



REPORT TO

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

### RETURN TO SCHOOL UPDATE

*"The Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous."  
Psalm 146:8*

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
August 31, 2020	September 3, 2020	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>

Barbara Loporati, Senior Coordinator, Planning Services  
 Shawna Campbell, Superintendent of Schools, Area 3 & Early Years Programs  
 John Wujek, Superintendent of Schools, Area 5  
 Corrado Maltese, Coordinator, Occupational Health and Safety Department  
 Shazia Vlahos, Chief of Communications and Government Relations  
 Martin Farrell, Superintendent, Environmental Support Services  
 Deborah Friesen, Superintendent, Capital Assets and Renewal  
 Michael Loberto, Superintendent, Planning and Development Services  
 Steve Camacho, Chief Information Officer

### INFORMATION REPORT

#### Vision:

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.*

#### Mission:

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.*

*We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*



Brendan Browne, PhD  
 Director of Education

D. Koenig  
 Associate Director  
 of Academic Affairs

L. Noronha  
 Associate Director of Facilities,  
 Business and Community  
 Development, and  
 Chief Financial Officer

## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last update to the Reopening Action Plan was submitted to the August 20, 2020 Board meeting for information and consideration. The Plan is updated as necessary and is available on the TCDSB website. Staff Guidelines were released Monday August 31, 2020 and provided to staff on the internal intranet website. Further updates to initiatives that require costing, feasibility and implementation strategies are presented here for the Board's further consideration.

A financial analysis (*Appendix 'A'*) including allocation of funding recently provided by the Federal government (August 27, 2020) to enhance provincial funding already committed towards a safe return to school. Additional initiatives that were being explored (tents, H2O bottle filling stations) will be implemented through use of this additional funding.

Registration questionnaire results have been compiled and distributed to Principals for follow up with families that were not able to respond by the August 26, 2020 deadline.

Several key events and communications have occurred since the shutdown of schools in March 2020 and were referenced in the Return to School Updates at the August 14 & 20, 2020 Board Meetings. The following items that affect the TCDSB Reopening Action Plan have occurred in the past week:

<b>August 26, 2020</b>	TCDSB Return to School Virtual Townhall
<b>August 26, 2020</b>	Registration Questionnaire Closed
<b>August 27, 2020</b>	Federal Government announces funding for Reopening Schools
<b>August 31, 2020</b>	Release of Staff Guidelines for Reopening
<b>Sept. 1,2,3, 2020</b>	Professional Development Days

*The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 40 hours*

## B. PURPOSE

To provide the Board with updates as they pertain to the TCDSB Reopening Action Plan.

## **C. BACKGROUND**

1. *At the August 20, 2020 Special Board meeting, the Board approved some additional motions pertaining to the Return to School plan.* Approved motions included a delayed start to school (September 14) which includes a staggered entry dates for elementary and secondary, added physical distancing where possible, improvements to ventilation, water bottles for all students, portable hand washing stations, use of reserve funds to hire additional school based staff and the purchase of tents for use as outdoor classroom space.
2. *The TCDSB Reopening Action Plan continues to be updated to reflect recent changes.* Items from Board motions and Ministry updates that are confirmed have been included for parents to reference. The plan will continue to be updated as information changes moving toward school reopening.
3. *On August 26, 2020, TCDSB staff held a virtual townhall to provide families with an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on return to school plans.* Key staff supporting the TCDSB Reopening Action Plan participated and the number of attendees reached 4,906. Questions were organized into themes and updated on the FAQs page.
4. *On August 26, 2020, the Registration Questionnaire was closed. The questionnaire is intended to gather much needed data* concerning families choices for in person or remote learning as well determining how many children will opt for school bus transportation. Principals have been following up with families who were unable to complete the questionnaire before it closed. Initial results indicate approximately 96% have responded. Currently 69% have chosen to attend school in person and 27% have opted for virtual learning.

