

# School Reopening Plan 2021-2022

*A Guide for the Safe Return to our Catholic Schools During COVID-19*

Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

August 2021

*Rooted in Faith, Alive in Spirit*

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## NPSC Mission & Vision

As we prepare to safely return to our Catholic schools and serve our students and families using our faith-based and inclusive approach, we are reminded of our important call to serve our students as a Catholic Faith learning community.

### Our Mission

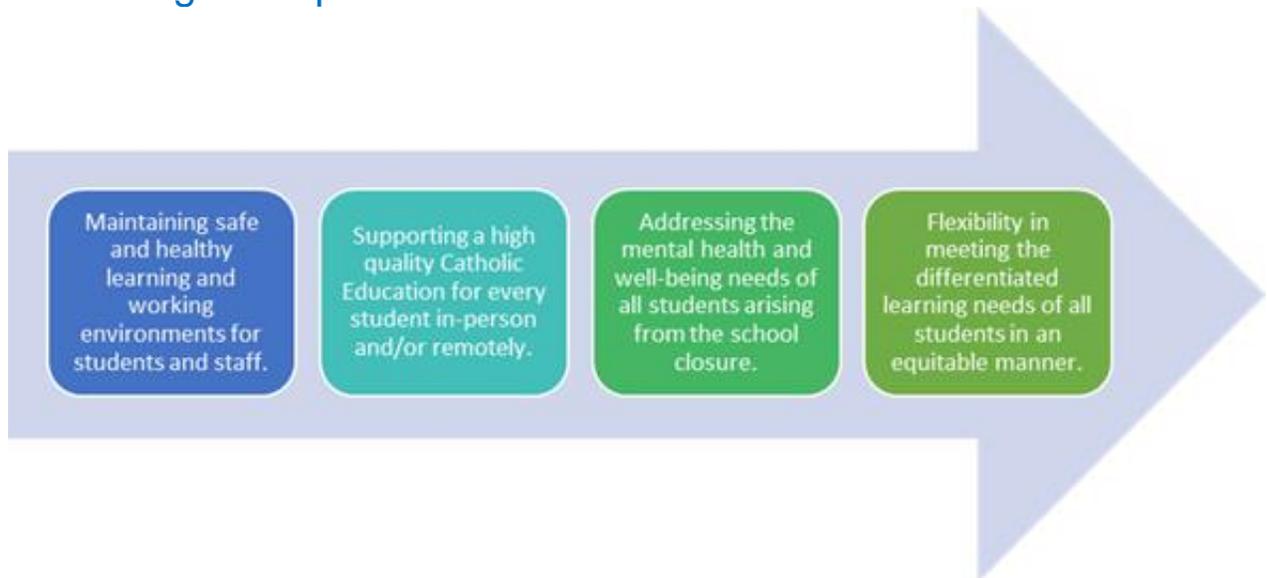
As a faith community, we provide learning opportunities that inspire, nurture and celebrate each learner's journey to:

- Reach their full potential;
- Be a contributing member of society;
- Live the richness of their faith;
- Embrace lifelong learning.

### Our Vision

Rooted in Faith, Alive in Spirit

## Our Guiding Principles for our Return to School



## Introduction

The health, safety and well-being of our students and staff remains as our top priority as the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board plans to reopen schools for the 2021-2022 school year.

On August 3, 2021 the Ministry announced that this September, all schools in the province will open for conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week. This applies to all Kindergarten to Grade 12 students. This preferred model of conventional delivery will ensure school every weekday for all students, with class sizes that reflect current regulations, cohorting, increased social interaction and with continued enhanced hygiene protocols in place.

A measured approach to reopening schools is important to support schools to maximize health and safety as places to work and learn and remain open to in-person learning for the full school year.

Students will attend in-person learning daily for the full school day (five instructional hours) in elementary and secondary schools across the province. As noted in [Memorandum 2021:B07 Planning for the 2021-22 School Year](#), remote learning will remain an option.

We are excited to welcome our students and staff back to school and look forward to planning the full return of our students. We are mindful of how important our relationships are to each individual student's overall success, mental health and well-being and the impact the school closure period has had on many of our students and families. Please be assured that every measure is being taken to prepare our school facilities, staff and students for a smooth and warm welcome back to our Catholic schools.

In planning for the 2021-2022 school year, the Ministry confirmed that parents will continue to have the option for their children to receive instruction remotely with synchronous learning instruction, which respects the fundamental role of parents in making the final determination whether they feel safe with their children returning to school. Parents were provided an opportunity to choose the learning mode for their children in the early summer of 2021.

In planning for the resumption of instruction in September, it is critical to balance the risk of direct infection and transmission of COVID-19 in children with the impact of school closures on their physical and mental health. Current evidence and experience support the concept that children can return to school in a carefully structured manner that protects children's health and minimizes risks from a public health perspective.

This document provides a high-level framework for how the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board plans to reopen schools to students and staff in a safe manner, while aiming to return to as normal conditions as possible. It is based on the Ministry's [COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance \(2021-2022\)](#) guidance document, originally released on August 3, 2021, and is aligned to the ongoing guidance provided by our North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit. This guide has also been informed by the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board's Emergency Planning Committee, with representation from health and safety, facilities, communications, curriculum and program, special education, business and finance, human resources and information technology departments, and the Joint Health & Safety Committees. In addition, further consultation with our union and federation partners, students, staff, and parents and guardians will be ongoing as our reopening plans further develop.

