

Re-opening NCDSB Schools 2020-2021

Stakeholder Guidelines & Information

*Learning together.
Striving for excellence.
In service to God and each other.*

Version: September 29, 2020

The entire NCDSB community is excited to welcome our students back to school. We have missed seeing our schools filled with the joy of learning and the deep curiosity that our students bring into our classrooms and playgrounds. These past few months have been challenging for all of us, and we look ahead to the new school year with hope and optimism. We are ready and eager to continue our journey in Catholic Education, as we live out our vision of being faithful and thoughtful learners, working together to transform the world.

Our strategic directions

We will dedicate our efforts and time...

toward responsible stewardship of our God-given gifts and resources.

toward innovative and excellent programs, services, and opportunities that are responsive to our students and families.

toward nurturing a culture of learning by investing in ourselves and one another.

The guiding principles of the Re-opening NCDSB Schools plan:

- to provide a safe and healthy school environment for students, staff, and safeguarding the broader communities in which they live;
- to provide a consistently high-quality Catholic education for every student of the NCDSB;
- to address potential gaps in student learning, mental health and well-being;
- to ensure equity of access for students, staff, and families;
- to be adaptable, flexible, and open to working together to improve outcomes for all.

We hope that the guidelines in this plan provide our families, staff, and stakeholders with confidence to return to school knowing that we are making our very best efforts to ensure the health, wellness, and safety of all. This plan represents our best thinking in this moment. We remain committed to reviewing all aspects of the Re-opening NCDSB Schools Plan regularly and make the necessary adaptations and changes to best respond to the current realities of the global pandemic and the needs of our students and staff.

The pandemic has brought with it complex challenges that continue to require creative solutions. We will engage with our stakeholders regularly to ensure the best possible outcomes for the NCDSB community.

Let us continue to learn together, strive for excellence, and always be in service to God and each other.



Northeastern Catholic District School Board

Re-opening Our Schools

GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Re-opening NCDSB Schools Plan will invite all students to attend school daily, in specific class cohorts. Our school day will closely resemble a normal school day routine, with some modifications to address the health and safety needs of students and staff.

Quick Facts

- No educational excursions, for the immediate future.
- Large gatherings will be avoided. School assemblies and school mass may be facilitated virtually, with students remaining in their class. Our school communities will follow the provincial guidelines relating to the congregation of people (indoor facilities allow for fifty people, while outdoors allows for 100, providing that the appropriate physical distancing requirements are followed).
- Extra-curricular activities will be delayed temporarily, and will proceed at the principals' discretion and upon advice of health officials. Clubs and organized sports may proceed eventually, in accordance with governing principles and participation rules.
- Three PA days are required prior to student entry. All school-based staff, including occasional teachers/staff, will be required to participate in a one day paid health & safety training session.
- Local health units will hire public health nurses to assist schools with health protocols.
- Primary & Junior EQAO Assessments for the 2020-2021 year have been cancelled. The Grade 9 Math EQAO assessment and the Grade 10 Literacy Test (OSSLT) will continue.

***We remain committed to providing high quality Catholic Education
in safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environments.***



HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

The health and well-being of our students and staff is our top priority. It has been the primary lens for all decisions, including but not limited to programming, busing, and school operations.

