

09/15/2020

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding RCDSB Return to School

1. What safety measures will be in place to protect students?

The Ministry of Education released its Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools on July 30, 2020. The document provides direction to school boards and was developed in consultation with the COVID-19 Command Table and pediatric experts and approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. Based upon this direction, the RCDSB has created a locally-developed resource guide that has been endorsed by our partners at the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHS). The RCDSB's 'Return to School and Work Resource Guide' can be found [here](#).

2. Will staff and students be screened upon arrival at school?

RCDSB staff will be required to complete a COVID-19 Self-Assessment screening every school day prior to entering a school. The Self-Assessment for staff can be found [here](#).

As parents/guardians, you are responsible for assessing your child daily for any of the common signs/symptoms of COVID-19. **Please use the following Ministry of Health COVID-19 School Screening online self-assessment [here](#) each morning.** If you do not have access to the internet, please identify if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- new or worsening cough;
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
- temperature equal to or over 38°C;
- feeling feverish;
- chills;
- runny nose;
- fatigue or weakness;
- muscle or body aches;
- new loss of smell or taste;
- headache;
- gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting);
- feeling very unwell.

Children have been more commonly reported to have abdominal symptoms, and skin changes or rashes.

After completing the online self-assessment from the Ministry of Health, if it identifies that your child should not go to school/be tested, self-isolate immediately and call the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre at 1-844-727-6404 or your family doctor. Please note that all household members/close contacts (siblings, parents, etc.) must also self-isolate and follow guidance from public health officials.

This process should also be followed if you did not do the online self-assessment, but your child is presenting with any of the above signs/symptoms (and there is no known cause, such as regular seasonal allergies).

If your child is away from school presenting with any COVID-19 signs/symptom, or your child is away due to a symptomatic household member, they (along with other immediate household members) should not come back to school until:

- **the students and/or household member presenting with signs/symptoms has a negative test result;**
- **testing was not deemed necessary by a healthcare professional, and the student is symptom free for 24 hours, or;**
- **households who did not wish to participate in testing have self-isolated for a period of 14 days.**

Please note: These guidelines are changing regularly at both a Ministry and local level by public health officials. While the RCDSB will make every attempt to notify parents/guardians, staff and our school communities on process changes when they occur, we would encourage you to refer to the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Students](#) section of our Resource Guide.

3. What happens if a student feels sick? Will they be sent home? Will they have to isolate for 14 days?

If a student is presenting with signs and symptoms of COVID-19 at school, they will be isolated immediately and the parents/guardians will be called for a pick-up. The RCDHU suggests students are picked-up within the hour. Parents are then required to assess their child using the Ministry of Health online self-assessment [here](#), and follow the procedure outlined in question #2. Further details can be found in the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Students](#) section of our Resource Guide.

If a test is required, the student (along with their close contacts/household members) must stay home until a negative result is provided. Once a negative test result is provided they will then be permitted to return to school 24 hours after being symptom free.

If a test comes back positive for COVID-19, the student must continue to stay home and quarantine, along with their close contacts/household members. At this point, the RCDHU will assume responsibility for the positive case for monitoring, contact tracing, further testing and next steps.

4. What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing, notification, and follow-up is a process that is used to identify, educate and monitor individuals who have had close contact with someone who is

infected with COVID-19. These individuals are at a higher risk of becoming infected and sharing the virus with others, and can often be symptom-free. Contact tracing can help individuals who have been in contact with a case of COVID-19 understand their risk and limit further spread of the virus.

While the RCDSB will work diligently with the RCDHU, contact tracing is done by public health and not the school board.

5. What if a student or staff member tests positive? Does the whole class/staff have to be tested or self-isolate?

All positive COVID-19 cases in Renfrew County are managed by the Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU). Should a positive case be confirmed at one of our schools/sites, the RCDSB will follow all directions provided by the RCDHU. The RCDHU will conduct all contact tracing, and assist us with determining next-steps at that time. In the interests of privacy, information provided to school communities will not identify the student or staff member that has received a positive COVID-19 test. If public health advises that a class, cohort or a school should be closed for a period of time, parents, students and staff will be notified immediately.

