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February 8, 2021

Re: Return to in-person learning at school

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Schools in Toronto are planning to re-open for in-person learning on February 16, 2021. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has important reminders to help you prepare your child for the return to school.

How to prepare for return to in-person learning:

- **Daily screening:** Starting today for everyone in your household complete the updated COVID-19 symptom screening for [students](#) and [adults](#) every day.
- **Get tested:** If anyone in your household has one or more new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19, they should [get tested](#) as soon as possible. Everyone in the house will need to stay home if someone in the home is sick with a COVID-19 symptom. More [pop-up testing sites](#) will be made available this week through our testing partners.
- **Pack your mask:** Students are required to wear a mask properly at all times except when having a mask break or eating lunch. Pack an extra mask in case your child needs to change it.
- **Stay-at-home except to attend work:** Continue to support stay-at-home measures in order to keep schools as safe as possible. Stay at home except for work, essential shopping, outdoor exercise, or healthcare appointments. Limit contact outside of school/work to only the people you live with.

When at school for in-person learning:

- **Confirmation of screening:** Students should bring a paper record or show your school's app to confirm that screening has been completed before starting school each day.
- **Follow prevention measures:** Students should wash or sanitize their hands frequently, stay at least six feet/two metres from others as much as possible, wear a well-fitting mask, and stay home when sick.
- **Mask breaks:** Students must ensure physical distancing is maintained when taking short mask breaks outdoors or indoors or to eat lunch/snacks.
- **Stay-at-home except to attend school or work:** Students can attend school each day, but should not gather with others, even those in their cohort. Continue to support stay-at-home measures to keep schools as safe as possible. Stay at home except to attend school, exercise outdoors or for healthcare appointments. Limit contact outside of school to only the people you live with.

COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community. TPH is prepared to respond if COVID-19 is detected related to the school. We have increased our capacity to do full case and contact investigations, co-ordinate testing when a cohort is dismissed, and communicate with schools and families about what they need to do.

TPH will continue to work with schools, staff and parents to keep schools safe, including:

- When a staff member or student who attends school tests positive, TPH will identify their close contacts using the cohort approach. Students may belong to a classroom, bus or before/after school cohort. These cohorts will be dismissed from school and directed to self-isolate for 14 days from last contact with the case. This message may come from your Principal or from TPH.
- If your child is identified as a close contact, they will receive a letter from TPH. The letter will recommend testing even if your child is not sick, and include the dates that your child must self-isolate at home. It will also include information about where to get tested. Please bring your letter to the testing location as the letter includes a unique identification number, which will help TPH to complete the investigation.
- TPH may recommend expanded testing for the entire school if there are: a) multiple cohorts who were dismissed; or b) there is someone who had COVID-19 related to the school setting and we are not clear on where the person got COVID-19. TPH will provide a letter to parents to provide details on the expanded testing clinics.
- Testing is completed by testing centres, not TPH. We are working with testing centres to reduce barriers to getting tested. This may include dedicated hours at an assessment centre for your child, on-site school testing, or take-home test kits.
- If your child develops a new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, they should be tested as soon as possible and self-isolate at home. Please bring your letter to the testing site as the letter may include a unique identification number, which will help TPH complete the investigation.

Thank you for all that you are doing to help keep our schools and communities safe.

Please continue to visit our website at: www.toronto.ca/COVID19 to stay up-to-date.

Information specific to school communities is available at: [COVID-19 school information for parents & caregivers.](#)

Yours truly,



Nicole Welch
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COVID-19 Liaison
Chief Nursing Officer