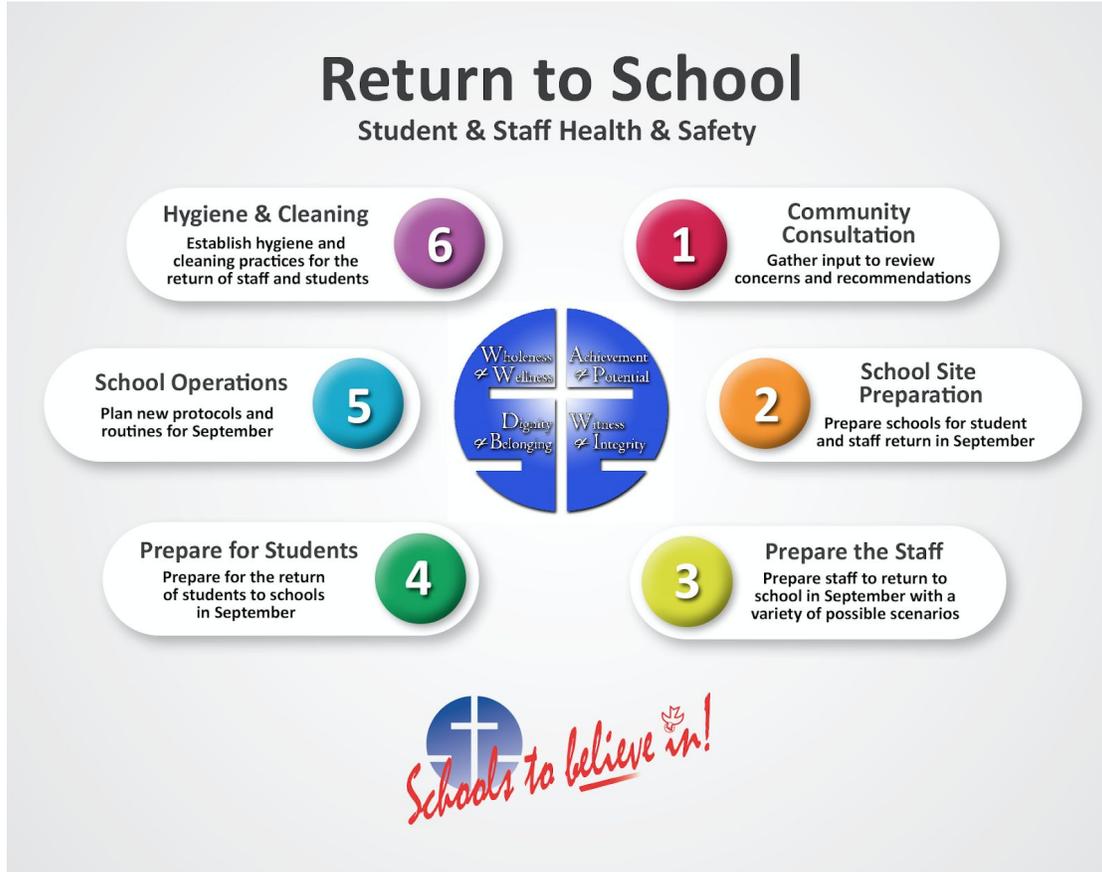


Renfrew County Catholic District School Board



A Plan To Safely Reopen Our Schools

Current as of September 1st, 2020

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Executive Summary

The RCCDSB's Vision Statement aspires to have "safe school environments characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy." As we slowly begin to emerge from the school and workplace closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we want our schools to reopen to serve our students and our communities. While we must address the realities of the current environment, we also want to ensure our students' mental health and well-being is attended to. As the Updated July 29th [Sick Kids recommendations](#) suggest, COVID-19 related risks to students need to be weighed against other risk factors, including mental health. Schools serve an essential role in allowing students to connect with peers and with educators. We know that relationships with other students and with staff are important for each student to meet with success. The experts at CHEO have pointed out that we need to balance the possible risk of exposure to COVID19 with the effects of continued isolation and the lack of social interaction. On July 30, 2020, the government of Ontario announced that we will have a full return to schools with enhanced safety measures put in place. The Ministry of Education released its [Approach to Re-opening Schools for the 2020-21 School Year](#) and also released on July 30th its [Guide to Re-opening Ontario's Schools](#). In the coming days, the Board will be reviewing and adjusting the plans contained in this document in light of the July 30th Guide to ensure alignment with provincial expectations and guidance.

Parents need to have some predictability and routine in their family life so that they can arrange childcare, home life, and work commitments while knowing that their child is receiving academic instruction in a safe environment. Given the pandemic situation, flexibility, patience, calm and understanding will be needed as we work out solutions to the various challenges with a return to school.

This document provides a framework for how the Renfrew County Catholic School Board plans to reopen schools to students and staff. The document outlines six components that we are addressing to reopen schools. These components include preparing the school sites, preparing the staff, preparing for individual student needs, creating a physical distance plan, preparing for access and cleaning needs, and open communication with our communities. This document is intended to be an operational guide, and the final version will be available publicly on our Board website, along with shorter summaries including Student, Parent, and Staff FAQs.

Acknowledgment

The Board is grateful to the Ottawa Catholic School Board for sharing this template and granting permission to adapt it for our use.