6. Do students have to wear a mask? What if they can't wear a mask due to a condition?

The Ministry of Education has outlined that all students from Grade 4 and up must wear a cloth mask each day, however there are exceptions for students who have medical conditions or special needs that would prevent them from wearing a mask. Please speak to your child's principal for more information on this.

7. Will masks be provided to students?

All students are expected to bring a cloth mask from home. If a student who is in Grades 4 to 12 arrives at school without a mask, the school will provide them with one cloth mask that they may use with repeated washing.

8. How will masking be handled in split grades where some are required to wear masks and others not (like Grade 3/4 class)?

The Ministry of Education requires that students in Grades 4 to 12 must wear a mask during the school day. As such, in a Grade 3/4 split class all Grade 4 students will be required to wear a mask and any Grade 3 student who chooses to wear a mask can do so if they wish, but it will not be required.

9. Can students wear face shields?

Students in Grades 4 to 12 must wear a cloth or medical-grade face mask. Face shields will not be permitted unless there is a medical exemption prohibiting the use of a mask.

10. How will children store their masks for lunch breaks and recess?

During lunch and recess, students will be permitted to put their mask on/in their desk or in their cubby/locker in a labelled paper bag.

11. How can we ensure adequate physical distancing?

The Ministry of Education has indicated that standard physical distancing of two meters is not possible in most schools. Schools will provide two-meter spacing as much as possible and try to reduce face-to-face interaction. Because physical distancing is difficult in most schools, masks are mandatory for staff, students in Grades 4 to 12, and encouraged for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. Where possible, staff will be encouraged to take students outdoors or into larger spaces to further reduce risks. We understand this is not an easy task.

12. How will you support mental health and well-being for students?

Educators and school staff are encouraged to get involved in mental health promotion as a part of daily classroom practice. Parents may connect with the School Support Counsellor, Principal or Vice-Principal for concerns related to student mental health and well-being.

Our commitment to student wellbeing is grounded in our Lead with CARE - a tiered approach to mental health and well-being.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
Involves the whole school in mental health promotion. Learn about mental health promotion strategies for the school and classroom on the staff site: mental health, and website for students and parents.	Involves targeted support either within the classroom, individually or in a group to bolster skill development and SEL. The School Support Counsellor supports the student and/or family and facilitates access to the School Board Social Worker, and community agencies for more individualized support as required.	Involves more individualized support for mental health, including assessment, treatment and specialized services. RCDSB partners with community agencies that specialize in providing clinical care to students for mental challenges and addictions.

13. How will students with special education needs be supported?

Collaboration between school teams, parents and students will continue in the development of the IEP. Individual, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meetings and/or case conferences will continue as needed in either a face-to-face or using a virtual platform.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) will continue to meet monthly during the school year, either face-to-face or using a virtual platform, to provide guidance and feedback to the District.

Please check out our Special Services section of the Return to School and Work

Resource Guide for more details [here](#).

School Day

1. Do students have to return to school?

Parents/guardians may choose to send their child to school for in-person learning or keep their child home and enroll in remote synchronous learning. Guidelines for online learning, including daily minutes required, can be found [here](#).

2. Will visitors be permitted inside the school?

Only essential visitors are permitted in RCDSB schools at this time. Access to the school by parents and visitors will only be permitted in the case of an emergency.

Should a visitor need to enter the building, pre-approval from the principal is required along with the placement of restrictions on which areas of the school can be accessed along with the use of a mask. Visitors must also sign in at the school, and complete the online self-assessment.

