

Message to Elementary Families on Return to In-Person Learning

February 3, 2021

Subject Line: Students Return to In-Person Learning on Mon Feb 8

Earlier today, the Ministry of Education announced that students in Durham Region will return to in-person learning on Monday, February 8, 2021. This decision was made by the Minister of Education and the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario.

When students return to school, we will continue to undertake enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high traffic/touch point areas. Additional measures have also been established and we are sharing with you more information in this update below.

New Masking Requirements for Students

It is now mandatory for all students in Grades 1 to 3 to wear a mask, subject to reasonable exceptions. This masking requirement is in addition to the existing requirement for students in Grades 4-12. We strongly encourage students in Kindergarten to wear a mask.

The new requirements also mean that all students learning in-person are always required to wear a mask inside the school, in class, in hallways, on school buses as well as outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. recess). We are sharing with you a few activities that families can practice with students to help encourage wearing a mask: <https://bit.ly/3k134JB>

We also require parents/guardians to wear a mask when on school property while dropping off or picking up your child(ren). Thank you for doing your part to support safety in our community and for helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Congregating Before and After School

In order to further prevent any potential spread of COVID-19, it is critical that students do not congregate together before and/or after school. Please ensure that you have a discussion with your child(ren) about this as COVID-19 can spread in any setting where individuals are not wearing a mask and may not be physically distancing.

Mandatory Daily Self-Screenings

We would like to remind all students and families to do their part to help keep everyone safe by conducting the mandatory self-screening for COVID-19 each morning before leaving for school. This is a critical step that families are required to do every morning in order to ensure that students and staff in the class are protected.

Parents/guardians can check their child for symptoms of COVID-19 using the Government of Ontario's easy to use COVID-19 school screening tool at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>.

If your child does not pass the screening, please ensure that your child does not come to school and follow the directions outlined in the self-screening tool in order to keep everyone safe.

Information on Targeted Testing

The ministry has advised that they are expanding targeted testing for students, children and staff across the province. It will be up to our local public health unit, the Durham Region Health Department to determine where this testing is needed, with a focus on communities experiencing a high level of community transmission. Testing will be voluntary, and consent will be required for students under 18 years old. We will share more information with you on this should it become available.

Returning Chromebooks, Power Cords and Mobile Internet Devices

If your child(ren) in Grades K to 6 are returning to in-person learning and have received a loaned electronic device (i.e. Chromebook and/or mobile internet device), we ask that you please return the devices and power cords to the school as soon as possible.

Please note that child(ren) in Grades 7/8 should keep their Chromebook and all students scheduled to transfer to DDSB@Home on February 22, 2021 should keep any loaned devices in anticipation of the transfer.

With students returning to in-person learning, it is important that everyone remembers to stay safe by following the direction of public health and provincial officials. We encourage all community members to continue wearing a mask, to frequently wash/sanitize hands, cough/sneeze into your arm, avoid any gatherings with people outside of your household, avoid any non-essential travel and maintain appropriate physical distancing from others.

Schools are looking forward to welcoming your child(ren) back to school on Monday, February 8, 2021 and will be in touch if there are additional updates to share with you. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to be in touch with your school team.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we follow provincial direction to ensure schools can re-open safely.