***It is important to note that the guidance outlined in this document is based on the most recent advice from the Ministry of Education and Public Health officials. As this plan is intended to be a flexible plan that may require revisions, it is subject to change and will be updated as required based on the guidance provided by the Ministry of Education and by provincial and local Public Health officials.***

## What We Know About COVID-19

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets generated when you cough, sneeze, or talk (including singing and yelling)
- Close, personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching a contaminated surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

### How long does the virus survive on surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be infected, clean the area first with a rag if visibly soiled, then use disinfectant approved by [Health Canada's website](#) to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Review the Safety Data Sheet and technical data sheet of the disinfectant to confirm contact time for disinfecting. Clean your hands by washing them with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

### Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

In general, human coronaviruses commonly cause mild, but occasionally more severe respiratory infections. It is estimated that they cause about 15% of common colds. Older patients and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- New onset of cough or worsening chronic cough
- Muscle aches and tiredness
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- Runny nose, nasal congestion (without other known cause)
- Sore throat
- Decrease or loss of sense of taste or smell
- Chills, headaches
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- For those over 70 years of age, they may experience symptoms of delirium, unexplained falls, acute functional decline or worsening of chronic conditions.

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

## Reducing the Spread

Protect your health and help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community by using these simple, easy and routine practices:

- Practice physical distancing
- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Sneeze [and cough into your sleeve](#)
- If you use a tissue, discard it immediately and wash your hands immediately afterwards
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Wear a [face covering](#) when physical distancing is not possible or may be hard
- Clean high touch surfaces frequently
- Avoid contact with people who are sick or who have symptoms of COVID-19
- Stay home if you are sick or have [symptoms of COVID-19](#). If you have symptoms, immediately isolate yourself, complete [the self-assessment tool](#), follow the instructions provided by the self-assessment tool, and arrange to be tested.
- The symptoms of COVID-19 can resemble those of a cold or flu, and it is recommended that any person who is experiencing symptoms related to cold, flu or COVID-19 call Telehealth at 1-866-797-000 or your primary healthcare provider for additional advice and guidance.

## [PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning](#)

All families have the option to continue student learning at home, in an online format this September. On August 13, 2020, the Ministry of Education released PPM 164 Requirements for Remote Learning <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/164.html>.

This policy and program memorandum outlines the requirements that will be followed in order to provide remote and synchronous learning. Parents who choose to have learning for their child facilitated virtually for the 2021-2022 school year, will be contacted by their school principal to confirm the next steps for their child's learning. It is important to note that a team approach will be taken to facilitate remote learning and therefore their assigned teacher may differ from the teacher in their registered school.

In an effort to maintain the health and safety requirements outlined by the Ministry of Education, should a parent who initially chooses online learning wish to change to face-to-face learning for their child, this change may be delayed until key transition times in the year, which will be determined at a later date.

## Guidance for NPSC Schools (Elementary and Secondary)

Our Catholic schools are required to take appropriate precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 inclusive of enhanced hygiene protocols. Each school's Joint Health and Safety representative will be included in the development and implementation of practices at the school level that align with the required practices and guiding principles outlined in this document. The following information reflects current Public Health practices and measures and the resulting required procedures and guiding principles that schools are expected to follow. Outlined below

are considerations for school Principals/Vice-Principals, staff, educational programming, and considerations for communication with parents.

## Enhanced Public Health and Hygiene Protocols

The following section includes information on a number of enhanced public health and hygiene protocols developed, and related practices and guiding principles.

### Self-Screening and Self-Isolation Requirements

- Staff members, parents, and children/students must not enter the school if they have [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Daily on-site confirmation of self-screening for all students, staff and visitors is required. All schools will implement the daily-on site confirmation of self-screening for all elementary and secondary students, staff and visitors for the first two weeks of the school year.
- Following this period, all staff and students must continue to self-screen every day before attending school using the [Ontario COVID-19 School and Child Care Self-Assessment Tool](#).
- Should the results from a self-assessment indicate the need for testing, call your nearest [testing centre](#) to arrange for testing for COVID-19. Individuals must self-isolate at home until the results are received. Individuals can check their results on the [COVID-19 results website](#).
- A checklist will be provided to parents to perform daily screening of their children before arriving at school.
- Self-assessment tools will be made available to staff to ensure awareness of possible symptoms of COVID-19.
- Signs will be posted at entrances to the school to remind students, staff, parents/caregivers, and essential visitors of screening requirements.
- If a student or staff member is experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), they must stay home from school and should seek testing and appropriate medical attention.
- If a student has a pre-existing medical condition, parents are advised to talk to the family's primary healthcare provider before returning to school.
- Staff and students who have returned from international travel must follow the [travel requirements for travellers entering Canada](#) outlined by the Federal Government prior to returning to school

### Protocol for Reporting Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

- Flowchart: ["You've been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, now what?"](#)
- Parents and students must report any symptoms of COVID-19 to their teacher and/or principal.
- If a staff or student has symptoms included on the [Ontario's self-assessment tool](#), they must immediately put on a medical mask, isolate and go home.
- Each school will continue to designate an isolation room/area for the temporary placement of any student that becomes ill during the day. The supervising staff will keep

a 2-metre distance from the ill child and both staff and child will wear a mask. Staff will wear other appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as necessary. The parent or guardian of the child who developed symptoms will be asked to come to pick up their child as soon as possible as well as any other children living at the same address, and continue with remote learning if they are well enough to do so. Similarly, staff members presenting symptoms will be required to leave the school, along with any other staff or students living at the same address.