The Guiding Principles for our Return to School include:

- 1 Keep Students and Staff safe and healthy
- 2 Provide Continuity of Learning: In-Person or Distance Learning or Hybrid combination
- 3 Be Flexible to address access and equity needs of each student

The operations outlined in this document are based on the most recent advice from Public Health officials. Our blueprint for Return to School is flexible, recognizing that given the unprecedented times, we do not have a clear path to follow. Decisions will require us to be innovative, while at the same time, knowing that this is a slow return to what used to be considered as normal, not a full reset back to where we were prior to the last day of in-person classes on March 13th. Our plan will be adjusted based on guidance from the Ministry of Education, the provincial Chief Medical Officer, and directions from The Renfrew County District Health Unit (RCDHU). The recommendations in this plan will change over time, based on the community feedback that we receive, the guidelines that will be coming from the Ministry of Education, and based on current and updated information on the Coronavirus19 in our community.

The initial return to in-person instruction will require limits on the number of student contacts on the bus, in each class and the number of student direct and indirect contacts in the school. The recommended number of contacts in the province's [Guide to Re-opening Plan](#), for example, for secondary students is 100.

The information contained in this DRAFT plan is subject to change at any time based on the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education and/or from the guidance provided by local or provincial Public Health department staff. We accept that we don't have all of the answers, that many decisions will be made centrally and that disruption is a reality as we try to support our students' needs during this pandemic.



Communicate with Stakeholders

School Principals and the Board will communicate regularly with students and their parents or guardians, particularly following any changes in the local COVID 19 data.

We may need to revisit the staffing process. This will be dependent on enrolment and whether parents choose to send their child to school in September. Partnering with unions will be essential. Our many education partners need to be part of the process of creating viable operational solutions. Flexibility and innovation will be required to come up with unique solutions as we work together through the pandemic.

Parents considering registering their child should be informed that we will be flexible in terms of options for the fall, including a combination of in-person, distance learning, and hybrid models based on the best advice from Public Health. At the same time, parents will be advised of key dates when they can choose to re-enter face-to-face learning from remote or vice versa. The first such date for elementary pupils will be November 16th and for secondary students, February 2nd, 2021.

We recognize that there will be questions from our various union and association partners. We will not return to the status quo system, so we will need to work together to find solutions that will serve our students while addressing the collective agreements.

Our parent community will have many unique family situations and work commitments that they need to resolve. This plan will not be able to meet every unique situation. We will work to find creative solutions designed to help as many families as possible, so they can manage their competing demands of work, school and family needs.

We also know that some of our students with special needs will continue to face challenges and obstacles to learning during a pandemic, given the realities of physical distance requirements. We will work with each family to try and find a solution that meets their child's needs while keeping them, and others at the school safe. The health and safety of our staff and students must be at the centre from which all decisions emanate.

The following stakeholders were initially approached to provide feedback on this plan on June 22nd, 2020:

RCCDSB Trustees, Student Trustees and Senior Administration, Diocese of Pembroke, PIC, SEAC, CMSM, IEAC, Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, County of Renfrew (for Daycare Guidance Document), RCDHU, OECTA, CUPE, COPE, CPCO, Non-union staff, RCJTC, RCCDSB Joint Health and Safety Committee.

2

School Site Preparation

Prepare schools for student and staff return in September

Prepare the School Site

Schools need to be safe sites for staff and students. Our schools have been closed to students since March 13th. Maintenance and inspections have taken place during the school closure period. A walkthrough of an elementary and secondary school by RCDHU and RCCDSB staff were conducted on August 11th. The RCDHU staff created a checklist to be used by all schools to ensure infection control methods are implemented.

Prior to a return to school, a health and safety committee inspection was completed at each school.

Background Information

We know that COVID-19 can be spread through direct contact with droplets spread by coughing, and sneezing and usually occurs within about six feet of the person that is infected. Infected droplets on surfaces can be spread by someone touching the droplets and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. It is believed that the droplets can live a number of hours to days depending on the surface. Cleaning and disinfecting with soap and water and disinfectants will typically eliminate the risk of spread.

School Signage and Markings

Wherever lines of unsupervised students from more than one cohort may be expected to occur inside or outside of the school, tape, pylons, or floor/wall markings are placed to assist students in keeping physical distances from one another. This could be for locations such as entrances to classrooms, school entrances and exits, washrooms, large spaces such as the learning commons, and meeting spaces such as the main office, principal or vice-principal offices, outside elevators, and in the resource room. Education and awareness need to be a big part of this and having students take some responsibility for respecting distancing.

Playgrounds

The Province of Ontario moved to “Stage 3” of re-opening in Renfrew County on July 17th. As a result, playgrounds could re-open. Staff may choose to use pylons or other unique markings to assist cohorts of students in maintaining physical distances from one another in the yard.

Personal Protective Equipment

Each school will be provided with a minimum of 2 medical grade masks for each staff member; a box of medical grade masks for students who may exhibit signs of illness such as coughing, a box of disposable gloves, isolation gowns, face shields for those who enter the isolation room. Students in grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth masks. These masks are the responsibility of children and parents to ensure they have them every day and laundered appropriately. Identifying features, such as the child’s name clearly displayed on the mask, is

encouraged. Usage is required in common areas such as hallways and indoors wherever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Public health officials strongly encourage mask use for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 while indoors, if tolerated.

A barrier for reception desk

Where practical, a barrier, ie., sheet of portable Plexiglass, is placed in areas where regular public contact may take place such as at the front reception area of the main office.

One Way Directional Signage

Where practical, separation markers are placed to signal one-way direction within the school. Where possible, this will assist in maintaining physical distances for everyone in the school.

Thermal thermometer

One thermal thermometer is provided to each school. School staff will not normally be involved in the direct screening of students for fever.

Hand Sanitizer and Disinfectant Wipes

Hand sanitizer will be placed at the front entrance(s) of every school and in every classroom. Should hand sanitizing supplies become limited, hand sanitizer will be placed at the front entrance of every school and in every classroom where other hand washing facilities (sinks) are not readily available. Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes will also be placed in high touch areas (such as photocopier, laminator, etc.).