## **D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS**

### *Cohorting and Distancing*

5. *A regional approach to the allocation of additional resources will be addressed with the following considerations:*

- First priority to address schools within high COVID-19 incidence areas as identified by Toronto Public Health (*There are 36 schools in these areas*)
  - Next priority given to kindergarten classes and then Grade 7 and 8 classes thereafter to achieve distancing where facilities or TCDSB resources allow, and will then explore options for space outside of TCDSB resources.
  - Staff have been in contact with City staff to identify community centre, public library and park spaces that could assist with distancing.
  - Additionally, staff continue to engage other community partners for use of spaces that can provide recreation/physical education space for schools in close proximity.
6. ***An analysis of the 36 TCDSB schools located in the TPH identified high incidence areas indicates that students can be distanced within the existing buildings through the use of larger spaces such as libraries and gyms.*** Allocation of staffing and number of students attending in person will inform class layouts and distancing measures required. Human Resources and Planning staff are collaborating on providing the most effective classroom layouts to maximize distancing requirements in these locations.
7. ***Should available funding remain following the above implementation strategy, staff will proceed to address remaining schools with capacity concerns*** starting with kindergarten classes using the same methodology as above.

### **Admissions and Registration**

8. ***TCDSB issued a registration questionnaire to*** confirm the intent of families to have students engage in learning in person or remotely. The questionnaire also collected data concerning transportation needs and ***closed on August 26, 2020.***
9. ***Principals are following up with families who did not or could not complete the questionnaire to determine their intent.*** Principals are to have confirmation completed by September 3<sup>rd</sup>.
10. ***Both Elementary and Secondary school administrative staff have been directed not to process any student applications that remain on waitlists in SOAR until the confirmation of placed and registered applications is completed and class reorganization and space needs have been met.*** Waitlists will be held until all registered and placed students have been accommodated

in person or virtually to ensure that class sizes are maintained and reduced where possible. Once this process is completed, regular processing of waitlisted applications will be allowed to resume dependent on available space in either in person or virtual classes.

11. ***Students will be able to move from one model to the other at predetermined re-entry dates as below or within a reasonable amount of time determined by the school Principal.***

Elementary – November 1, February 1

Secondary – mid November, beginning February, mid April (Quad timelines)

This direction allows for adjustment of class sizes and staffing allocations in alignment with collective agreement requirements. Some students may need to be waitlisted until there is room within the requested class or there are enough students on the waitlist to generate a new class

### **Plexiglass Shields**

12. ***Staff were asked to implement the purchase of Plexiglass desk shields for classes of over 15 students.*** Implementation will be determined using a regional approach, schools in high needs areas first and then proceeding with kindergarten rooms and Grade 7 and 8 classes in schools with limited capacity. Staff will include this element in their review with Principals.

13. ***A Plexiglass specification for student desks has been confirmed*** and the procurement process is underway and will be made available for classes in excess of 15 students.

14. ***Plexiglass shielding for office and administrative areas is currently on order and will be delivered by the Warehouse Courier service.***

### **Staffing and Recruitment**

15. ***Normal Human Resources Department activities associated with September re-entry are underway and targeted for September 14, 2020 completion.***

These activities include recruitment of all staff to address attrition and operational needs, filling Long-Term Occasional teaching assignments and oversight of all employee group return-to-work meetings. Return to work meetings are experiencing delays as a result of the current re-organization of in-class and virtual learning environments.

16. ***Strategic recruitment of various school-based positions is ongoing to assist in meeting the demands of physical distancing and enhanced cleaning.*** Targets

for recruitment have been established based on need and approved funding. These recruitment efforts include the hiring of 125 caretakers to support enhanced cleaning requirements, use of 45 retired Principals for additional administrative support, and 20 additional Child & Youth Workers and 100 Occasional Teachers for direct in-class support.

17. *In preparation for the new school year and to provide additional support, assistance and enhanced safety measures for our students, elementary school principals have approval to hire additional Lunchtime Supervisors in elementary schools.* Elementary school Principals can allocate all Lunch Supervisors an additional 1.5 hours per day and Secondary school Principals have allocated all Secondary Student Supervisors an additional 20 days for the academic year to assist with supervision/screening requirements.

#### **HVAC and Ventilation Staff Needs**

18. *The current TCDSB inventory of equipment requires the effective servicing of over 400 boilers, 25 chillers, and thousands of Air Handling Units, exhaust fans, make up air units, and other HVAC equipment.* Given the need to upgrade the current level of inspection, service and repair, it will be necessary to improve service delivery with additional staff.
19. *The Environmental Support Services (ESS) Department has only two (2) full time HVAC technicians and limited number of Maintenance Mechanics dedicated to servicing this equipment. To better respond to increased demand, ESS will hire two (2) additional HVAC technicians and two (2) Maintenance mechanics on temporary one-year contracts.* This would reduce the reliance on external contractors and establish improved service levels and standards. ESS will be more responsive and provide consistent service that will benefit schools who have HVAC and ventilation system issues.

