

## Letter from Director – July 30, 2020

Dear families,

Earlier today, the Minister of Education announced that **elementary schools** will open for conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week. This means students in full cohorts will be attending. **Secondary schools** will open on an adapted model, with class cohorts of approximately 15 students, on alternating schedules with at least 50 per cent of in-class instructional days.

Our Board has been working on developing plans to support the safe reopening of schools for our students and staff members. We appreciate that these are uncertain times and you will have questions and concerns about the process for reopening. We will continue to prioritize health and safety and take measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 through the reopening of schools. Today, we are sharing with you additional details about our planning and will continue to provide you with updates as they become available. The full details of this update are available on the [Board's website](#), and we have also included some information in this email.

### **Teaching and Curriculum**

Instruction will be provided in all subject areas as outlined in the [Ontario Curriculum](#). As a result of health and safety measures, some of our curriculum delivery may be modified to meet the needs of our students and staff members. These changes are based on guidelines and advice from Public Health, the provincial Ministry of Education and our goal of offering high-quality public education for all. For more subject-specific information about modifications, including for elementary and secondary schools, please visit the [Board's website](#).

### **School Schedules and Timetables**

In **elementary school**, the Ministry of Education has indicated that elementary students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 will attend school five days per week for the full day of learning in one cohort. More information on timetabling will be available to families in the near future as details are finalized. In addition, families can also make the decision to send their child to school or engage in remote online learning. Online learning will be available for students who do not return to school physically. Please note that, in order to maintain safety and appropriate cohorts, children whose families opt for online learning in September may be required to wait for a specific entry point (e.g., an entire term) to return to in-person learning at school.

In **secondary school**, as directed by the Ministry of Education, secondary schools in York Region will open using an Adaptive Model to support student learning. In this model, all in person face-to-face classes will have a cohort limit of approximately 15 students at one time. Students physically attend school on alternating schedules, which may mean attending on alternate days for at least 50 per cent of the instructional day(s). Secondary school students in this adapted model receive an opportunity for both synchronous and asynchronous learning during the school day. York Region District School Board staff are currently reviewing the Ministry announcement and guidance documents to finalize its plans for the adaptive model in secondary schools and will provide additional information as it becomes available. Online learning will be available for students who do not return to school physically. Please note that, in order to maintain safety and appropriate cohorts, children whose families opt for

online learning in September may be required to wait for a specific entry point (e.g., an entire semester) to return to in-person learning at school.

### **Pre-Registration Form**

Next week, you will receive a pre-registration form from YRDSB asking families to indicate their intention for students to participate in person at school or through remote learning. For those eligible for transportation, the form will also include the ability to opt-out of this service. Where possible, parents are asked to arrange their own transportation to and from school for their children.

### **Health and Safety Protocols**

We continue to work closely with public health authorities and follow their direction and advice. The following measures will be in place in our schools to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and well-being of our students, staff members and families. For additional details, please visit the [Board's website](#):

- **Face coverings (PPE)** - Parents/guardians will be expected to provide their child with a personal face covering (non-medical mask) to wear at school to reduce the spread of their own respiratory droplets to protect others. In Grades 4 to 12, students will wear non-medical or cloth masks while in school. In Kindergarten to Grade 3 non-medical or cloth masks are strongly encouraged for students.
- **Self-assessment** - On a daily basis, parents/guardians of students under 18 and students over 18 are responsible to review and adhere to the [COVID-19 self-assessment instructions that will be provided by York Region Public Health](#). Any student experiencing COVID-19 symptoms **is required** to remain home.
- **Hand washing and sanitizing** - A hand sanitizing station will be placed in the front lobby of the school and in classrooms. Students are not encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer. Students and staff members will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer regularly, including when they enter the classroom, before and after lunch and recess, after using the washroom or touching shared objects or common touch spots.
- **Cleaning and disinfection** - Additional cleaning measures will be put in place in schools, including twice-daily cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces, in line with public health guidelines.
- **Movement around the school** - Directional signs and stickers will be installed throughout the schools to minimize close contact between students.
- **Visitors** - Until further notice, visitor(s) are not to enter the school during hours of operation unless identified through a prearranged exception. If you need to attend the school, please contact the principal to make arrangements. Accommodations will be made in emergency situations. All visitors must comply with safety protocols.
- **Lunch** - Please ensure your child brings their lunch and snacks required for their day at school. Lunch drop-offs will not be available, including access to lunch delivery services. Until further notice, secondary school cafeterias will be closed and food services will not be provided.
- **Water fountains** - Students are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles and to use the fill stations in schools.
- **Breakfast, snack and milk programs** - These nutrition programs will continue with enhanced safety protocols.
- **Returning school equipment** - Students who have borrowed learning resources such as textbooks are asked to return them to the school as early as possible in the school

year. Students who borrowed technology devices for remote learning may hold them until the protocol for their return is announced.

- **Lockers** - Until further notice, the use of lockers will not be permitted. Use of hooks and cubbies in elementary schools is permitted.
- **Extra-curricular activities and field trips** - Until further notice, extra-curricular activities (such as sports and clubs) and field trips are cancelled.
- **Kindergarten** - More information is available on the Board's website.
- **Guidance (secondary)** - Meetings with guidance will continue virtually where possible.

## **Special Education**

In partnership with families, schools will be working alongside the Board's Student Services department and Regulated Health Professionals to plan for a safe return to school and the provision of safe and appropriate support for students with special education needs. This will be accomplished through collaboration and consultation between schools and families. More information regarding Special Education is available on the [Board's website](#).

## **Transportation (Busing and Taxi Service)**

Transportation services will continue with modified ridership and safety and cleaning protocols. Those eligible for transportation may opt-out of transportation services through the reopening online form provided to families next week. More information on routes, bus stops and timing will be available prior to the school year start. You may see some frequently asked questions about transportation on the [Board's website](#).

We know that families may have questions beyond the information in this letter and on our website. We will continue to provide updates and additional resources as information becomes available. As always, we will maintain student and staff safety at the forefront of our planning and decision making. Next week, you will receive information about completing the return to school forms, we hope you take the time to complete it so that we can tailor services in accordance with your plans.

Please know that while this school year may look different in many ways, our commitment to supporting student well-being, learning and achievement has not changed, and we look forward to supporting your child's transition back to school and learning, and to reconnecting with our students and families.