Classes with Sinks and Running Water

Classrooms with running water have received a supply of hand soap and paper towels.

Work/Prep Rooms

Educator work rooms are reconfigured to allow for physical distancing.

Ventilation

Cleaning and disinfecting will take place away from students. Bringing more outdoor air into the school is encouraged through opening windows, running exhaust fans longer and/or adjusting air dampers. Additional Ministry funding for HVAC systems is being used to accelerate scheduled inspections for maintenance, repairs and adjustments.

Community Use of Schools

Indoor permits will continue to be on hold for the use of any classroom space. The goal is to limit nonessential visitors to the school. Where the use of non-classroom space is allowed, the use should be staggered to properly provide time between bookings and time to clean and disinfect between different user groups.

Before and After School Programs

In schools where space permits, third party providers are pursuing licensing of space that would not be a shared space to use for Before and After School Daycare cohorts instead of using shared school space. This will help to maintain the integrity of both daycare and school cohorts. It will also assist with cleaning protocols.

Outdoor space for Recess

Recess may be staggered based on the size of the outdoor space and the availability of supervisors. Where possible, areas should be designated outdoors for each class to minimize contact with other students from outside the instructional cohort. Consideration should be given to the painting of markings/pylons or other unique markings on the school yard to indicate appropriate physical distances between cohorts where needed. Each Principal will develop a recess schedule and routine that allows for students to maintain appropriate physical distancing while still having an opportunity for fresh air and physical activity. One consideration is to build recess into the instructional period and have each teacher scheduled to take their class outdoors at specific times of the day.

Isolation Room/Area

Each school will designate an isolation room/area. If a student becomes ill at school the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. The student will be isolated with supervision in a designated health room/area until pick-up can be arranged. An isolation kit (medical mask, hand sanitizer and tissues) will be provided for the individual who is ill. The staff member attending to the ill child will also receive a kit consisting of a medical mask, eye protection, gloves and gown. Dispose of used PPE in the plastic ziplock baggie in which it was stored.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit Walkthrough

On August 11th, members of the RCDHU (Healthy Schools Coordinator, Inspector and Infection Prevention and Control Nurse), along with our Health and Safety and Plant Officers, School Principals and Supervisory Officers will conduct a walkthrough of two schools (SJHS and OLF). The RCDHU staff will provide us with a checklist designed to assist operations for September school startup. The follow up will be shared with all principals.

Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

A safety checklist will be provided to each site to ensure the site is prepared for occupancy. Here is a [Covid-19 Inspection Checklist](#) for use by the JHSC. In the interests of staff safety, the Board is currently reviewing a list of questions from the Joint Health and Safety Committee following its July 13th meeting. It is noted that the Ministry convened a call on July 20th to discuss the process for school boards to obtain additional PPE and cleaning supplies to support school start-up this fall. We also note at this time that central and provincial direction may be required on a number of items related to PPE. Readiness walkthroughs and inspections were conducted in all schools between August 27th and 29th and feedback from these inspections is further informing school planning. The Board's Joint Health and Safety Committee also met on August 31st to review this feedback, along with the feedback from the Ministry of Labour consultation held on August 27th.

3

Prepare the Staff

Prepare staff to return to school in September with a variety of possible scenarios

Prepare the Staff

Staff Accommodations

Accommodations may need to be determined for staff with heightened risk from COVID19 based on their health conditions. HR staff should follow their normal accommodation process when determining reasonable accommodations based on each employee's unique limitations and restrictions. All RCCDSB employees are asked to watch for correspondence from the Human Resources department on this issue.

The normal HR medical accommodation process will take place for staff that indicate that they are not able to physically be present at school in the presence of students. Where possible and if appropriate, staff with medical conditions preventing them from their regular working duties should contact the Human Resources department ASAP. Human resources will communicate with all staff on accommodations needs following the public release of this plan.

Team Approach

School-based solutions are needed to support the various staff and student family and health challenges. Staff are encouraged to be flexible and create teams to quickly support one another and respond to the challenges that arise.

Personal Protective Equipment

The provincial CMOH, the Ministry of Education and the RCDHU have provides advice and training on donning, and doffing personal protective equipment, infection control risk assessment and requirements for staff. The Board will provide up to two medical grade masks daily for each employee when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Some staff, such as educational assistants, or others that work with students with unique needs, may require additional protective equipment such as gloves and face shields based on risk assessments. The special education department staff in consultation with RCDHU will make this determination. Face shields may be appropriate for staff, especially those that work with students that have difficulty with fluids and drool, spit, or have excessive saliva.

Outbreaks

The Board has begun discussions with the RCDHU on outbreak management which will be addressed on an ongoing basis. There is always the possibility of a return to distance learning if an outbreak forces a classroom or a school to be closed for a lengthy period of time. In preparation for continuity of learning, all staff will be advised on District level tools that are available for appropriate distance learning to take place. Time for professional development will be provided to staff during the first three PA days to ensure all teachers have a blended learning classroom ready for September 8, 2020.

On August 27th, the Province released its outbreak protocol called [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#). Roles, responsibilities, reporting and communication will be reviewed on the professional activity day, Sept. 2nd.

Equity considerations

Staff need to spend time preparing for differentiated supports for students with special needs and those learners that require additional support. Staff must also recognize the challenges for distance learning in some homes, where home support is not always possible for a variety of reasons. There is a need for a school-wide approach to understanding and supporting solutions to address the disproportionate impact of distance learning on marginalized groups in the school. Challenges exist, and collectively we will provide the necessary resources to each student to assist them to reach their potential. For example, RCCDSB has made a significant investment into Chromebooks & windows based devices to allow for a 1:1 ratio for students from grade 4 to 12. This will allow students to transition more smoothly from face to face learning to distance learning. This investment will also eliminate the need for students in grades 4 through 12 to share devices.