Part A: Schools

1. Signage and physical building markings will be installed in our schools. Each school is unique and will need to be individually assessed by the school staff. Student and staff movement within the school will be a primary consideration.
2. Teachers and support staff will be responsible for training all students in health and safety practices as part of daily routines.
3. Engineered controls (shields) will be installed at the main office, as required.
4. Classrooms will be reviewed and adaptations made to accommodate the needs and size of the cohort. All unnecessary and/or optional items will be removed to ensure cleaning routines are manageable.
5. Designated doors for entry and exit will be determined by the principal to minimize broad access to the school by students and staff.
6. Movement in hallways will be staggered and follow an appropriate flow of traffic to ensure proper physical distancing and safety.
7. Elementary schools will implement multiple or staggered outdoor play and learning periods throughout the day to ensure distancing can be respected.
8. Teaching staff will consider student seating in classrooms where collaborative tables are present to ensure distancing requirements are respected, to the best of our ability. Students will have designated seats in their classroom. Masks for all students will be encouraged, and mandated for students in grades 4-12.
9. Windows should be opened when and where feasible to allow for fresh air to circulate in classrooms and workspaces.
10. Hand sanitizer will be provided in high traffic areas such as the entry points to the school and classrooms or where hand washing is not easily accessible. Hand washing will be reinforced as the key strategy to use to maintain good hand hygiene.
11. Custodians will ensure a thorough wipe down of all high touch surfaces on a daily basis, and at least two times (mid-day / end of day).
12. Community Use of Schools (facility rentals and/or indoor permits) are temporarily on hold.
13. Visitors, including volunteers and parents/guardians, will not be allowed to enter the school at this time, except in case of emergency. On rare occasions when visitors must enter by pre-arranged appointment, they will be required to wear a mask and adhere to the log-in process for contact tracing purposes.

Part B: Staff

1. All staff are required to engage in a daily self-assessment before reporting to work and anyone feeling unwell or identifying a concern based on their self-assessment should not report to work. Currently, the recommended school screening tool can be found at [COVID-19 school screening tool](#)
2. All staff within schools will be required to wear masks at all times. Reasonable exceptions will apply. Face shields are also required when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

3. Staff meetings will take place either virtually or in a space large enough to ensure appropriate physical distancing.
4. Use of staff work rooms will be largely discouraged. If a staff room must be used, staff will be required to exercise appropriate physical distancing and limit use of staff kitchens to one person at a time. The same general principles will be followed when staff are using photocopiers.
5. Staff who may need a medical accommodation in the workplace are to consult with the Human Resources Department, as soon as possible. Staff who have medical limitations or restrictions preventing them from regular class instruction may be assigned to the virtual program.

Part C: Students

1. All students (or parent/guardians on their behalf) are required to engage in daily self-assessment before reporting to school. Anyone who is unwell or identifying a concern based on their self-assessment should not attend school. The recommended school screening tool can be found at [COVID-19 school screening tool](#).
2. All students from grade 4-12 are required to wear a face mask. Reasonable exceptions will apply. In instances of combined 3-4 classes, all students in the class will be required to wear a face mask.
3. Students in Kindergarten to grade 3 are strongly encouraged to wear masks.
4. Students will be able to remove masks when outdoors within their cohorts, providing that physical distancing requirements can be maintained.
5. Students will store personal belongings in an assigned locker or space. Minimal personal belongings should be brought to school on a daily basis.

Part D: Community Service Providers

1. Pre-arranged appointments must be confirmed in advance with the Principal, except in emergency circumstances.
2. All service providers must wear a mask in all NCDSB facilities.
3. All service providers must report to the main office and complete the necessary logging requirements, including providing a contact number.
4. A designated space will be assigned to the service provider by the Principal/designate. Surfaces must be cleaned by the service provider, should there be multiple student appointments being conducted. Cleaning products will be made available for these purposes.

BASIC HYGIENE AND CLEANING

Part A: Protective Personal Equipment

1. Staff will be required to wear the medical grade face mask provided. Face shields will also be provided and worn as needed/required.
2. Students are required to wear a cloth mask, provided by and cleaned by parents/guardians.
3. Proper hand hygiene will be performed before putting on and after touching or removing a face mask.

Part B: Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

1. Regular handwashing hygiene will be embedded into the daily schedule and will be dictated by events including but not limited to: *start of day, after recess, before eating, after eating, hand related activities.*

2. Hand sanitizers must be available in classrooms, the main office, and other high traffic areas.
3. Students may choose to use personally provided hand sanitizer, providing there is no added perfume or scent. Personal supplies of hand sanitizer should not be shared with others.
4. Students and staff will be encouraged to practice proper respiratory etiquette and to avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth.
5. Signage will be posted at handwashing stations to remind students and staff of appropriate hand washing practices.