#### **TTC**

20. *Staff have met with TTC representatives to ensure route coverage for early secondary school dismissals.* TTC will organize route coverage to accommodate early dismissal times for secondary students who are attending in person classes. *Routes will be adjusted as necessary based on enrolment figures provided to TTC.*

#### **Masks**

21. *The Board approved that masks be worn indoors for all students, staff, and visitors, with the exception of those with medical exemptions, until masks are*

*no longer required or recommended in the general population to prevent the spread of COVID-19.* This has been incorporated into the updated TCDSB Reopening Action Plan and Staff Guidelines. Parents may be required to complete the Special Services form on Prevalent Medical Conditions due to the medical exemption requested by the parents.

### **Technology**

**22. *The TCDSB distributed 10,500 new devices to students in the spring. Students who are returning to the TCDSB in the fall are allowed to keep those devices until June 2021.*** This was direction provided to staff by Trustee motion. Because of this strategy, we believe many existing students will have devices for the coming school year. However, this strategy also means we are unable to collect devices from students who are registered for face-to-face learning and no longer need these devices.

**23. *As a result of government direction in PPM 164, the demand for devices is expected to increase because devices can no longer be shared among students in the same household.*** The government issued a Policy Memorandum (PPM 164) in August 2020 that directed school board on the minimum amount of time that students should have access to synchronous (real-time) learning. As a result of this new requirement, staff believe the demand for devices will increase, as students in the same household, but in different classes, will need a dedicated device to participate in most online classroom activities. In an asynchronous form of learning, devices could potentially be shared, as work would happen on the student's own time.

**24. *There is a limited supply of devices available because of heavy worldwide demand for devices coupled with component shortages.*** The TCDSB has secured about 400 iPads and 2,500 Chromebooks for delivery in September and October. This may not be enough to meet the demands of parents.

**25. *To ensure devices are distributed in the most equitable way, staff will be targeting new devices to students who are enrolled in the virtual school or secondary schools and who are in financial need.*** We will not offer devices to students who are back in normal face-to face learning.

**26. Parents/students that have the financial means to purchase their own device should do so immediately.** As a result of the strategy outlined above and the heavy demand for devices, staff believe most families should look to purchase their own device if they have means to do so as TCDSB will not have enough

to meet demands. We have published suggested models and links to hardware vendor's sites with preferred rates on the TCDSB digital store (<https://www.tcdsb.org/digitalstore>).

27. ***For families without means to purchase their own devices, staff will be developing a protocol to allow them to request devices similar to what was done in the spring.*** Under this protocol, staff believe the first wave of devices orders will be ready in late September and early October.
28. ***TCDSB will also need to provide internet to those students who cannot afford or access the service at a cost of \$1.1M.*** Staff are estimating this will cost up to \$1.1M for fiscal 2020-21. This cost is based on an estimated combined 2,000 students from last spring and this year who will need internet access. Staff is also looking at ways to reduce this cost going forward by working with the EDU and carriers.

#### **HEPA Filters**

29. ***HEPA Purifiers are being jointly tendered with another Board for a large quantity of units.*** Pricing is expected to be received by Friday September 4<sup>th</sup>. Initial distribution will focus on the highest incidence areas as identified by TPH. Schools without any type of mechanical systems will also be considered in the first round of implementation. Rooms with no windows will be considered for room purifiers.
30. ***Filter changes for mechanical ventilation and handling units have been increased to 4 times per year.*** Going forward, the MERV 10, currently in use, will be upgraded to a heavier MERV 13. MERV stands for Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value. Generally, a higher MERV rating indicates higher air filtration capability.

#### **Water Bottles**

31. ***Staff have been asked to explore options for the purchase of water bottles with the Board logo for distribution to students.*** Not all students will require this option, so efforts will be concentrated on providing aluminium bottles for all students attending E-Pan identified schools (just over 30,000 students). An additional 6,500 bottles will be ordered representing approximately 10% of remaining students from all other schools. These bottles can be requested by Principals from central inventory on an equity need basis.