Hygiene Instruction

Upon return to in-person classes, educators will instruct students on proper hygiene practices. Hygiene routines will be reinforced on a regular basis. Each class will have information to teach and reinforce the importance of handwashing, avoiding touching one's face/eyes/nose/mouth, and the importance of coughing and sneezing into one's sleeve if a tissue is not available. Educators will be provided with grade appropriate Hygiene lessons.

Staff Gatherings

Staff should promote physical distancing amongst one another as role models for students.

Staff Family Considerations

If the selected model of instruction changes due to an outbreak, there could be child care challenges for staff and/or if childcare has not opened up at the same time as schools have opened up. The earlier that staff are made aware of the likely format for distance and in-person learning, the more time they will have to make arrangements to allow them to be present for their students as needed at school.

Social Emotional Learning

Each staff member will receive units of instruction that foster social emotional learning and that will assist all students with coping skills. This will occur during the 3 professional activity days that begin the school year.

School and Board level Support

Each Principal will arrange for additional support for students who require mental health supports. Board clinical staff will continue to have check-ins with students and families that would benefit from their support.

Outdoor and non-classroom space

Staff will be encouraged to take advantage of the use of outdoor space for instruction where feasible. The use of outdoor space to minimize interactions with other classes during travel times and to ensure

that students maintain physical distance from other cohorts when outdoors will be coordinated by principals.

Sharing of Resources

Staff will be asked to limit student sharing of materials and resources in class. Adequate supplies for instructional units should be provided to each student, and where it is not practical to give each student their own resources then the shared equipment should be disinfected between use. Digital resources for reading, math, science, social studies, history and geography, as well as some related hard copy resources such as “Units of Study for Writing” have been purchased centrally to assist with limited student and staff sharing of resources. These resources will be shared with teachers on the Sept. 3rd PA Day and throughout the fall.

Staff Room Access

Educators may access the staffroom and other common areas but should maintain physical distance from colleagues, and when that is not possible, they should ensure that they are wearing a mask. Staff should not share items such as coffee mugs and utensils and instead should bring their own items to and from school each day. Staff should use available hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to clean common handles.

Photocopiers

Staff can still use the photocopier; however, they are encouraged to share work digitally where possible. If a photocopier must be used, staff should practice hand hygiene before and after photocopying and wipe clean the buttons they touch on the copier after use. Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes will be available.

Staff – Health and Safety Guidelines

Guidelines for all staff to follow when returning to work during COVID-19 can be [found here](#) (General Guidelines for Employees during Covid-19). These guidelines include advice from RCDHU on the proper use and care of PPE and hygiene that staff should follow when working in schools during the pandemic. Additional guidance should be provided to staff that work in multiple facilities, such as staff from the planning and facilities department. Please see [guidelines found here](#) (Guidelines for Plant/IT Services Staff During Covid-19 - for Maintenance & Repair Services). I think we should remove this as this procedure was developed for when we were only allowing certain staff in the buildings. They would now follow the same guidelines as all employees (General Guidelines for Employees during Covid-19)

Illness

Staff who have any signs of illness should stay home. Staff who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive with COVID-19 must follow the RCDHU guidelines.

Racism and Discrimination

Staff have a responsibility to prevent discrimination against all students and families. Staff should actively monitor any student derogatory comments based on race at all times. The leadership team has been provided with a copy of “White Fragility” to prepare for further training on racism. Our SEL unit includes instruction on being inclusive, safe and welcoming. Training on this unit and Anti-Racism will occur during the 3 P.A. days to begin the school year.

Privacy

Staff must follow the directions from RCDHU in terms of what medical/health information related to their students or their families that can be shared.

Screening Procedures

It is not staff's responsibility to screen students for illness; however, if a staff member is concerned that a student is exhibiting signs of illness, this should be reported to the school administration. If a student voluntarily shares that they or a member of their family has COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test, this information should also be shared with the school administrator.

In the August correspondence to parents, they will be asked to screen ([Covid Self-Assessment](#)) their child daily for any symptoms of cold, flu, or other symptoms that may be associated with COVID-19. Parents will be informed that health care professionals are not located within our schools so staff will not be screening students; however, if staff observe a child that is ill, parents will be called to pick up their child from the school promptly.

Attendance

Student attendance should be taken for all students that arrive in school, and a record should be maintained when students are in areas other than their classroom and assigned cohort. This will assist RCDHU for contact tracing should a positive case of COVID-19 be determined at a later date. Online attendance should be recorded separately from in-class attendance. Students should not be penalized academically should they choose not to attend in-person sessions.

Doors

Where possible, classroom and office doors will be left open during the day to minimize the number of students or staff that need to open the door physically. A balance must be struck between the fire code to keep doors closed and open doors to minimize the potential spread by contact from a potentially infected individual.

Staff Hygiene and PPE Routines

Staff will be provided with health and safety training for hygiene and PPE routines on the first PA Day, Sept. 2nd.

Technology

The Board will continue to offer professional learning opportunities for staff to ensure that they are positioned to use digital tools effectively. Based on feedback from parents, one area of growth for the Board is to move to a more centralized communication platform so that students/parents do not need to access multiple platforms for each educator's class. The Board will look to implement [School Messenger](#) across the district and a parent portal to assist as the interface between parents and the school. Two key tools that are recommended for sharing of learning activities is the use of Brightspace (D2L) as the Board's learning management system, and the use of G Suite tools such as Google Docs and Google Meet to allow for collaboration and communication along with Seesaw for our Primary grades. Instructional staff will receive further training on digital tools, including synchronous learning (eg. Google Meet) and assessment and evaluation, on the 3 P.A. days that

RCCDSB Return to School Plan

begin the school year. The Board's focus and expectations will shift from "emergency" distance learning to effective, sustainable remote learning as required.