Part C: General Cleaning

1. Custodial services will be available at all times that students are present in the school.
2. High traffic areas and high touch points will be cleaned at a minimum twice daily or as required.
3. Items that cannot be easily cleaned in classrooms will be removed and stored. This includes but is not limited to plush toys, dress up clothing, and soft furnishings.
4. All students and staff will be encouraged to promote constant and good cleaning practices.

LUNCH AND FOOD PROGRAMS

Elementary

1. Students will eat in classrooms.
2. Hand washing hygiene will be exercised before eating.
3. Each student will have their own individual meal or snack with no common food items.
4. Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle that is labelled, kept with them during the day and not shared (there will be no active water fountains in use/only water filling stations will be in use).
5. There will be no use of microwaves.
6. Students cannot be involved in the preparation or serving of food.
7. 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 formats are preferred). All bins and containers for food should be disinfected prior to and after each use.
8. Students and staff will minimize waste by participating in a litterless lunch strategy – all containers, storage bags, food waste, and wrappers will return home at the end of the day.
9. Lunch times at elementary may be staggered, as much as possible, to ease any possible congregation of students in common areas and on the playground.
10. Weather permitting, staff may direct students to eat lunch outside.
11. Lunch drop-offs must be restricted or limited.
12. Those students and staff who are reasonably able and willing to eat lunch at home are encouraged to do so for the immediate future.

Secondary

1. The cafeteria will have limited capacity, assigned by the Principal.
2. Modifications to lunch hour will be necessary to avoid large congregations of students in the cafeteria.
3. Alternate spaces will be used for grade specific cohorts to eat lunch, including some classrooms.
4. Regular cafeteria services will not be available immediately. There will be alternate methods of food distribution at some point in the future (grab and go type lunches and snacks).

5. There will be no use of microwaves.
6. Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle and kept with them during the day and not shared (there will be no active water fountains in use/only water filling stations will be in use).
7. Students and staff will minimize waste by participating in a litterless lunch strategy – all containers, storage bags, food waste, and wrappers will return home at the end of the day.
8. Those students and staff who are reasonably able and willing to eat lunch at home are encouraged to do so for the immediate future.

SCHEDULING & DAILY TIMETABLES

ELEMENTARY

Generally, typical school day schedules will apply. The school day will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. Lunch and recess will be from 11:30 – 12:30 each day, and there will be staggered schedules for students to eat and/or play outside.

Students will be encouraged to arrive at school as close as possible to the school start time.

Upon arrival to school each morning, students will immediately proceed to their assigned classroom. There will be designated doors for entry and exit and protocols for student drop-off and pick-up. There will be school-specific plans for student entry and dismissal, based on the individual contexts of every school.

As part of our prioritization of steps to reduce the risk of transmission and to take every reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of students and staff, there will be a temporary suspension of the two traditional recess times at the elementary level until the pandemic is declared over and/or a vaccination is implemented.

This approach is aimed to minimize the number of students entering/exiting the building during a regular school day, as well as trying to stagger cohort access to the hallways and playgrounds. It allows for a safer approach to ensuring appropriate physical distancing requirements as well, and eases the supervision burdens that our schools currently face with our return to school plan during the pandemic.

In Regulation 298 of the *Education Act*, it does state that “There shall be a morning recess and an afternoon recess, each of which shall be not less than ten minutes and not more than fifteen minutes in length, for pupils in the primary and junior divisions.” We believe that our approach will address multiple concerns we are facing with safety, supervision, and mental health requirements for our students. We are not eliminating outdoor play, but rather are looking at alternate ways to engage our learners outdoors in the safest way possible.

Outdoor play and learning will be delivered by the classroom teacher at staggered times throughout the school day. In this way, students will be able to remove their face masks while outdoors, which we believe is an important aspect of personal health and well-being for students and staff.

SECONDARY

Students will participate in a two-day cycle, designed to minimize student movement in the school and the indirect/direct number of contacts.