3. What will lunch breaks look like?

Where possible, recess and lunch breaks will be staggered to limit the number of students congregating at any one time. At the elementary level, students will have lunch at their desk. Secondary students will be permitted to eat their lunch in the cafeteria, or other areas of the school as indicated by the school's administration. These staggered times and related decisions will be made on a school-to-school basis.

4. How will student supplies and shared learning materials be cleaned?

Learning materials, sports equipment, textbooks and manipulatives will be limited to classes and cohorts. Adequate supplies for instruction may be provided to each student. Classroom resources that are used regularly will be cleaned and disinfected daily and/or isolated for 7 days after use. Students will be instructed to clean their hands before and after use of classroom resources.

5. Will families need to purchase extra school supplies for the new school year?

The only additional supplies parents/guardians will need to purchase is a reusable cloth mask and a reusable water bottle to use at the re-filling station. If parents/guardians are unable to purchase a mask or other learning resources, they are encouraged to speak to their principal/teacher so arrangements can be made to provide these resources to each student.

6. Will students be able to use textbooks and/or other learning resources?

Yes.

7. Will students be able to use lockers and/or cubbies?

Yes.

8. Will field trips be allowed?

Due to the additional logistics and risks surrounding class field trips, no field trips requiring transportation will be taking place at this time.

9. Will playgrounds be open?

Yes. All playground equipment and school yards are now open.

10. Will there be clubs and/or extracurricular activities?

Athletics will follow Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) and Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea) guidance with respect to reopening sports programs and extracurricular activities. The Executive of the Upper Ottawa Valley High School Athletic Association (UOVHSAA) will monitor the situation and plan to meet before classes resume.

All decisions will be made with the best interest of our District, and in consultation with senior staff at the District School Boards who are members of the UOVHSAA. The RCDHU will be consulted throughout the whole process of a return to play. Further evaluation will be required for individual sports.

11. Will Community Use of Schools (rentals) resume?

There will be no Community Use of Schools (CUS) permitted prior to January 2021. Access to the public for all RCDSB facilities will be reviewed regularly and will always consider both recommendations from the RCDHU and the resources available to provide the additional cleaning that CUS will require.

12. Will school nutrition programs (Food Sharing Project) still be offered at my child's school?

At this time, Nutritional Programs at the RCDSB will continue with a "Grab and Go" format, to ensure both easy access to the program for all students, and to reduce the risk of potential pathogen transfers. All surfaces, bins and containers for food will be disinfected prior to and after each use, with a deep clean of surfaces daily.

For more information on the RCDSB Nutrition Program, please click [here](#).

Learning Models

1. What does the elementary learning model look like?

All elementary schools in the RCDSB will be conducting classes in a traditional manner (by "term") with health and safety precautions in place to limit student contacts and reduce the risk of transmission.

2. What does the secondary learning model look like?

All secondary schools in the RCDSB are "quadmestering" for the upcoming school

year, which means instead of 2 semesters of 4 classes a day, students will be doing 4 semesters with 2 classes a day. Students will have one class in the morning, and one in the afternoon (only 2 a day), but for a shorter period of time. Students will still end up completing the same number of class hours and courses throughout the school year. This allows our schools to limit student contacts by reducing the risk of transmission as students will only have 2 classes a day.

3. Will health and physical education (gym class) be permitted?

Physical fitness has been shown to have a positive impact on both our physical and mental well-being. As such, it is important that students are able to engage in activities that promote this aspect of the Health & Physical Education curriculum.

Activities will be carefully planned and chosen in order to maintain physical distancing and no contact sports will be permitted.

If there is shared equipment (balls, mats, fitness equipment etc.), the equipment will be disinfected between use. Students will be instructed to wash their hands prior to attending gym class as well as following gym class. Whenever possible, physical education classes will take place outside to enhance physical distancing.

4. Will arts and music classes be permitted?

Yes, arts and music classes will be permitted. In music classes, singing may only take place outside, and physically distanced. No wind, or brass instruments will be allowed.