Prepare for Students

4

Prepare for the return of students
to schools in September

Prepare for Students

It is normal that parents and students will be excited and anxious about returning to school. To assist in the transition from distance learning to a return to in-person school, each principal is asked to send a letter home or send a video explaining what school will look like for September 8th. The message will be sent home approximately two weeks before the return to school. The Board will provide a sample letter for Principals to use. The letter will include suggested strategies for parents to reassure their child that the school building is safe. As per Ministry of Education guidelines, parents have the option to keep students home and participate in remote learning.

Initial Return

During the initial return to school, staff will include activities prepared by our mental health team that acknowledge and recognize the fear and anxiety that have potentially impacted students and their families during the initial stage of isolation. A focus on the whole student will be the priority for the return to school. Program staff will provide age-appropriate Social Emotional Learning resources for each staff to focus on during the first week back to school. Targeted support will continue for those that require additional assistance throughout the year. Counselling support will be available to assist with the mental health needs of students.

All staff should be made aware of the potential impact of stress and anxiety on student learning, behaviour and relationships. As outlined in PHE Canada's Teach Resiliency program, a school-based trauma-informed approach will help students feel safe to learn. Resources will be shared during the September PA Day for staff to implement during week one of return to school.

Communication

Feedback during the first phase of distance learning provided input on areas of possible improved communication. One such area was the desire to have a minimal number of applications for parents/students to check for work assigned during distance education. Each Principal should review the available Board digital tools that can be streamlined to address this parent feedback, where possible. Information for parents on the potential use of the new parent portal and School Messenger will be shared in August.

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, either distance learning solutions will continue, or the parents can apply for home instruction support where a teacher will go into the home up to three hours per week to provide academic support along with the classroom distance learning resources. PPE will be provided for anyone going into homes for home instruction. This will be discussed with RCDHU for health and safety purposes.

Parents will be asked to keep their child home if they exhibit any signs of illness. Parents who have access to a thermometer will be asked to check their children for fever each morning and to keep them home if they display any signs of illness.

If a student is diagnosed with COVID-19, the Principal will follow the directions from RCDHU. Outbreak management protocols will be provided by the MOE and PHO. Contact tracing will be conducted by the RCDHU.

Previous Grade Instruction

We know that class composition is never homogeneous, and we always have students that bring different levels of pre-existing knowledge with them. Educators will spend some time determining areas of academic need for each student, and they will differentiate the instruction to support each student. K-8 teachers were given an opportunity to attend a virtual “Preparing for September” professional development session that included high yield instructional strategies, including small groups and assessment for learning. They were given access to new digital resources that will support planning for return to school in September. These sessions were recorded and will be made available along with the resources to educators who couldn’t attend in June.

Students with special needs and/or self-regulation needs

Individual plans and solutions will be needed for students that have a challenge with self-regulation. The Special Education department, in cooperation with school teams, will be responsible for assessing the needs of personal protective equipment for staff that work with students that will find it challenging to maintain physical distancing.

Student Masks

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.

Students in **kindergarten to Grade 3** will be strongly encouraged, but not required, to wear masks in indoor spaces. The Board will continue to take advice on the issue of masking from the RCDHU.

Specialized Personal Protective Equipment

Students that require visual cues for communication will be identified by the Special Education Department, and specialized PPE will be provided for staff that support these students. This may include medically-approved see-through masks that will assist during communication.

Student Transitions

The Special Education Department staff, Special Education Summer School Principal and school-based teams will work on summer transition programs and plans. These plans are intended to assist students with the changes in routine that a potential hybrid learning model will require next September.

Student reminders

Regular reminders will be provided to students on proper hygiene and physical distancing. Students will be asked to wash their hands before and after eating, and when returning from outside, and after using the washroom.

Education and awareness need to be a big part of this and having students take some responsibility for respecting distancing. Families that are not able to provide a cloth mask to their child may request support from the school Principal, and where available, a cloth mask will be provided.

Students using a cloth mask or face covering will be taught the proper use of a mask. Any logo or design on a mask will be subject to normal school dress code policies.

Student belongings should be taken home each day to be cleaned as needed.

Water Bottles

Students will be encouraged to bring their own labelled and filled water bottle to school each day. Water fountains can be used to refill water bottles.

Lockers

Access to lockers will be determined.

International Students

All international students returning to Canada from another country must self-isolate for 14 days before being allowed to attend RCCDSB schools.

System Classes

A review of any required specialized PPE or classroom modifications will be conducted for each system class. Daily access to in-person instruction will be prioritized for students attending system classes, as long as distancing can be maintained within the guidelines of class size limitations during the pandemic.

Letter to Parents

The summer letter to parents should include a checklist of what to send to school each day with their child, including where available, personal hand sanitizer, a cloth mask, water bottle, and learning materials. A centrally created sample letter will be provided to Principals.

School Operations

Plan new protocols and routines for September

5

School Operations

Parent Survey

A second parent survey will be conducted during the summer beginning on July 30, 2020. Parents will be required to indicate if they will be sending their child to on-site schooling in September, based on the Board plan, or if they would be keeping their child home for fully online learning, or another plan to ensure that their child is attending school as is legally required. To determine bus schedules, transportation needs will also be determined at the same time. Multiple return paths will be provided to parents so that they can access education for their child within their own comfort level for schooling outside their home.