Day 1: Morning – Period 1 (150 minutes)
Afternoon – Period 3 (150 minutes)

Day 2: Morning – Period 2 (150 minutes)
Afternoon – Period 4 (150 minutes)

Upon arrival, students will immediately proceed to their assigned classroom. There can be no large congregation of students in the cafeteria, the common area, or the library.

The school day will begin at 9:00 a.m.

There will be a one-hour lunch break from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

The school day will end at 3:00 p.m.

CONFIRMATION OF ATTENDANCE: Conventional Learning or Virtual Program

Families have made the decision to send their child back to school to a conventional classroom or to enroll their child in a virtual learning program. For those families who have opted into the virtual program, there will be designated times throughout the school year for a child to return to the classroom setting. The same is true for students in a conventional classroom who wish to opt into the virtual program. The transition dates are as follows:

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Monday, November 9, 2020

Monday, February 1, 2021

Monday, March 22, 2021

All requests must be made to the respective School Principal at least one week in advance of these designated dates. This is necessary to ensure that the schools can adequately and properly adjust classroom structures and cohort groupings.

STUDENTS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS

Some students will not be able to take part in the in-person component of returning to school due to their chronic health conditions. For this group of students, distance learning solutions may be the best option at this time.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to speak with their health care provider(s) to determine the best mode of delivery for those students who are medically fragile, immune compromised or have chronic or persistent health conditions.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to work in partnership with school personnel, as required, to ensure that a student's physical health needs are considered as part of the return to school plan during the COVID pandemic.

TEACHING & LEARNING

Parents will have the option to opt-out of in-class learning for their children. In these instances, there will be one pre-determined time period during the school year for students to transition between the in-class and virtual learning models. This time will be consistent with mid-term reporting in November, the beginning of the second semester/term, and/or April 2021.

The Ministry of Education has released Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 164: *Requirements for Remote Learning*.

The full document can be found by using this link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/164.html>

This PPM outlines the specific details and expectations for remote learning programs. The NCDSB will abide by all requirements of the PPM.

Students participating in virtual programs will be provided with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning each day, in accordance with the provision of PPM 164: *Requirements for Remote Learning*. Students will have at least one teacher assigned to support the virtual classrooms. There will be an expectation that teachers provide live synchronous instruction online, every day.

At Elementary, virtual programs will have students from across the district participating in grade specific, virtual classes facilitated by a teacher.

At Secondary, virtual programs based on student course selections will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Virtual learning options may include remote instruction by a certified NCDSB teacher, eLearning courses delivered by Ontario certified teachers in other school boards, or eLearning courses delivered through the Independent Learning Centre managed by TVOntario.

For in-class learning, teachers will be responsible to deliver the Ontario Curriculum as normally expected. Some adaptations will be required to ensure the ongoing health and safety of students. Those include, but are not limited to the following:

Music

There will be no instrumental music instruction at this time. As well, under the guidance of public health officials, our students will not participate in any singing. All students will continue to participate in daily opening exercises, respecting the national anthem by standing and listening attentively.

Health & Physical Education

The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) is developing resources for educator use to support the continuation of the Ontario curriculum adhering to public health safety protocols.

As much as possible, physical activities relating to the Active Living and Movement competency strands will be addressed outside.

Gymnasiums should only be used where physical distancing measures can be followed.

Cleaning protocols for equipment must be considered. Shared equipment must be disinfected regularly and students will be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.

Mathematics

The Revised Mathematics Curriculum (2020) will be implemented in all elementary schools.

Family Studies and Technological Studies

The Family Studies program offered to intermediate students will be suspended. The Technological Studies program may be offered to students in schools with direct access to a shop facility. Access to the shop would only be permitted if appropriate physical distancing can be maintained and all equipment can be cleaned between uses by different student cohorts.

Visual Arts

Visual Arts will continue to be delivered to students, however, care will be taken to plan lessons and activities that do not require the sharing of materials. Paint brushes, colouring pencils, markers, scissors, and other tools or supplies will need to be made available to each student for individual use, should they be required to support the lesson.

