parks, corners and community mailboxes where there is ample space for physical distancing. Bus stops are not supervised. Maintaining physical distancing at bus stops is the responsibility of the students and caregivers.




3 VEHICLE CLEANING

Buses will undergo additional cleaning with disinfectant, normally after the morning and afternoon routes. Between runs, special attention will be paid to the handrails, which students should hold on to when entering and exiting the bus for safety reasons.




4 HAND HYGIENE

Transport Canada recommends students wash their hands before boarding the bus and when they get off the bus. Caregivers should incorporate handwashing into morning and afternoon routines before getting on and off the bus. Caregivers may also want to provide hand sanitizer for their student to use at the bus stop or on board.



5 FACE COVERINGS

While on board the school bus, bus drivers and attendants will be wearing a mask. Masks are mandatory for students in Grades 4 - 12. We encourage students in JK- Grade 3 to wear a face covering. Families should instruct their student how to do so properly. Masks must be on prior to getting on the bus.



6 HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

Students must not board the bus in the morning if they are sick. If a student falls ill during the school day, the school will contact the caregiver to pick the student up as the student will not be allowed on board the bus in the afternoon. Caregivers should have an emergency plan in place.

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO
STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

PREBOARDING HEALTH CHECKS FOR STUDENTS

Transport Canada's report states, in part: All children and drivers who experience symptoms, including mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more), need to self-isolate and stay home. If another member of a child's or driver's household develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is recommended that the child or driver stay home and self-isolate.

Parents/guardians must check their student for symptoms each morning before boarding the school bus.

Bus contractors are responsible for establishing daily health check procedures for Bus Drivers and Bus Attendants prior to starting work.

STAY INFORMED

Student Transportation Services will undertake significant route changes for September in response to COVID 19. Bus routes and school bus stops are under review. Expect changes from prior years. Bus schedules will be posted in the [Parent Portal](#) in late August.

Monitor the [mybigyellowbus](#) website, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and check your emails frequently.

Weekly STS New Updates will be posted on the website using the STS News Update link from the [homepage](#).

Resources

Transport Canada

Report: [Federal Guidance School Bus Operations during COVID 19](#)

Report: [Guidance for transit agencies and passengers in response to COVID 19](#)

Province of Ontario

Report: [Reopening Schools 2020/2021 School Year](#)

SickKids

Report: [Covid 19 Recommendations for School Reopening](#)

Local Public Health Units

[Middlesex London Health Unit](#)

[Southwestern Public Health](#)

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Website: [mybigyellowbus.ca](#)

2. Physical Distancing on the School Bus

School buses have only one entrance - the back door is for emergency use only. Each student will pass within approximately 1 meter of the bus driver while getting on or off the bus. Strict physical distancing of 2 meters is not achievable on a school bus and therefore other strategies to mitigate risk must be used.

The manufacturer's capacity of a full-sized school bus is 72 passengers. This assumes a portion of the riders are in junior grades, sitting three to a seat, and senior grades at two per seat. The bus has two rows with twelve bench seats per row. At two riders per bench seat, a full-sized bus would accommodate 48 passengers. Assuming each rider sat properly in the aisle seat and window seat, approximately 1 foot of space would exist between the riders, depending on their size.

The Ministry of Education's Approach to Reopening Schools in 2020-2021 school year originally suggested that consortia consider "Supporting physical distancing between students on school vehicles by considering planning parameters of one student per seat (unless the students are in the same household)" which would reduce capacity on a full sized school bus by more than 50% in many cases.¹ In the revised document released July 2020, the Ministry acknowledges that in order "to support return to school 5 days per week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity".²

Since the original release at one per seat, other mitigations strategies have been confirmed, such as PPE for the bus driver and masks on students. It is the combination of controls which assist with the higher number of students assigned to the bus.

Action Items:

- The bench seat immediately behind the school bus driver will be left empty.
- The windows on the vehicles will be kept open, weather permitting, to support increased ventilation.
- STS will ensure contractors comply with mandatory mask usage for bus drivers and attendants.
- STS will promote mandatory masks for grades 4 – 12 and encourage JK- grades 3 to wear a mask through public education.
- STS will recognize those who cannot mask because of underlying health conditions.
- STS will ensure hand sanitizer is available on vehicles.
- STS will, wherever possible, not have actual loads which exceed 46 students, or 2 per seat.³

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year>

² <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools>

³ 60% of elementary runs for September already meet this target without registrations being finalized and without remote learners removed.