- Families with children presenting symptoms or staff who are presenting symptoms should be tested for COVID-19 and isolate while test results are pending or not available, unless there is a known alternative diagnosis provided by a health care provider before entering or returning to school. If they are not tested, they should remain at home for a minimum of 10 days and until symptoms resolving for at least 24 hours, or 48 hours for vomiting/diarrhea. Information about how to access a testing centre is available on the [North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit website](#).
- Individuals who are not fully immunized or previously positive and have been identified as a high-risk close contact of a COVID-19 case, such as household members, should not attend school. These individuals should follow directions from the Health Unit on testing and self-isolation.
- Children in a household where a parent or other member has tested positive for COVID-19 are considered to be high risk contacts and should get tested and self-isolate. The Health Unit will provide detailed direction to high risk close contacts, including household members of a person diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Schools will report suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 to the local health unit.
- For an ill individual who has a known alternative diagnosis provided by a health care professional, return to school can occur if they do not have a fever and their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours or 48 hours if vomiting or diarrhea. Individuals will still need to use the COVID-19 school and child care screening tool, or a screening tool designated by the local public health unit, daily before attending school and may also be required to provide confirmation of self-screening prior to or upon arrival to school.
- If the COVID-19 test is **positive**:
  - If a person in the school community (staff or student) tests positive for COVID-19, they will be contacted by the health unit about their test result and given directions. If a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19 at a testing centre, they are unable to return to school until verbal clearance has been provided by the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit.
  - Following the initial positive test of COVID-19, students and/or staff can return to school once they receive verbal clearance from the health unit.

## Recordkeeping

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, contact tracing, facilitated by the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, is a critical process used to identify, educate and monitor individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected with a virus. In order to support this process if required, schools will maintain current records, including the following:

- Attendance records
- Student portfolio

- class lists and seating charts
- before-and-after child care lists
- transportation lists and seating charts
- essential visitors who are approved to enter the school
- special assignments and programs (for example, Education Community Partnership program (formerly Care Treatment Custody Corrections), Special Education)

Schools will maintain these records and the records will be readily available to public health for contact tracing purposes.

### **Physical Distancing**

- Within schools, all students and staff maintain a 1-2 metre distance from each other at all times, as possible.
- At the elementary level, students will remain in their classroom cohorts and maintain physical distance from other class cohorts.
- Contact within the school between class cohorts and staff will be minimized.
- Classrooms will be arranged to allow the most space as possible between students and to encourage physical distancing of 1-2 metres. It is important to note that in schools, physical distancing does not need to be maintained within each classroom cohort at all times, however individual classroom cohorts need to remain physically distanced (2m) from one another.
- Staff who are teaching or supporting more than one cohort will maintain a physical distance from the cohorts and will be required to wear a mask.
- Staff within schools will physically distance from each other.
- Hallway movement protocols have been developed to ensure students remain a safe distance apart while moving throughout the building.
- Students will enter and exit the building via designated entry and exit doors at the school.
- The daily timetable for students at elementary and secondary is projected to remain the same with some variations to instructional, recess and lunch blocks throughout the day. Parents will receive a communication from their child's specific school.
- Transportation will be provided to students who are eligible.

### **Student Masks**

- Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on school vehicles. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply.
- Non-medical 3-ply masks will also be made available for students.
- Students in Kindergarten will be encouraged, but not required, to wear non-medical or cloth masks in indoor spaces, as well as on school vehicles.
- Masks are not required to be worn outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible.
- Blocks throughout the day, such as nutritional breaks, lunch and outdoor recess, will be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks within their cohorts.

- Mask breaks for students will be incorporated throughout the day as long as 2-metre physical distancing is possible.
- Masks may be temporarily removed indoors to consume food and drink.
- Where they can be worn safely based on the activity, masking is encouraged for engaging in physical activity.

### **Staff Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- School staff and school bus drivers, school bus monitors and student aides will be provided with required PPE, including medical masks (surgical/procedural), eye protection and other PPE based on their specific role/job functions (for example, gloves, gowns).
- All school-based staff and visitors will be required to wear medical masks and eye protection indoors when supporting students without masks, including in hallways and during class, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.
- Staff are not required to wear medical masks outdoors. However, if staff are less than two metres from students outdoors who are not wearing masks, masks and eye protection must be worn.
- Staff must maintain at least 2-metres distance when consuming food/drinks.
- Additional PPE will be available within the school for students who exhibit signs of illness, such as coughing, including disposable masks, disposable gloves and face shields for an additional level of protection.
- The province of Ontario will continue to procure personal protective equipment for boards and guide requirements which will be communicated with our staff.
- If a staff member works with more than one class group, the staff member will wear a mask to limit cross-contamination.
- School staff that work in close proximity to students who have specialized needs, are medically fragile, or who are not wearing masks (i.e. students in kindergarten), will have additional PPE that meet their needs (i.e. gloves, face shields, gowns).
- Eye protection is not required for education staff working with students who wear masks.
- Where necessary for faces to be seen for lip reading to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing, masks with clear sections may be appropriate.
- Where staff are required to perform an Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP) or required to be in the same room when an AGMP is being performed, N95 respirators (fit tested) will be provided.

## **Preventing the Spread of COVID**

### **Health and Safety Hygiene Protocols for all Schools**

- A positive culture of good hand hygiene will be modelled and promoted by staff and with all students in our schools.
- Staff and students will be provided with the supplies they need to conduct appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and these supplies will be easily accessible.
- Student processes, routines and procedures for hand hygiene (i.e. upon entry, following recess, washroom breaks, before and after lunch) will be reviewed at each grade level.