5. What about expanded opportunities programs such as co-operative education, specialist high skills major, apprenticeships, dual credits and technological education programs?

All of these programs will continue.

6. What if my child begins in-person learning but becomes ill, or is required to self-isolate?

All classrooms will use a virtual platform - Google Classroom or Brightspace - with their face-to-face classes. This will allow students who are ill to remain engaged with their class while absent from class.

7. What is the status of international students?

International Education will proceed at the RCDSB through the District's partnership with *Yes Canada* and individuals.

All international students will be required to follow the guidelines stipulated by Health Canada as well as any directives from local health authorities, which include a 14-day isolation period upon arrival in the country.

8. What is the status of alternative education centres and continuing education?

They are open and operating.

9. What is the status of busing?

All busing for the RCDSB is coordinated by the [Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium](#) (RCJTC). The RCDSB works closely with the RCJTC, however all busing-related inquiries should be sent directly to the RCJTC.

For further information, please refer to the busing section of our Resource Guide [here](#).

10. What will remote learning look like?

Students participating in remote synchronous learning will receive instruction and details from their teacher/school at the start of the school year.

The process for this learning will be a combination of live online instruction along with assignments and activities. Students are expected to be available and present for all scheduled instructional times and complete all assignments. Grades 1 to 12 will be required to complete 225 minutes of learning per day. Kindergarten will be 180 minutes.

Academic expectations for students learning from home will be no different than those learning in the classroom. These learners will still have access to mental health and special education supports as needed.

The RCDSB would like to highlight for parents/guardians that students who enter remote synchronous learning will not be in the same class, or with the same teacher, as they would be at their regular school with in-person learning.

In order for the District and our staff to deliver remote synchronous education, students learning from home will be part of a virtual classroom, with other online students in their grade or multiple grades from schools across the District. Each classroom will be assigned an online teacher. For secondary students, they may also be registered in an online classroom as part of our regular eLearning offerings.

Secondary students who select remote synchronous learning may have limitations on the courses they can take, as courses are offered based on enrollment numbers. Additionally, some courses that have more experiential expectations would not be available in this environment (e.g. some Technological Studies courses etc).

Parents/guardians will have the opportunity at three separate times throughout the school year to switch their children from remote synchronous learning to in-person learning, or vice versa. However, exceptions can be made at alternate dates should parents/guardians require.

Dates are as follows:

Elementary and Secondary

Parents/Guardians must commit by:

November 2, 2020

January 18, 2021

March 29, 2021

Effective on:

November 16, 2020

February 2, 2021

April 12, 2021

If you have questions or require assistance in the start-up of your child's online remote learning, we now have a dedicated email: **remotelearning@rcdsb.on.ca**. Staff will respond to you as quickly as possible.

For more information regarding remote synchronous learning expectations and direction from the Ministry of Education, please visit [here](#).

RCDSB ONLINE LEARNING

Tips and expectations for RCDSB students doing online learning.

At the RCDSB we are committed to creating an inclusive, engaging and educational online learning environment for all students. Below are a few points to consider for online learning this year.



MEETING SPACE

Have a dedicated learning workspace in your home that you can work from all day. This could be your kitchen table or a home office.

BE AVAILABLE DURING SCHOOL HOURS

All students participating in online learning are expected to be online during the school day, in all virtual classes and meet assignment deadlines. Online learning is just as much class time as in-school learning.



RESPECTFUL

Online interactions should be respectful and adhere to the existing RCDSB Code of Conduct.

DRESS CODE

Please dress as you would for in-class learning.



MUTING

Try to limit background noise (avoid streaming music or video while connected to a virtual session), and mute yourself until you are called to speak.

VIDEO

If you do not wish to have your video on, please feel free to turn it off.



CONTRIBUTING & QUESTIONS

Once the teacher calls on you, remember to unmute yourself. Only one student should talk and contribute at a time.



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