3. Time on the School Bus

When considering physical distancing constraints, another key consideration for the number of students assigned to a bus run is ride time.

It should be noted that for many urban bus runs, 15 minutes or less is the norm. For specialty program runs or county runs, ride times are typically 30-45 minutes long.

The number of students assigned to a vehicle will be higher in city runs based on density, with mitigation factors being mask use, sanitizer, ventilation, and short trips.

Based on preliminary planning for the 2020-2021 school year, approximations of ride time are:

Ride Time	Percentage of Riders
0 – 15 minutes	62%
16 – 30 minutes	26%
31 – 45 minutes	9%
More than 45 minutes	3%

4. School Bus Stop Locations

Parent/guardians are responsible for student safety to, from and at the school bus stops.

In rural areas, bus stops are typically located at the student's residence and therefore pose limited risk. In urban areas and especially in high-density residential areas, community bus stops serve multiple students, ranging from 5 – 60 assigned students.

As part of its planning process for 2020-2021, STS reviewed community bus stop assignments and adjusted where it was practical to do so. The distance students travel to a bus stop may be longer than in prior years. This provides two benefits: increased physical activity and a shorter ride time on the bus.

Bus stop locations are not supervised. Located at community mailboxes, parks and greenspaces and neighborhood corners, school bus stops are open-air environments. Physical distancing at school bus stops will be a shared responsibility amongst students in the community who use it and caregivers who accompany younger students.

Bus drivers will not perform health checks prior to students getting on the bus. The responsibility for daily health checks rests with the family. If your student is unwell, do not send them to the bus stop.

Action Items:

- STS will promote the need to maintain physical distancing at school bus stops through public education.
- STS will promote that masks should be worn at bus stop locations and/or in place upon bus arrival, prior to getting on the bus.

5. Vehicle Cleanliness Standards

Buses and minivans will undergo additional cleaning measures. The vehicles will be cleaned between morning and afternoon routes. Between runs, high-touch areas like the handrail will be treated with disinfectant.

Students are reminded there is no eating or drinking on the bus and should remove any personal garbage when they get off the bus.

Action Items:

- When possible, the windows of the bus should be kept open to promote air circulation.
- Protocols to be established regarding additional cleaning requirements.
- Disinfectant has been provided for every vehicle in the district.

6. Transporting Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs will require an enhanced level of care in coordinating transportation based on underlying health conditions. Transportation for these students is already highly individualized. Additional communication protocols between the school board and STS have been developed to provide a greater level of care given the uniqueness of returning students with special needs to school safely.

STS will assign siblings from the same household to the specialized vehicle where possible to minimize outside contact. This will be a change in practice from prior years and will be communicated to affected families.

Action Items:

- Specialized vehicles will have reduced capacity. Where possible, students from the same household will ride on the vehicle with siblings.
- Parents/guardians who assist students at the vehicle will be asked to wear a mask.
- Additional PPE may be provided to bus drivers and attendants where circumstances warrant.

7. Parents and Guardians & School Bus Safety

Parents and guardians will play a critical role in keeping the bussed community safe. Transport Canada guidelines establish that:

Parents/guardians complete a health check each morning before putting their student on the bus. Students with new symptoms of COVID 19, including a fever of 37.3 degrees or higher, not be put on the bus and will be sent home from school without transportation if they become symptomatic during the school day.⁴

Further, these guidelines establish that the student should wash their hands each morning before boarding the bus and wash their hands each afternoon upon returning home from their

⁴ <https://www2.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/federal-guidance-school-bus-operations-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>

bus ride. Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide hand sanitizer to older students for their own use and apply hand sanitizer to younger students in the morning before they board the bus.

Using the school bus is an experience beyond the time on the bus. Parents/guardians should actively educate their students with respect to the core activities: getting to and from the school bus stop, getting off the bus at school and riding the bus safely. A series of public education messages for parents/guardians will be developed promoting the key messages that follow.

