

September 14, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) and the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit (LGLDHU) have been working closely with local school boards to implement the [Ministry of Education Guidelines for childcare and school reopening](#). The Guidelines are based on the key public health measures that have helped us “flatten the curve” of COVID-19 and keep the number of people infected with COVID-19 low in our communities.

Collaboration with families will be an important part of our success in keeping COVID-19 out of classrooms. If we all take precautions at home and in the community, there will be fewer opportunities for the virus to be present in our schools.

#### **What can families do to keep our students safe?**

- It is important to use the anonymous online [screening tool](#) (also available in [printable version](#)) each day to determine if your child/youth has possible symptoms of COVID-19 and should stay home from school and be tested for COVID-19.
- Help your child/youth learn how to put on and wear a face covering/mask safely. This is required for Grades 4 and up, and is recommended for younger children.
- Continue following public health precautions to protect yourself and your family against COVID-19, both at school and in the community. This includes staying home when sick and going for testing, avoiding large gatherings, washing hands frequently, wearing a mask when in enclosed public spaces, maintaining physical distancing of 2 metres when with people outside of your social circle, and regularly cleaning common surfaces. More information on how to protect your family can be found at [www.EOHU.ca/coronavirus](http://www.EOHU.ca/coronavirus) and [www.healthunit.org/coronavirus](http://www.healthunit.org/coronavirus).
- Make plans for how your child will be cared for if they are tested and waiting for the results to come back. Also prepare for if they are a contact of a case as they must be isolated as much as possible from other members of the family for 14 days. If they have COVID-19, prepare for them to be isolated from other members of the family for 14 days.
- Please respect privacy and refrain from posting information or rumours online that could identify anyone who has (or is suspected of having) COVID-19. Sharing rumours may stigmatize a child and be harmful to their mental health.

#### **What are public health and schools doing to keep our students safe?**

Public health has been working in collaboration with school boards to provide resources and direction on infection prevention and control measures to help prevent and reduce spread of COVID-19 in schools. Public health nurses will work with the schools to support infection prevention and control practices, case management, contact tracing, and communication with schools and families in the event that anyone becomes infected with COVID-19.

All individuals entering the school (including teachers, other employees and essential visitors) will be asked to self-screen using the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) tool, and to remain at home if they have any symptoms. All staff will be wearing a medical mask at school. In addition, they will use a face shield when in close contact (less than 2 metres) with students and others in the school. Schools also have heightened infection control procedures that would be activated if someone had COVID-19 while at the school, in addition to their regular, enhanced cleaning.

Communication and collaboration with the school community is an important part of keeping everyone informed and safe. Families will be notified if there is a positive case of COVID-19 at the school, and given instructions for next steps. The number of active cases in each school will be posted on the website of the school board, the health unit, and schools that have a website. To protect privacy, individual cases will not be identified by name.

### **What happens if a child becomes ill at school?**

As a precaution, students who become ill during the day will be isolated in a separate room, and their family will be called to come and pick them up from school as soon as possible. Symptomatic students will not be able to use student transportation to return home.

### **What happens if someone tests positive for COVID-19 and they could have been infectious while at the school?**

- The school will provide the public health unit with information about close contacts of the individual while they would have been infectious at school, including before and after school programs, and on the school bus, if applicable.
- All families will be notified if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 in the school.
- Families will be contacted by public health if their child/youth could have had close contact with the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 in the school, and given instructions for next steps. Close contacts will have to stay home for 14 days from the date of the last exposure. Public health will provide instructions for testing.
- The school will activate infection control procedures including cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and any other areas where the individual may have been. If school transportation is involved, the bus/vehicle will also be cleaned and disinfected.
- If there's an outbreak at the school (2 or more cases, at least one of which is determined to be linked to transmission at the school), public health will determine through its investigation whether it is necessary to cancel classes or close the school. Parents will be notified if cancellations or closures are required.

### **For more information**

For more information on COVID-19 and schools, including the latest updates and frequently asked questions, please visit:

- Eastern Ontario Health Unit website: [www.EOHU.ca/coronavirus](http://www.EOHU.ca/coronavirus)
- Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit website: [www.healthunit.org/coronavirus](http://www.healthunit.org/coronavirus) (or call 1-866-236-0123 if you don't have access to the internet)
- [Upper Canada District School Board \(UCDSB\) return-to-school plan \(UCDSB\)](http://www.ucdsb.on.ca): [www.ucdsb.on.ca](http://www.ucdsb.on.ca)
- [Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario \(CDSBEO\) return-to-school plan](http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca) [www.cdsbeo.on.ca](http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca)

We, in public health, are committed to supporting families and our school partners in navigating this unprecedented school year safely and successfully.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by:*

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*Original signed by:*

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