- Staff and students will be provided with targeted, age-appropriate education in proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette guided by the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit.
- Age appropriate health unit signage will be posted in each classroom, outside of washrooms, at office reception areas and at hand sanitizing and handwashing stations.

### **Touch Point Cleaning**

- Cleaning will take place at least twice daily in all high contact areas including desks, tables, railings, door handles, light switches and other surfaces throughout the school's high touch surfaces or equipment (e.g. pencil sharpeners, water fountain knobs and push buttons, doorknobs, faucet handles, toys, electronic devices, school bus handrails and seats).
- High touch surfaces in each school have been identified and rigorous cleaning protocols have been established. Cleaning of high contact areas will be a minimum of twice daily.
- The frequency of [environmental cleaning](#) has also been increased in washrooms, and a regular schedule to clean regularly and be disinfected is in place.

### **Hand Sanitizer**

- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant will be provided to each school.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be placed at entry/exit points of the school, classrooms and high traffic areas, and will be refilled regularly.
- Hand sanitizer will be placed in all classrooms that do not have an available sink (water/soap) for hygiene purposes.

### **Sharing of Materials**

- Sharing of materials is permitted between students with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Students and staff are required to perform hand hygiene when entering and exiting the school as well as before entering the classroom, and to practice respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of infection.
- Materials in the classroom such as playdough will be provided individually and are not to be shared.
- Students will fill water bottles rather than drinking directly from the mouthpiece of a fountain.
- The number of common surfaces that need to be touched will be reduced (e.g. prop doors open, no-touch waste containers).
- Reduced or restricted access to non-essential shared equipment will be identified and post-play hand hygiene practices will be implemented.
- Student supplies will be provided to minimize sharing (e.g. art supplies, pencils).
- Students belongings will be separated from others (e.g. in cubbies or separated areas) as best as possible within a class cohort.
- We ask parents to limit items to be carried between the child/youth setting and home and a list will be provided of recommended student materials.

## **Cleaning Products**

- Our schools will use products that provide both the cleaning and disinfection action.
- Schools will only use cleaning and disinfectant products that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and will be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

## **Staff Training**

On August 31, 2021, staff will be provided with a day of training on the health and safety protocols inclusive of all enhanced hygiene measures and required adaptations.

## **School Main Office and Reception Areas**

Portable Plexiglass will be placed in high traffic areas where distancing may be problematic, such as at the front reception area of the main office and guidance reception areas. Where a distance of 2-metres can be maintained, plexiglass is not needed.

## **Isolation Room / Area**

Each school will designate an isolation room/area. This room/area will be used for the temporary placement of any student that presents with COVID symptoms and becomes ill during the day. An isolation kit containing staff/student PPE for illnesses will be provided to each school containing: nitrile, vinyl, or synthetic gloves; face mask for staff member, face shield or safety goggles; box of tissues; hand sanitizer; disposable gowns/lab coat; and board approved disinfectant.

## **Ventilation**

- Ventilation and/or air filtration is a key element in the strategic, layered and measured approach to support healthy and safe learning environments for students and staff.
- All ventilation systems at NPSC schools have been assessed to ensure they are fully operational and serviced where necessary.
- System inspections have taken place and will continue during the school year to ensure systems are operating properly.
- Ventilation systems have been modified to increase the amount of incoming fresh air and have been programmed to operate longer hours to ensure occupied spaces have full air exchanges before, during, and after class time.
- Stand-alone HEPA filtration units have been positioned in all occupied Kindergarten classrooms and all other occupied classrooms which do not have access to mechanical ventilation systems.
- Stand-alone HEPA filtration units have also been provided in libraries, gyms, staff rooms and offices where mechanical ventilation is not available. Information regarding ventilation and air filtration for each NPSC school will be available on the [NPSC website](#).

## Returning to School: School Operations

### Student Attendance

Student attendance will continue to be taken for all students that arrive at school, and a record will be maintained when students are in areas other than their classroom. This will assist the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit to ensure accurate contact tracing should a positive case of COVID-19 be determined.

### Conventional School Daily Timetables

All NPSC schools in the elementary and secondary panels will adopt timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting of students as much as possible, in order to employ a measured approach to school reopening and return to learning that emphasizes continued health and safety protocols.

### Elementary

- Elementary school students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 will attend school five days per week, with 300 minutes of instruction per day, remaining in one cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch.
- Cohorted classes will stay together with some exceptions
- Students may continue to see changes in the timing of recesses, lunches, and bathroom breaks as they are staggered to support cohorting.
- Specialized teachers and itinerant teachers like French, music and preparation time teachers, are permitted to go into classrooms to provide the full breadth of programming for students. However, schools may continue to limit the number of student contacts per day, while ensuring the rich provision of programming.
- Students will remain in their designated classroom cohort with their classroom teacher(s) throughout the day.
- Students will also be able to leave their classrooms to receive additional supports in shared spaces (ie: another classroom, library) and may interact with other students in the group with the appropriate distancing, masks (Grades 1- 8) and hand hygiene
- Student cohorts may come together indoors in shared spaces with a distance of 2 meters between cohorts.