Registration Protocols

During any normal year, the RCCDSB gladly welcomes eligible registrants new to the Board and/or our schools. Given the need to maintain the integrity of cohorting, the Board will only guarantee that new registrants will be placed in a class for September 8, 2020 up until August 17th. Following that date, the Board may not have class placement for your child for the start of school. The Board will endeavour to have a class placement as soon as possible but no later than October 1st.

Opt Back In

Parents who opt to have their children remain home and participate in full remote learning are asked to note key dates for opting back in to face-to-face learning and full attendance. The first opportunity to opt back in for elementary students will be November 16, 2020. For secondary students the first opportunity will be the start of semester 2 on February 2nd. Should we receive advice from the RCDHU or other medical authorities that it is safe to do so earlier, the Board will communicate this.

Scheduling and Timetabling

The Ministry has asked boards to prepare for 3 possible scenarios:

1. Normal school day routine with enhanced health protocols;
2. Modified school day routine based on smaller classes, cohorting and alternate day or week delivery;
3. At-home learning with enhanced remote delivery.

The Ministry has now announced support for a full 5-day return to school for a number of reasons, including positive trajectories of COVID-19 cases. The Board is exploring the implications for staffing and supervision needs as students return to school while physical distancing is still required. Once guidance is provided by the Ministry of Education we will adjust our model as needed. Input into options is also part of our consultation with the community based on this draft document. Focus groups will be held with Principals/ Teachers/ Unions/ Associations to consider possible models for the Board.

Modified routine - Board Recommendation: Weekly 3/2 Model: Homeroom classes to be divided into two distinct cohorts (Cohort A and Cohort B) One cohort will attend school on Monday and Tuesday (Cohort A); the other cohort will attend school on Thursday and Friday (Cohort B); each cohort will alternate attendance on Wednesday. If COVID numbers begin to rise and we are directed to move to a hybrid model we will look at implementing this 3/2 model.

Additional Support for Students with Special Needs

We will closely monitor scheduling and programming for students who require educational assistant support to ensure support is effective, equitable and consistent. Additional supports may be added if required.

Full-time Virtual Learning

Parents who are reluctant to send their child back to school will be provided the option of distance education with daily teacher check-in. There is a potential cost associated with this as teachers would be needed to run online classes with daily check-ins.

School Bus options

Parents will be requested to drive their child to school, if possible, to limit the number of students on a bus. The RCJTC is working with consortiums across the province to review transportation configurations to best meet student needs while addressing health and safety.

Each Principal will develop a bus schedule and routine that allows for the loading and unloading of students while maintaining appropriate physical distancing and entry into and out of the school.

Drop-off and pick-up routines will need careful attention to avoid congestion and to maintain distancing.

School Hallways and Stairways

Depending on school design, the option of designating traffic flow one way, or allowing for spacing should be considered as a separation technique.

Classroom Setup

Students will remain in the same consistent seat in the class as much as possible. This area becomes their personal “bubble” and should maintain physical distance from the nearest student. Where possible, the same students should remain with the same teacher with minimized rotation. Classroom design will vary from teacher to teacher but the same goal remains to keep everyone apart. Physical barriers such as unused desks, or visual markings, can be used to assist with the separation. Teachers are encouraged to use the Teacher Checklist which incorporates Classroom Infection Prevention and Control measures recommended by the RCDHU.

Kindergarten Classrooms

While 2-metre distancing may not be as practical for four and 5-year-olds, the rule of no physical touching should be taught and reinforced. Activities should be designed for small groups, and furniture and playing areas should be used to help maintain physical separation. Plush toys should be temporarily stored during the pandemic. Toys and manipulatives will be reduced where possible while still providing for students a wide variety of play-based learning. Additional guidelines based on the success of childcare operations will be reviewed for Kindergarten classes. Parents who register their child for Kindergarten may choose to register their child for partial days or partial hours that best meet their personal circumstances.

Submitting Assignments

Where possible, assignments can be submitted electronically. For physical assignments that must be submitted, it is recommended that a location be established in the class to leave assignments rather than directly approaching the educator. Educators and students are reminded to practice hand hygiene while handling assignments.

Class rotation

Consideration should be given to having grade levels access hallways at different times to minimize hallway traffic throughout the day. Schools are encouraged to eliminate bells that signal all students into the hallways at once.

Entry Requirements

School entry times may be staggered, and multiple entry doors may be used to allow for physical distancing. This will be determined once the selected instruction model is confirmed. Students will be required to practice hand hygiene as they enter the school.

Dismissal Requirements

School dismissal times may be staggered, and multiple exit doors will be used in order to allow for physical distancing to take place.

School Supplies and Equipment

Students should have their own school supplies, and the sharing of school supplies should not be permitted.

If a device such as a Chromebook is being scheduled for alternative use, it must be wiped down with sanitizer wipe before changing users. Disinfecting wipes and/or a 70% isopropyl alcohol solution will work on electronic devices. Avoid using aerosol sprays or abrasive cleaning products that may damage electronic equipment. The distribution of books can still take place within a classroom setting.

Technology

Students who do not have access to a device at home will be prioritized for the loan of a School Chromebook. Students are encouraged to bring a fully charged device to school each day that they are taking part in in-person instruction at school. As part of our commitment to equity, the Board

should prioritize assisting families that had been identified as not being able to afford the cost of Internet connectivity.

Physical Education and Technology based courses

These courses may continue with the educator putting in place curriculum modifications to ensure that physical distancing is maintained as much as possible. Limit the sharing of equipment as much as possible. Where equipment is needed for different classes, the equipment must be sanitized before and after use.

The RCCDSB Phys. Ed., Health and Outdoor Education SPAT has prepared a P.E. unit which supports physical distancing. Additional Grade level physical education activities that can be introduced while maintaining distancing are available in the PHE Canada – [Return to School Physical Education and Health Guidelines](#).