VISITORS

In an effort to minimize risk to students and staff, there will be new restrictions on visitors to our schools. Only essential visitors will be allowed to enter the school, and may only do so by making a pre-arranged appointment.

Parents/guardians will not be allowed to enter schools at this time, except in case of emergency.

Visits to ensure school safety, such as inspections by fire prevention officers or by public health officials will continue. Third-party service providers to students will be permitted entry only by pre-arranged appointment, and they will be required to self-screen and wear a face mask while on school premises.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Blackboard Connect will be used as a primary communication tool from the Board Office and local school communities (phone and email messenger).

The Board website at www.ncdsb.on.ca will serve as the online platform for all related information, resources, and updates.

Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) will be used as an additional communication tool to highlight information shared on the Board website.

TRANSPORTATION

All bus drivers will be provided with PPE by bus operators.

All students (Kindergarten to Grade 12) are required to wear masks while riding a school bus. Bus drivers will have a small supply of masks to provide to students as required.

Regular transportation services will proceed, with some possible modifications to routes and cohorts. There will be assigned seating for all students, and students residing at the same address will be required to sit in a seat together.

We already know that there are driver shortages and bus delays for the start of school. Therefore, it is **very important** that all families subscribe to the [Netribus](#) portal in order to receive important notifications from North East Tri Board Student Transportation. By subscribing, families receive an email advising them of route delays and cancellations in real-time.

Families are strongly encouraged to make their own arrangements for transporting their child to and from school, wherever possible, and/or use active transportations as much as possible (walking or cycling, as examples).

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

During the first three professional activities of the year, all staff will participate in a range of training sessions including but not limited to all health & safety protocols, addressing student mental health needs, remote learning strategies, and all related facility training to ensure a safe reopening of school for students.

Public Health Ontario training videos:

[Handwashing](#)

[Hand Rub](#)

[Putting on gloves](#)

[Removing gloves](#)

[Putting on full PPE](#)

[Putting on mask and eye protection](#)

Facility Training (flow of traffic, logging access & movement, staggered schedules).

Isolation Protocol Training (what to do in case of student/staff illness during the school day).

TRACKING & MONITORING

Class lists will be maintained by the principal and/or designate. Every teacher will have up to date access to class lists.

Teachers will be required to keep a log of student access to any space in the school other than their assigned classroom. This includes logging visits to the washroom, resource rooms, gymnasiums, and student services spaces in the school.

All visitors will be expected to register at the school office and provide their contact information for possible contact tracing purposes by public health officials.

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS & SERVICES

The ordered school closure and distance learning strategy impacted our students and staff in different ways. We know that many students found this experience to be challenging in terms of their mental health and well-being.

All school based staff will participate in training modules available through School Mental Health Ontario. All mental health related support staff will be available to our students throughout the return to school process.

Parents/guardians with specific concerns in this regard, are encouraged to contact the school principal to discuss issues and solutions for their child's mental health and well-being.

Additional resources are available to our students and their families on our board website:

<https://www.ncdsb.on.ca/mental-health-resources.php>

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION (COOP) & ONTARIO YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (OYAP)

All COOP and OYAP students will attend work placements, providing the appropriate health & safety measures are in place by the site employer.

Students will also complete a pre-placement preparation module that includes COVID-19 preparedness in the workplace.

Any required sector specific training certification will be provided prior to the work placement for OYAP students.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

The NCDSB continues to work closely with our child care providers to ensure that child care and before & after school programs remain available in designated schools. Families seeking child care services are encouraged to contact the provider directly to discuss availability of such programming.

SCREENING PRACTICES

All students and staff must complete a COVID-19 self-assessment each day. There will be signs posted at entrances to the school/facilities to remind students, staff, parents/caregivers, and essential visitors of screening requirements.

Effective September 15, 2020 the COVID-19 School Screening Tool is available for use. The tool can be accessed by visiting [COVID-19 school screening tool](#).