### Secondary

- Secondary students will receive instruction through a quadmester model, where students take two credits at a time, spending the morning on one subject and the afternoon on a second subject, with four segments to the school year.
- Each segment of two in-person credit courses will be planned in approximate 9-week cycles. Further details on this model and student timetables will be provided by St. Joseph-Scollard Hall to secondary students and parents prior to September 7, 2021.
- It is important to note that this model will be planned for the first semester and the circumstance will be monitored and assessed for second semester with the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Public Health.

### **Entry and Exit Routines**

- School entry and exit times for students may be staggered, and zoning multiple entry doors for classes and grades may be used to ensure physical distancing.
- Students will be required to follow hand hygiene practices as they enter the school/classroom(s).

### **School Signage, Markings and Directional Flow**

- In each school, signage on walls and floors will help students maintain a 2-metre distance from one another. Signage will be posted at entrances to classrooms, school entrances and exits, common areas, and meeting spaces such as the main office, principal or vice-principal offices, outside elevators, and in the resource room.
- Where practical, separation markers will be placed to signal one-way direction within the school. This will assist in maintaining 2-metre distances for everyone in the school.

### **Parents and Visitors to the School, Including Student Drop Off and Pick Ups**

- In an effort to minimize student contact and access to the school during this period, parents and visitors will be able to access the school by appointment only with their principal. Each school will provide details and contact information.
- All visitors will be required to sign in, confirm self-screening and provide contact information.
- All visitors will also be required to self-screen, perform hand hygiene upon entry to the school, maintain physical distancing and wear a medical mask while on school premises. A medical mask will be provided by the school if needed.
- Parent drop off and pick up areas will be clearly marked outside the front of the school.

### **Outdoor School Spaces: Playgrounds / Play Structures**

- Students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible. Staff may continue to choose to use pylons or other means to help students maintain 2-metre distances from one another in the yard.
- Students who use the playground equipment will be required to wash their hands before and after outdoor play and playground use.
- School play structures should be used by one cohort at a time and cleaned between use, where possible.
- Routine cleaning of surfaces on playgrounds, including high touch surfaces made of plastic or metal, requires soap and water but not disinfectant. Cleaning of wooden surfaces is not recommended

### **Recess**

- Students do not need to stay within their cohort during recess and breaks outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible.
- Shared materials outdoors are permitted, with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Recess may be staggered at elementary based on the size of the outdoor space and the availability of supervisors.

- Where possible, areas will be designated outdoors for each cohort to minimize contact with other students from outside their class cohort.
- Principals will develop a schedule and routine that allows for students to maintain appropriate physical distancing while still having an opportunity to engage in healthy physical activities outdoors.

### **Washrooms**

- Washrooms will be marked off to ensure physical distancing of 2-metres and routines will be set up for access.
- Mixing of cohorts needs to be limited as much as possible.
- The process for students to physically distance from those in different cohorts and hand hygiene will be reviewed.
- Based on the size of the washroom and the number of stalls, numbers will be limited in each washroom with a sign indicating the numbers of people permitted in the washroom at one time.
- Increased cleaning and disinfection of the washroom will be in place.
- Signage will be placed inside the washroom, reminding students of both physical distancing and proper hygiene.
- Principals will implement a shared tracking system for staff to record the time and location of student access to washrooms. This will assist with contact tracing if needed.

### **Lockers/Cubbies**

Use of lockers/cubbies is permitted. Students may have controlled access to lockers/cubbies and other storage areas for personal items during COVID-19. If possible, it is advised that all materials stay with them in the classroom. Personal items being brought to school (for example: backpack, clothing, sun protection, water bottles, food) should be labeled. Each school will determine the storage of personal items in designated areas.

### **Doors**

Where possible, and safe to do so, classroom and office doors should 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 certain doors closed and open doors to minimize contact in high traffic areas.

### **Water Bottles**

Students will be encouraged to bring their own labelled water bottle to school each day. Water fountains can be used to refill water bottles. Drinking directly from water fountains during COVID-19 will not be permitted.

### **Lunch / Nutrition Breaks**

- Students may eat together outdoors without distancing.
- Students may eat together indoors, with a minimum distance of 2-metres maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible within a cohort.
- Students will continue to be allowed to eat their lunch in their classroom with their cohort to decrease contact where possible and may vary from school to school.

- Students will be asked to wash their hands before eating.
- A no food sharing policy will be enforced.
- In larger schools such as the high school, a procedure will be established for designated cohort lunch areas within the school.

### **Shared Spaces: Learning Commons, Libraries, Wellness Hubs and Gymnasiums**

- These areas may still be open to students within our schools; however, masking and as much distancing as possible should be maintained between cohorts
- Students may access libraries to borrow books and access resources with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

### **Student Nutrition Programs**

- Student nutrition programs and non-instructional food events (such as pizza days) can continue with the provision of 2-metre distancing, and additional cleaning of the area on a daily basis.
- Snack trays will be prepared with individually wrapped portions and students will eat in their classroom cohort.
- Surfaces, bins, and containers used in all food preparation areas will be disinfected before and after each use.

### **School assemblies**

School assemblies or other student/school gatherings are permitted and should follow the relevant provincial requirements under the *Reopening Ontario Act*. This can include multiple cohorts in alignment with provincial capacity limits and includes allowance for in-school student to student peer support programs such as “reading buddies”.

### **Extra-curricular and After School Activities**

Consultation is currently on-going with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and the four local school boards to outline measures to support resuming inter-school sport activities and will follow the requirements outlined by provincial health resources.