French As Second Language

FSL teachers will move to student classrooms rather than students move into a shared classroom to maintain cohort integrity. Like other Itinerant staff, FSL teachers will maintain physical distancing whenever possible and wear appropriate PPE.

Music And Dance

The safety of students and staff will require additional procedures for music classes and bands including the disinfection of instruments and classroom layout considerations. In most cases students will be assigned their own instruments. Full precautions to be followed can be found in the Ontario Educators' Association - [Framework for the Return to Music Classes](#). Additional considerations will be given to scheduling for Music and Dance to reduce teacher movement between schools. Music and Dance in Elementary Schools will be delivered in a block school model. Each school will be assigned blocks of weeks during which principals will schedule Music and Dance timetables which will also provide ANPPT to classroom teachers. As with other itinerant staff, whenever possible, staff will move to student classrooms rather than students move into a shared classroom to maintain cohort integrity. Itinerant staff will maintain physical distancing whenever possible and wear appropriate PPE.

Fitness Rooms and Equipment

Physical fitness has been shown to have a positive impact on well-being, both physical and mental. Clean all equipment before and after use and maintain 2-metre distances from others who may be in the room at the same time. [Guidance on Health and Safety for Fitness and Swimming Pool Facilities during COVID-19](#)

Washrooms

Signage will be placed inside the washroom, reminding students of both physical distancing and proper hygiene. Occupancy signs that assume students are not wearing a mask and are not supervised will be posted by principals. Washrooms will be cleaned throughout the school day and again each evening.

Deliveries and Mail

Where possible, deliveries should remain for 24-48 hours before unpacking. Proper hygiene, including

washing before and after handling the delivery, should take place where this is not possible or practical.

Student illness

If a student becomes ill during the day and/or if they exhibit signs of illness, they will be required to enter into an isolation area as designated by the school until the parent can pick them up. The student will be provided with a medical grade mask to wear until picked up, and staff assisting the student will be asked to wear full PPE and keep 2 metre distance unless in the case of an emergency. The area will be flagged as closed until it can be cleaned and sanitized after the student leaves the school. Before the student returns to school, they must be symptom-free for 24 hours after symptoms resolve. Areas used by the student who is ill should be closed off and the area should not be used before cleaning and disinfecting can take place. Cleaning staff must wear full PPE and disinfect the isolation room as soon as possible after the student leaves.

Classroom Carpets

Full groups should not be gathering on shared carpet areas. Carpets can remain where they are used for regular foot traffic; however, students should not be sitting on carpets unless they are able to maintain the same location on the carpet and can do so while being physically distanced from the next student. Where possible, carpets that had been used for students to sit on during full group instruction should be rolled up and temporarily set aside during the pandemic.

Confirmed cases of COVID

When a student or staff member has been diagnosed as positive for the COVID-19 virus, the school will follow the directions of Public Health and the [Operational Guidance:COVID-19 Management in Schools](#) document. This may require one or multiple classes to move to a distance learning model and/or may require the school to be closed to in-person instruction for a length of time necessary, based on the time recommended by RCDHU. Students who tested positive for COVID19 wait 14 days before being allowed to return to in-person instruction. An outbreak disinfection chemical compound (ie., electrostatic sprayer) will be used to disinfect any area accessed by someone reported as testing positive for COVID19. Students who have exhibited symptoms and receive a negative test must not return to school until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.

After School Activities

There will be no large gatherings until we receive direction from Public Health that they can resume. Students can collaborate online for clubs and after school activities.

Physical Distancing Breaches

Maintaining physical distancing at all times will be challenging. Adults and students will sometimes forget this important safety measure or will unintentionally enter someone else's "bubble". It is important to recognize that we are aiming for best efforts and not perfection. A friendly reminder should be provided when someone is failing to keep the required distance apart, or when two friends hug or are seen in physical proximity to one another.

Visitors, Volunteers and Parent Access

Visitors, volunteers, and parents will not be permitted on school property during the pandemic. Parents may not enter the school with the exception of a Principal approved appointment or to pick up a sick child.

Fire Drills

Practice drills should continue. Classes could move throughout the building while maintaining physical distance between students in the classroom, hallway and at all exits. Each Principal should review with staff where to go in case there is a real emergency, and the school needs to be evacuated. Locations on the school playground or field should be identified that would allow for a physical distance between students to be maintained.

Lockdown Drills

A review of the procedures to take place in the case of a real life-threatening situation should be discussed in place of a lockdown drill. Further direction from the MOE is expected.

Attendance during the initial phase of return to school

Teachers will continue to take attendance for the in-class component of instruction for the fall. Students participating in distance learning will be marked as present for each day that they are scheduled for distance learning from home.

Learning Commons

The Learning commons may still be open to students; however, a procedure must be put in place for the handling and return of books. For an added precaution, it is recommended that all books that are returned are placed in an area for 24 hours before being returned to display areas. Students may access the learning commons to borrow books. Schedules must be created that will allow for physical distancing by all students in the learning commons at the same time. Clubs such as makerspaces and robotics will only be able to function without sharing resources or equipment.

Curriculum and Assessment

Educators have the authority to use their professional judgment to focus on key areas of the curriculum rather than try to cover all items in the curriculum guidelines. The wide variety of educational resources, including those rich digital resources created or accessed during the first phase of distance learning should be critically assessed. Educators should use this transition phase to determine the most impactful resources available that will allow them to move from a low-level-fact based curriculum to rich resources that require critical thinking and problem solving. Assessment practices should take into account the pandemic conditions and allow both flexibility and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding and application of key concepts.