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 center.

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.

MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOLS

The Ministry of Education has released an operational guidance document for COVID-19 management in schools. The document provides insight into the strategies that will be implemented for a confirmed COVID-19 case in the school. You can view the full document here: [Operational guidance: COVID-19 management in schools](#). There is excellent information available to help all of us better understand the processes that will be used to support the safe reopening of schools.

Every school will have a designated isolation room that will be used as a safe place for sick or symptomatic students to stay until an adult can pick up the student from school. It is critical that parents/guardians can be reached during the school day and that arrangements can be made in these instances for the child be picked up and brought home. There are specific protocols and expectations for staff and parents/guardians to follow in all such situations.

The following provides a general overview of the protocol that will be followed in our schools. The process aligns with the algorithms created by the Porcupine and Timiskaming Health Units. It is subject to change, pending further provincial direction.

Students Presenting with Covid-19 Symptoms During the School Day

An NCDSB staff member will alert the Principal/Vice-Principal/Designate if they suspect a student may be ill.

The student will put on a face mask immediately, if not already in place.

The student shall be isolated in a designated space of the school.

The Principal and/or designate will contact the parents and/or emergency contact to arrange for the student to be picked up immediately from school. Siblings and household members should be assessed for symptoms and sent home if symptomatic.

The adult supervising the student will sanitize their hands using the sanitizer, put on a gown, mask, eye protection, and gloves when entering the isolation space to attend to the student.

The principal and/or designate will advise the parent/guardian to contact an assessment centre or their healthcare provider.

The Principal will complete the necessary reporting requirements.

The isolation room will be cleaned after each use, and all surfaces within a 2 meter radius of the child's desk must be cleaned by the custodian. If required, soft materials will be stored in a plastic bag for one week.

The Principal should contact the local health unit if:

- i) They have concerns about student related absences or attendance concerns within their school community;
- ii) They have questions about management of individuals with symptoms;
- iii) There are concerns about multiple ill individuals in a cohort;
- iv) They are of the opinion that an individual is a high risk COVID-19.

Staff Presenting with Covid-19 Symptoms During the School Day

The staff member is to go home immediately and contact an assessment centre or their healthcare provider.

Contract Tracing

In instances where a person tests positive for COVID-19, the local health unit will initiate a contact tracing process and will inform the appropriate contact the health unit deems appropriate of the next steps for symptom management, possible isolation, and/or testing requirements. All communication to the school community will be facilitated by the local health unit in partnership with the Principals.

STUDENT RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER ILLNESS

The public health units have created excellent resources that detail the process to follow when a person exhibits symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Those resources can be accessed on the webpages of the respective health units and/or in the Health Units section of the Board's website.

Effective immediately, there is also a requirement for an attestation form to be completed by the parent/guardian every time a student returns to school from illness.

We recognize that this is a new expectation for our families, but it is a necessary step to help protect the health and safety of all members of our school communities.

[NCDSB Student Return to School Attestation Form](#)

SCHOOL CLOSURE PROTOCOL

The local public health unit:

- is responsible for determining if an outbreak exists, declaring an outbreak, and providing direction on outbreak control measures to be implemented.
- will assist in determining which cohort(s) may be sent home or if a partial or full school closure is required based on the scope of the outbreak.
- will work with the school to determine epidemiological links (for example, cases in the same class, cases that are part of the child care cohort, cases that have assigned bus seats in close proximity to each other).
- will determine which cohorts are high risk contacts requiring isolation.

If the local public health unit advises that a class, cohort or a school should be closed for a period of time, families, students and staff will be notified accordingly.

Notices of any closures will be posted on the school board website within the COVID-19 advisory section.

REOPENING SCHOOLS AFTER CLOSURE

All reopening of NCDSB schools will be in accordance with the direction provided by public health officials.

CLOSING NOTE:

This plan is subject to change based on the advice of public health officials and all related regulations or expectations of the Ministry of Education.

Version: September 29, 2020