#### *Sports Team and Clubs*

Clubs, activities, sport teams, bands and extra-curriculars are permitted. Cohorts may interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, and indoors with masking and appropriate physical distancing.

#### *Inter-school Sport Activities*

- High and low-contact activities are permitted outdoors without masking.
- High and low-contact activities are permitted indoors. Masking is encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.

### **Fitness Rooms and Equipment**

- Physical fitness has been shown to have a positive impact on both physical and mental well-being.
- Our secondary school may allow the use of their student conditioning facilities and will ensure that proper cleaning procedures are in place for all equipment that is use.
- Staff/students must agree to clean all equipment before and after use and maintain 2-metre distances from others that may be in the room simultaneously.

### **Field Trips**

- As indicated in the COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools, day trips and overnight stays are permitted and should follow the relevant provincial requirements under the Reopening Ontario Act.
- Please note, our board is currently working with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and the Nipissing-Parry Sound Student Transportation Services Consortium to ensure all provincial requirements are in place to safely resume school field trips.

### **Emergency Response: Fire & Lockdown Drills**

- Procedures for conducting emergency and crisis response drills (e.g., lockdown, secure and hold, shelter in place) will continue to be aligned with current provincial and local public health guidance and the Ministry of Education's COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools (2021-22).
- Practice fire drills will be planned to continue in consultation with local municipality Fire Departments
- Classes will move throughout the building while maintaining 2-metres between cohorts (classes) of students in the hallway and at all exits.
- Each Principal will 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 will be identified that would allow for a 1-2 metre distance between cohorts of students to be maintained.
- Physical lockdown drills will take place respecting all distancing and masking requirements.

### **Before and After School Childcare**

Schools, child care operators and authorized recreation providers in schools should follow the guidance for before and after school programs and collaborate to ensure that student lists and information are maintained and readily available to be provided to public health for contact tracing purposes in accordance with all applicable legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### **Transportation**

- We have been working collaboratively with the Nipissing Parry Sound Student Transportation Services (NPSSTS) consortium inclusive of the four local area school boards to plan and prepare for a safe return to school.
- Parents and guardians were requested to complete a survey in June 2021 to indicate their intention for their child to receive school bus transportation, pending eligibility. In

order to ease pressure on transportation demand, the Ministry of Education, is "Encouraging active forms of travel or private transportation by parents and caregivers, where possible."

- The use of non-medical masks for students in grades K to 12 is required on school vehicles. Students in kindergarten will continue to wear face coverings on student transportation. Exceptions should be made for students with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking.
- Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver contracting COVID-19. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort should be seated together where possible.
- School vehicles should follow an enhanced cleaning protocol of disinfecting high-touch surfaces (for example, handrails, seatbacks) at least twice daily. Reducing Exposure: Prior to boarding the school bus, bus drivers, students, parents and staff must self-assess for any COVID symptoms and not board a school transportation if any symptoms are present. All students and drivers who experience symptoms will be required to self-isolate and stay home as per the school entry process. A student who develops symptoms while at school should not be permitted to return home on a school transportation and should be picked up by a parent/guardian or designated emergency contact.

## Supporting Student Learning, Well-Being and Success

- We recognize that parents and students will be both excited and anxious about returning to school. To support in the transition from remote learning during the school closure period, to in person at school, our communication will be sent home via your child's school principal on what school will look like for September 7, 2021, shared through EDSBY.
- Our school staff will provide resources and activities, prepared by our Student Support Services team, that recognizes the impact the school closure period may have had on our students using a strength-based resiliency approach to supporting the students' return to school. Our teams will continue to employ a holistic approach, with a focus on the whole student, who is created in the image of God.
- Student Support Services staff will provide age-appropriate Social Emotional Learning resources for each staff to focus on during the first week back to school through both in-person and distance learning activities. Targeted support will continue for those that require additional assistance throughout the year.
- Support will continue to be available to assist with the mental health needs of our students.
- All staff will be made aware of the potential impact of trauma on student learning, behaviour and relationships. A school-based trauma-informed approach will help students feel safe to learn. August Summer Institutes are being planned.
- Resources for a school-based approach to trauma will be shared at the September Professional Development days for staff to implement during the return to school.

## Equity for All Students

School and system staff will continue to exercise a differentiated approach and supports for all students that require additional supports. We will continue to use a school-wide approach to understanding and supporting solutions to address the impact of the school closure period on some groups of students in our schools. We will continue to work together with our staff, parents and community parents to find creative solutions to ensure that our students flourish and reach their full potential.

## Classroom Programming / Learning and Instruction

### Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

- Beginning in September, students will be supported in transitioning to their next grade or course, acknowledging the prolonged absence of students from the classroom.
- Part of this support should include assessments in order to identify students' strengths and gaps in learning at key instructional times, to ensure students have fundamental building blocks in advance of new content.
- The primary purpose of instruction and assessment is to raise the skill level of all our learners in their achievement of overall curriculum expectations across all subjects, courses, and grades.
- In our conventional return to learning for September 2021, all areas of the Ontario Curriculum will be facilitated with a focus on students working towards achieving the overall expectations in the curriculum.
- Educators will continue to utilize and leverage the wide variety of educational resources, including learning recovery resources by the Ministry of Education and the rich digital resources developed in our NPSC Education Portal as well as by many publishers and partners in education during the school closure period.
- Assessment practices will continue to be aligned to the Ministry's **Growing Success** document and provide students with ongoing and timely feedback throughout the learning process.
- We will continue to support staff to facilitate instruction and assessment in class, continuously build their skills in synchronous learning and opportunities to leverage our digital resources and board approved learning platforms: Google Apps for Education, EDSBY and Brightspace.