Opportunity for impactful reform

Educators are encouraged to reflect on the student agency that took place during the first phase of distance learning. There are opportunities to harness multidisciplinary approaches to instruction and Rich Assessment Tasks that provide students with authentic learning opportunities when they are learning outside of the school. In Education Reimagined, the authors suggest that quality learning must be built on the interests of students along with:

- Connecting to purpose and meaning

- Challenging students to have high expectations
- Positioning learning goals that focus beyond the basics
- Using engaging pedagogies
- Building relationships and belongingness
- Providing Opportunities to contribute to the world

“The pandemic has magnified the question of what kind of learning is required in 2020 and beyond”. Staff should reflect on what key learning came from the first phase of distance learning, and not automatically return to the status quo. Some questions to ponder include:

- What part of the curriculum was removed but not missed?
- How were meaningful relationships created?
- How were connections with the community or global environment created?
- What should students learn and why?
- How can we provide learning activities that students are motivated to complete because they see the application of the content, and not because it will be assessed?

The cancellation of exams and “unit tests” during the first phase of distance learning should be reviewed to see if alternative assessment practices provided differentiated opportunities for each student to demonstrate their learning.

Distance Learning and Competencies

Educators should consider how time spent in distance learning could be used to develop the six global competencies: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, character and citizenship. As we look at student passion and student agency, there are many opportunities to expand learning beyond the walls of the classroom, and distance learning provides an opportunity to focus on the learning environment and learning partnerships that do not require an in-person connection with the classroom educators.

Large group gatherings and Assemblies

RCDHU and/or the province will provide details of the size of permitted gatherings. In the early phases of return we do not anticipate any large group gatherings, and where students do gather they will be required to maintain physical distance from one another

Masses and Parish Support

Though the Diocese of Pembroke has permitted the resumption of masses at 30% capacity, the RCCDSB will adhere to provincial restrictions on large gatherings and will not permit school functions such as masses until permitted.

Parish priests, deacons and parishes were contacted via letter to advise of school start-up planning and requested to contact schools to determine if and where they could offer pastoral support.

Classroom Organization

Teachers are encouraged to use the Teacher Checklist which incorporates Classroom Infection Prevention and Control measures recommended by the RCDHU. Classroom educators will rearrange

their classroom so that physical distance can be maintained between students. Students will not be permitted to share resources.

The teacher should maintain a table of items to be cleaned, and these should be wiped off the following morning when returning to class (using provided disinfectant wipes).

Sports – Intramurals and interscholastic games

Individual sports may continue with proper hygiene and physical distance in place. Competitions continue to be “on hold” until the MOE and the individual sport governing bodies indicate that it is safe for team sports to resume.

Breakfast program

If the program can be run by staff and without volunteers, the breakfast program may continue as long as the setup can allow for physical distancing, and proper hygiene can be maintained. No buffet lines. Grab and go individual servings.

Lunch and Cafeterias

Cafeteria tables should be clearly marked to allow distancing to take place. Principals should implement a modified schedule that includes multiple lunch periods in order to discourage large group gatherings. Cafeteria serveries should include clear markings for physical distancing.

During COVID-19 microwaves in cafeterias or classrooms will not be available for student use. Outside food from restaurants or chains may not be delivered into schools since visitors are not permitted in the school during this time.

Field Trips

School staff should only plan virtual field trip experiences until RCDHU has indicated that larger gatherings can take place.

Contactless Payments

In an effort to reduce the handling of cash, schools will be required to promote the use of Cash online. Point of sale terminals will be investigated for each high school and then some high volume elementary schools.



The Plant Department is responsible for the training of staff and instruction of cleaning requirements.

Cleaning and disinfection routine

Schools will implement a frequent cleaning and disinfecting routine according to Ministry and public health recommendations. Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day throughout the school building.

Schools will undergo extra cleaning and disinfection at the end of each school day. Soft surfaces, such as some toys, that cannot be easily cleaned will be removed from classrooms. Cleaning will take place in all high contact areas including desks, tables, railings, door handles and other surfaces throughout the school.

Hand Dryers and paper towels

During the initial phase of return to in-person instruction at schools, all electric hand dryers will be marked as out of service, and paper towels will be placed in bathrooms.

Classrooms with water

Classrooms that have a water supply will be provided with hand soap and paper towels.

Cleaning Products

The Board will continue to use asthma-safe, hospital-grade green based cleaning products where available. Scent-free products continue to be recommended for cleaning.

The Board caretakers are responsible for: cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. Cleaning involves the removal of dirt, while sanitizing reduces germs from surfaces up to 99.9%; and disinfectants destroy germs and prevent them from spreading.

Special Attention

The caretaker team at each school will focus on high touch surfaces, including: door handles, railings, water fountains, faucets, and areas such as bathrooms, cafeterias and kitchen areas. Special attention will also be focused on classrooms and the isolation room when anyone is sent home for exhibiting any signs of illness.

Daily Cleaning

Soap and paper towels will be refilled as needed on a regular basis.

Sanitizer

Sanitizer will be placed at the front entrance of every school and in every class, and refilled when supplies are available.

Water Fountains

Water fountains can be used for refilling personal water bottles, but should be marked that they should only be used for this purpose and not for taking a drink at this time.

Student Desks, Chairs, and Tables

Classroom cleaning should focus on frequently touched surfaces such as door handles and light switches. Student desks, chairs, and tables should be cleaned between cohort changes, ie.

Garbage

Classroom garbage will be collected and disposed of daily

Opportunity for Input

We recognize that the selected solution for operating during a pandemic will not be ideal for everyone and the many different family situations that exist.

If you have suggestions, please submit your comments [using this form](#) Your input is valued as we move toward reopening our schools.

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