Action Items:

- STS will promote parent/guardian responsibilities through public education. (See Appendix B – Key Bus Safety Messages for Parents and Guardians)

8. Bus Drivers and Bus Attendants

Personal Protective Equipment has been ordered for contractors to distribute to staff. A summary is provided below:

Bus Drivers and Bus Attendants:

- 2 procedural masks provided per day
- Reusable face shield provided

Bus drivers and attendants who assist students with special transportation needs may require access to gowns, gloves, and goggles in addition to the masks and face shields.

Bus drivers and attendants are employees of the individual bus contractor. The contractors are responsible for establishing policies and procedures to protect the health and safety of their workers and monitoring compliance.

PPE will be distributed to the contractors based on route assignments. The contractors will be responsible for inventory control protocols and developing appropriate employer policies for proper use of PPE, storage, and disposal.

Wherever possible, bus drivers are assigned to the same route each day using the same vehicle. However, substitute drivers are used for absences when required.

Bus drivers play a vital role in the transportation system and the successful return to school by bus is dependent on drivers choosing to return to work. To support their return, STS is providing each bus driver a backpack to carry their PPE, disinfectant and hand sanitizer.

Action Items:

- STS to review contractor policies related to PPE.

9. Bus Registration System

To allow for contact tracing and help manage the number of students assigned to each bus, STS implemented a bus registration system. Only registered students will be assigned to a bus seat.

This approach is consistent with the Ministry of Education guidance document, recognizes that the student data from the school board will be delayed and acknowledges some families may choose to provide their own transportation.

Bus registration closes on August 14. Those who miss the deadline for registration should prepare for a delay in accessing transportation and may be waitlisted in some circumstances.

Bus registration will also allow schools to create seating plans based on the in-school cohorts (grouping) of students and allow for proper arrival and departure protocols to be developed at each school site.

Bus registration has been promoted on the STS website, by direct email, on social media, through paid advertising and radio and TV news spots and through board communications.

10. Bus Seating Plans

Schools will create seating plans with assistance from STS. STS will establish a common seat numbering system. Schools will be provided a template with directions to load by grade (and cohort where possible). Siblings from the same household should be seated together, regardless of grade.

Attendance on the bus will not be taken, but for contact tracing purposes, health units will be provided the bus list with registered students and the school attendance records to cross-reference.

Action Items:

- STS will organize seat numbering systems and templates for schools.
- STS will develop public messaging about seating for information purposes.

11. Behavior on the Bus

Student behavior on the bus is vital to the overall safety of the bus driver and passengers alike. Students are expected to use the same good behavior on the bus as they would in the classroom.

On the bus, students should remain seated, facing forward and in their seats for the entire ride. This is especially critical this year.

Behavioral concerns are subject to Principal action and, as transportation is a privilege, students who are unwilling to behave on board may lose transportation for the safety of other students.

12. Active Travel and School Zone Safety

Ministry guidance documents recommend encouraging active travel to reduce demand on school transportation because of potential capacity issues. Further, more parents than usual may choose to drive their students to school. School zones are already rife with congestion issues in the morning and afternoon and increased private transportation will exacerbate this problem.

To reduce congestion, promote active travel and to assist school communities, STS met with municipal partners throughout the district to arrange community-based central drop off sites

which are a 5-minute walk from school. Parents will be encouraged to use these sites to drop off and pick up their students to divert traffic away from school property.

Walking maps have been generated for school sites which show logical locations to coordinate pick up and drop offs for students who can walk 5 minutes independently to school property.

Community participation is necessary for the above approaches to be successful. Families will have to actively choose to alter their routines instead of dropping off at the front door of the school. These measures, when adopted by parents, will improve school safety for staff, walkers and bussed students alike.

Action Items:

- STS will distribute central drop off sites and walking maps to schools for their use.
- STS will share the locations and maps on its website and through social media.

13. Potential Cases of COVID 19

The local public health units are responsible for contact tracing. STS will follow direction from the health units as required and will communicate with both the school board(s) and bus contractors in a cooperative manner, noting that medical information is both private and sensitive.

When requested by public health, STS can produce the bus registration list, student contact information, length of bus ride and seating plan.