### Kindergarten

- Although 2-metre distancing may not be as practical for our early learners, classroom rules that promotes as much distance as possible within a cohort will be planned.
- Learning activities will be designed for small groups, and furniture and playing areas should be used to help maintain as much distance as possible within a cohort.
- Plush toys will be removed and will be temporarily stored during the pandemic.
- Toys and manipulatives in the classroom may be shared with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Students may have their own school supplies, and the sharing of materials is permitted with appropriate hand hygiene measures before and after use and respiratory etiquette.

### **Primary/Junior/Intermediate Classroom Organization**

- Educators will rearrange their classroom so that as much distance as possible can be maintained between students.
- Classroom spaces should continue to be assessed with the consideration of moving unnecessary furniture to allow as much distancing as possible, and to allow teachers as much teaching space as possible.
- Desks should face forward rather than in circles or groupings.
- Students are permitted to share resources (i.e. books) between students during class with appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- The teacher should maintain a table of items to be cleaned, and these should be wiped off by the following morning when returning to class (using provided disinfectant).
- Parents will be provided with a letter and list of essential student items to bring to school.
- Supplies for instructional lessons 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 cleaned or disinfected between each use.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided in each classroom setting.
- Class gathering should not occur on shared carpet areas.
- Students should not sit on carpets unless they are able to maintain the same location and exercise physical distance.
- It is recommended that, for the interim, gathering carpets are rolled up and set aside.

### **Physical and Health Education**

- In elementary and applicable secondary Health and Physical Education courses, the use of gymnasiums, change rooms, weight rooms, indoor physical education equipment and shared outdoor equipment are permitted with physical distancing and hand hygiene.
- High and low-contact activities are permitted indoors and outdoors as follows:
  - Masking is not required when playing high or low contact activities outdoors.
  - Masking is encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.
  - Windows should be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.
    - School swimming pools are permitted, with physical distancing around the pool area encouraged to discourage mixed-cohort congregating.
- Capacity in change rooms will be limited.
- Educators will plan physical activities that support physical distancing while also limiting the use of shared equipment.
- Shared equipment will be disinfected after each use and students will be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.
- Student safety and guidelines will be reviewed and adapted as needed during COVID-19.
- The following resources, [Physical & Health Education \(PHE\) Canada's resource](#) or the [Ontario Physical and Health Education Association \(Ophea\)](#), will continue to be used by our staff to inform the planning of physical education activities in alignment with current public health recommendations.

## **Science and the Arts**

- Teaching and learning in these curriculum areas may continue fully with activities exercising as much physical distancing as possible.
- The sharing of equipment between students within a cohort is now permitted with the appropriate hand hygiene protocols and respiratory etiquette. Where equipment is needed for different classes, the equipment must be sanitized before each use.

## **Technology**

- The Board will continue to offer professional learning opportunities for staff to ensure that they are well positioned to use digital tools effectively. At NPSC, we use EDSBY as our main communication tool, Google Classroom and Google Meet as part of the Google Suite of tools, and Brightspace in some classrooms.
- Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the three professional activity days will be used to prepare for the return to in-person learning.
- In the event of a move to remote learning, students who do not have a device at home will be prioritized for a school loaned device to support the continuity of learning and/or learning at home.
- To ensure equitable access, families requiring internet access will be provided an internet ready device.
- When devices such as a Chromebook are being scheduled for alternative use, it must be wiped down with a sanitizer wipe before changing users. Disinfectant and/or an isopropyl alcohol solution will work on electronic devices. Waiting 24-72 hours as a precaution is still advised.

## **Specialty Programs Grade 7 & 8 and Experiential Courses Grades 9-12**

- There are some courses and programs that will require greater modifications than others given the goal of maintaining physical distance from one another, maintain student cohorts, the travel between schools, and the disinfection of any shared equipment.
- While our goal is to provide instruction in-person and provide students with authentic hands on experiential learning experiences, we recognize we may have some limitations at this time as we begin the school year.
- Our Health and Safety teams are developing guidelines to assist staff in modifying activities such as science labs, construction technology, instrumental music, family studies, innovation, design and technology, physical education, hospitality courses, etc. Where safety cannot be addressed with in-person activities or in-person is not feasible, alternative virtual programming will be provided.

## **Music Programs Elementary and Secondary**

- Music programs are permitted in areas with adequate ventilation.
- Singing and the use of wind instruments will be permitted:
  - Use of wind instruments is permitted indoors within a cohort if a minimum distance of 2-metres or more can be maintained. As much distance as possible should be encouraged and use of large, well-ventilated spaces should be prioritized.
  - Use of wind instruments is permitted outdoors in mixed cohorts with distancing encouraged.

- Singing is permitted indoors. Masking is encouraged but not required for singing indoors if a minimum distance of two metres can be maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible maintained within a cohort.
- Guidelines and practices outlined in the [Ontario Educators' Association - Framework for the Return to Music Classes](#) will be followed.

### **Cooperative Education (Secondary)**

- In-person community placements will be arranged in alignment with the *Reopening Ontario Act*, the direction and recommendations of the local health unit, the direction of the school board, the interests of the students, and with the safety and curriculum requirements of the [Cooperative Education curriculum](#).
- If in-person placements are not possible, co-op placements will be offered virtually, where feasible.
- Cooperative education is a key component of Specialist High Skills Majors, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, and Dual Credit Programs.