32. ***Several options have been costed*** ranging from \$125K to \$1M for the entire order. All sources indicate delivery times of between 7 to 12 days for a portion of the order and 30 days for the entire order. Staff will be purchasing approximately 40,000 of the mid-price range (\$2.99 or \$3.15 per aluminium bottle). This would result in an expenditure of \$135K to \$142K from available funds.

### **Portable Handwashing Stations**

33. ***Staff have been able to secure portable handwashing stations for all floors without washrooms in schools across the system.*** Twelve (12) of these portable units will be available by September 4 and are scheduled to be delivered September 8 to all of the schools in the 5<sup>th</sup> quintile with the highest incidence of COVID-19 as identified by TPH. The remaining 72 units required are expected to be in place in schools by September 11. Following this initial critical roll-out, handwashing practices and issues will be reviewed as students return and the operation of the portable units evaluated to determine if their use should be expanded, either by further purchases or by renting additional units.

34. ***A number of touchless sanitizers are being evaluated for school use in areas where a portable wash unit cannot be deployed or for unique circumstances within a school.***

### **Tents**

35. ***A pilot program to initiate the use of tents for outdoor classrooms at [5-10] has been launched.*** The recently announced Federal funding to assist with school reopening, has made it feasible to rent classroom size tent structures to provide sheltered outdoor space for activities such as gym, music and reading circles for the schools that have been identified as having space issues. It is prudent to test a small number of sites to ensure that they are used effectively by the schools, based on their programming and to test durability, weather resistance and potential security issues.

36. ***The pilot schools will be selected based on careful analysis of the greatest space needs,*** cross-referenced with the TPH COVID-19 high incidence areas and coordinated with other sources of additional space available from the City and other partners. This selection will take place following creation of class lists and class sizes of students choosing in person learning. Coordination with affected Principals will be initiated shortly.

37. ***Tents will be heavy-duty commercial/recreational quality, with sides that can be rolled up or down, as required, and will not contain any moveable items to be left out overnight.*** Planning and Capital will review the proposed sites in consultation with school principals to determine the appropriate size for each site. Tents greater than 60 sq. m. (645 sq. ft.) in area will require a building permit and the City of Toronto has advised that they will work with the Board to expedite permits where required, however this will add time to the process. It is anticipated that 20 ft. x 30 ft. tents will be used for smaller sites (no permit required) and 20 ft. x 40 ft. tents will be used at larger sites where needed to accommodate the student population (permit required). Due to requirements for permits and utility locates, tents may not be in place for the first day of school.

### **TCDSB Virtual School**

38. Information for parents (K-8 and Gr 9-12) is posted on the TCDSB Website in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Return to School page. Link: <https://www.tcdsb.org/FORSTUDENTS/back-to-school/Pages/faq.aspx#13>

### **TCDSB Virtual School Specialty Programming**

39. Staffing specialty programs will depend upon the availability of qualified teacher candidates (ie. French Immersion, Extended French, International Baccalaureate, etc.).

40. Please note there are some secondary specialty programs that will not be able to be offered through the virtual school (ie. transportation technology, construction technology, etc.)

### **Staff Professional Development**

41. ***Staff have been involved in Ministry Professional Development sessions on September 1, 2 & 3.*** The three mandatory PD days opened with prayer and reflection and focused on school re-entry addressing the following topics:

- Health and safety protocols in response to COVID-19 (All staff, including caretaking staff, attended this full day session)
- Student mental health, well-being and anti-bullying
- Remote and online learning strategies and tools
- An introduction to anti-racism and anti-discrimination training
- An introduction to the new elementary math curriculum and fundamental math concepts/skills

Internal staff from a variety of departments personalized all of the modules and distributed them to the Principals for the required training of staff.

## **E. IMPLEMENTATION, STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

1. *FAQs continue to be gathered from parent feedback.* The board continues to provide updates, frequently asked questions and answers on the board website, social media channels, and shared with families via School Messenger.
2. *Local planning considerations will continue in collaboration with school principals.* Input gained through continued consultation with stakeholders will be considered during this process.

## **F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

This report is for the consideration of the Board.