Appendix A – STS Actions in Response to Ministry Guidance Document

Ministry Document (archived version)	STS Actions
Encouraging active forms of travel or private transportation by parents and caregivers, where possible, to ease pressure on transportation demand.	<p>Encouraging private transportation should be primarily messaged from the school boards.</p> <p>STS is coordinating “Drive to 5” locations district-wide, where feasible, to provide to each school and will publish maps for community use. “Walk a Block” sites are also being identified for each school site, where it is safe and practical to do so.</p> <p>STS will, through its partnership in ELMO ASRTS, coordinate messaging about active travel, school zone safety and congestion in school zones.</p>
Reviewing transportation eligibility policies (e.g., walk distances, courtesy rider) to focus available transportation capacity on students who would be unable to reach school without it.	No policy modifications were undertaken.
Surveying parent intentions to assess transportation service needs (e.g., through a transportation opt-in process).	STS released a mandatory bus registration process for September.
Supporting physical distancing between students on school vehicles by considering planning parameters of one student per seat (unless the students are in the same household) and having students from the same classroom cohort sit in the same area, where possible.	<p>This early guideline was replaced to support a return to school 5 days per week.</p> <p>STS will plan to two per seat (plus siblings) on yellow vehicles, where possible to do so.</p> <p>Seating plans will be developed at the school with support from STS.</p>
Where physical distancing is not possible, consider the use of non-medical face coverings or masks for students.	<p>This early guideline has been modified to:</p> <p>Mandatory masks grades 4 – 12 and optional (but recommended) for grades JK – 3.</p> <p>STS will introduce public messaging regarding masks for bus drivers, attendants, and students.</p>
Reviewing planning parameters such as limiting transfers and the number of students at a bus stop, to reduce exposure.	<p>The number of students at a bus stop is difficult to restrict in high-density areas.</p> <p>STS will develop public messaging that maintaining physical distancing at the bus stop location is the responsibility of the students and/or caregivers.</p>
Enhancing cleaning protocols for frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handrails, seatbacks) to at least twice daily.	STS is reviewing cleaning practices with the contractors.
Making alcohol-based hand sanitizer available on vehicles.	Hand sanitizer will be available to students upon request/need from the bus driver.
Assessing whether the use of personal protective equipment (e.g., surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (face shield or goggles)) for school bus drivers, school bus monitors, and student aides is necessary if they are unable to maintain physical distancing when transporting students.	Ministry guidance document sets out requirements.
Supporting accommodations for immunocompromised students, medically vulnerable students, and students with special transportation needs.	<p>STS will take direction from the boards on the development of the Individual Student Transportation Plan for such students.</p> <p>STS will provide recommendations and support to the boards in the development of such plans.</p>

Appendix B – Key Bus Safety Messages for Parents and Guardians

In addition to health checks and masks, STS will develop public messaging for the following topics:

Getting on the Bus in the Morning

Parents/guardians should talk to their student about how to properly wait for and get on the bus in the morning:

- Wait in an orderly, spaced line to get on the bus.
- Do not crowd each other to get on the bus.
- Use the handrail when boarding the bus.
- Fill the bus up from the back to the front. (secondary students)
- JK/SK students should sit near the front of the bus.
- Do not touch the tops of the seats as you walk past them.
- Keep your hands to yourself while on board.
- Sit facing forward, feet flat on the floor.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Arriving at School in the Morning

Parents/guardians should talk to their student about how to get off the bus while arriving at school:

- Students at the front will exit first.
- Stay seated until at least three rows ahead have exited.
- Step into the aisle and keep a distance from the student ahead of you.
- Use the handrail when getting off the bus.
- Follow school arrival protocols, which may include handwashing and/or the use of hand sanitizer.

Leaving School by Bus in the Afternoon

Parents/guardians should talk to their student about getting ready to come home by bus in the afternoon:

- Follow school departure protocols, which may include handwashing and/or the use of hand sanitizer.
- Wait in an orderly line to board the bus.
- Use the handrail when boarding the bus.
- Go directly to your seat.
- Do not touch the tops of other seats as you pass.
- Do not crowd others getting off the bus at the end of the day.
- When you get home, wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer.