### **Supporting Students with Special Education Needs**

- Return to school will present unique challenges to students with medical, developmental and/or behavioural complexities and their families. Students with specialized learning needs will continue to be provided individualized education plans (IEPs) and specialized services as applicable.
- If we are in an adapted return to school model where students attend in cohorts on a specific schedule, students with special needs will have the option of attending school every day.

### **System Classrooms**

- Students in our Learning Assistance Center Programs and Learning Skills Programs will resume in – person learning in September 2021. Additional risk mitigation strategies will be in place to reduce infection risks to students and staff. These classrooms will represent their own cohort; however, the success and well-being of our students is a priority. Cohorting and mixing of cohorts will be considered and planned with the overall goal of minimizing the number of contacts in a school day and the continued provision of enhanced hygiene protocols.
- Physical classroom spaces will be assessed in conjunction with all classroom spaces to ensure physical distancing.
- Cohort considerations for support from Educational Assistants (EAs) for students with an IEP.
- Continued learn from home supports (i.e. using virtual After Schools Skills Development Program model) will be made available for those students/families who choose to continue to learn at home.

### **Students with Medical and Health Conditions**

Most students with underlying medical conditions should be able to safely attend school provided that the appropriate enhanced safety measures are in place. However, it is recommended that parents/caregivers discuss this with the child's health-care providers so that they can make an informed decision based on individual circumstances. Students will continue to receive access to therapy and other services while in the school environment following established protocols. Should families choose for their children to receive instruction from home, a team approach will be used to support your child virtually (i.e. classroom teacher, classroom resource teacher, educational assistant), including the provision of virtual care of services and supports.

### **Specialized Personal Protective Equipment**

It is recommended that students wear Non-Medical Masks (NMM) while in school. We recognize that some students, for example those with expressive communication difficulties (including those with articulation problems or neurologic issues), may be disproportionately adversely affected by having to wear a NMM at school. Students' needs will be evaluated individually, in collaboration with families, to determine the individual approach to wearing NMMs while in school.

### **Provision of Service by Community Partners**

- In cases where therapists (both internal and external to the school board) are supporting a student, active communication between the school, parents and therapist(s) are encouraged to develop transition plans in order to provide seamless transition-to-school and service and support continuity.
- Students who require additional supports in the school environment require careful planning and health and safety measures in place in order to reduce infection and transmission risks to all.

### **Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being**

- Our Student Support Services team will continue to support students in their transition from the school closure periods at home to in-person learning at school.
- There will be a continued focus for support from a relationship focused lens and provide support to educators in their preparation of receiving students in the fall.
- School Mental Health Ontario resources will be provided prior to the beginning of the school year, which includes supports for system and school leaders, educators, support staff, students and families.
- Our Student Support Services team will be assigned to specific schools, which will be helpful if the need to enact contact tracing emerges.
- Each school will have a designated space for use by the Student Support Services team and we encourage the use of our Virtual Care platforms in order to provide continuity of service to students and families, where possible and permissible.

## Provincial Assessments and Graduation Requirements

- **EQAO**

For the 2021-22 school year, regular EQAO assessments for grades 3 and 6 will resume in the new digital format for math, reading and writing. Students in Grade 9 math will complete the Grade 9 math digital adaptive assessment in-person. Students learning remotely can choose to participate in the EQAO assessments in-person at the discretion of the school board as long as all applicable health and safety measures can be met. More information will be provided throughout the school year.

- **Literacy Graduation Requirements**

The literacy graduation requirement is waived for students graduating in the 2021-2022 school year. The literacy graduation requirement will be restored for students graduating in the 2022-2023 school year. Students in grades 10 and 11 and non-graduating students, including those who are learning remotely, are required to work towards the literacy graduation requirement, through participation in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), adjudication or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC).

- **Community Involvement Graduation Requirements**

The community involvement graduation requirement has been reduced from 40 hours to a minimum of 20 hours of community involvement activities for students graduating in the 2021-2022 school year. Temporary changes to reduce barriers students may face to earn their community involvement hours and provide greater flexibility in how they earn their hours will continue for the 2021-2022 school year. The community involvement graduation requirement of 40 hours will be restored in 2022-2023 and students working towards their OSSD should be supported to meet these requirements in time for their graduating year.

## Conclusion

As we prepare to welcome back our students this fall for the 2021-2022 school year, we remain grateful that you have entrusted us to provide a rich Catholic education. Our parent community can be assured that the safety and well-being of our students and staff remain at the heart of all decisions and in the development and continuation of all processes and protocols outlined in this framework. We understand our parent community will have a range of unique family situations and work circumstances that may need to be supported and it is our goal to continue to work with each of our families in a flexible manner in the fall.

We continue to work diligently with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and provincial and local partners to provide a thoughtful and responsive reopening plan, and we understand that flexibility and creativity are required to achieve shared solutions during this unique period. Our School Principals and Board Communications Department will continue to communicate regularly with parents and students as we return to school in the fall. As a Board, we will continue to use EDSBY as our main communication platform as well as npsc.ca and social media for regular updates.

## Resources / References

- [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#)
- Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools
- [COVID-19 Reopening Schools](#)
- [COVID Symptoms Ministry of Health Document](#)
- [North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit - Coronavirus](#)
- Ottawa Catholic District School Board: Blueprint for Return to School: July 2020
- Calgary Catholic District School Board: Reopening Plan May 2020