



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

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

September 15, 2020

First Tabling

September 17, 2020

Review

[Click here to enter a date.](#)

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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.



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last update to the Reopening Action Plan was submitted to the September 10, 2020 Corporate Services, Strategic Planning and Property meeting for information and consideration. The Plan is updated as necessary and is available on the TCDSB website. TCDSB schools opened September 14, 2020. Key updates and strategies are provided for consideration.

TCDSB commends parents, students and staff for their positive attitude and for embracing the COVID-19 safety protocols implemented at schools. Children as young as 3 year olds in our JK classes have embraced mask wearing as part of their new school routine. Plans have been successfully implemented and the warm and joyful welcome back to our students and families has been widely acknowledged.

Parents, staff and students have expressed positive responses and feedback on the staggered entry plan for elementary. Staff and families have conveyed the comfort it brought them having a structured and gentle staggered approach. It allowed staff to review, reflect and pivot where needed to ensure all health and safety measures were effective.

The return of our secondary students has been a smooth transition, with our grade 9 students beginning their high school experience Monday and Tuesday, and grade 10's, 11's and 12's joining them throughout the week. We are proud of the efforts of staff to implement the quadmester system in our secondary schools and for ensuring all aspects of the safe return plan are in place.

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, Sept. 3 and 10, 2020 Board Meetings. The following items that affect the TCDSB Reopening Action Plan have occurred in the past week:

Sept. 16, 2020	Provincial launch of online screening tool for students, parents and staff
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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. *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 a complete school reopening.
2. *On September 14, 2020, TCDSB began welcoming families back to in person learning in our schools.* Through a staggered approach in elementary and an adaptive secondary model, school began for a large portion of TCDSB families at the beginning of this week. Students and staff have spent time adjusting to new routines and environments over the past week. All students who have opted for in person learning will be in schools as of Thursday September 17, 2020.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

Cohorting and Distancing

3. *A regional approach to the allocation of additional resources will continue to 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, 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.

Securing Additional Indoor and Outdoor Space

4. *As part of the Board's COVID-19 response plan, staff continue to work on securing supplementary outdoor and indoor space to help address the need for additional physical distancing for students.* This includes access to space

in City owned community centers, public libraries, and parks as well as church parishes in close proximity to TCDSB schools.

5. ***The discussions on these matters are ongoing, with the intention of securing agreements as soon as possible.*** Staff are finalizing details of lease/license agreements with the City of Toronto and other community partners for the purpose of securing additional space as required.

Admissions and Registration

6. ***Schools continue to manage registration of students in person and virtual.*** Schools have been instructed to consider their entire enrolment when addressing waitlisted students to ensure spaces are held in school facilities for students who wish to return to in person learning from a virtual environment. Area Superintendents supported by Admissions staff continue to work with school administrative staff to address remaining waitlists.

Permits

7. ***In order to continue to support both the health and safety protocols and enhanced cleaning procedures in place for our schools, the TCDSB will not be issuing permits for community use of schools during the month of October.*** The postponement of school permits will provide additional time to ensure the availability of sufficient resources for permit supervision.
8. ***Staff are currently in the process of determining the parameters of a limited community use of schools program in order to provide opportunities for outside organizations to access space and offer programming in TCDSB facilities.*** Any permits issued will be consistent with both in-force physical distancing requirements, permitted activities, and restrictions on the size of gatherings.
9. ***A revised communication is being prepared for distribution to all permit applicants regarding the additional delay in the issuance of permits for the 2020-2021 school year.***

Staffing and Recruitment

10. ***The Human Resources Department is finalizing the recruitment of strategic additional staffing resources and deploying these resources in both the face-to-face and virtual models.*** 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.

11. ***HR staff continues to review and manage the significant number of employees requesting accommodation during this pandemic.*** Teachers and Designated Early Childhood Educators who qualify are being assigned to our virtual school. Senior TCDSB staff members have extended their commitment to meet with TECT (Catholic Elementary Teachers), TSU (Catholic Secondary Teachers), and CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees – 1328) union executives weekly (practice honoured since late March) to collaboratively address issues. We continue to work with all of our non-teacher union partners as well as we manage requests from employees in other employee groups with a focus on maintaining their services in a face-to-face model.
12. ***Elementary and secondary school Principals have diligently built new staffing models in response to revised enrolment figures. These revised enrolment figures reflect the transition of a significant number of students out of face-to-face models and into the TCDSB Virtual School. Senior TCDSB staff is staffing its virtual model with a targeted start date of Monday, September 21, 2020.*** Weekly plenary Principal meetings have been scheduled over the next month to address concerns, ensure consistency, and assess exigent needs. A Principal Leader Portal is also being built to ensure alignment and a consistent flow of information.
13. ***Staff has reviewed data that identifies higher risk school communities within high COVID incidence areas and additional teachers have been added to the appropriate school models to decrease the size of cohorts.***
14. ***The Virtual School has been assigned teacher allocations for a diverse range of classes including Special Education and French Immersion allocations.*** Staff will be allocating support staff positions to the Virtual School to support our special needs students.
15. ***French Immersion staffing remains a concern within the face to face and virtual settings.*** This is the result of ongoing provincial demand exceeding supply and compounded by attrition and apprehensiveness of retired and uncertified teachers to accept assignments during the COVID pandemic. Staff continues to review regional program needs as well as Virtual School French Immersion student enrolment to equitably inform staffing. A thorough review of teacher qualifications will inform placement within the Virtual School.

16. *In addition to the previously noted infusion of additional transitional staff, the Senior team is reviewing the roles of specific employee groups and how this role will need to change given new challenges associated with operating our schools during a pandemic (i.e. assigning of additional supervision and screening tasks to ensure safety).*

HEPA Filters

17. *HEPA Purifiers will be on order by the end of this week.* Distribution will focus on the highest incidence areas as identified by TPH. Schools without any type of mechanical systems (36) are being considered in the first round of implementation. The list of schools is being finalized and Principals will be contacted over the next few business days. It is expected that air purifiers will be delivered to these locations within 1-2 weeks.

PPE and Additional Disinfection

12. *Electrostatic Sprayers have been purchased and are being deployed to schools in order to provide aerosol disinfection capability. PPE*

13. *PPE provided by the Ministry of Government and Consumers Services (MGCS) has been received and orders for the October replenishment have been placed.* The Warehouse has additional quantities of PPE that can be provided to schools upon request through their Principal and Area SQS. Environmental Support Services (ESS) is developing an electronic method of ordering for Principals to facilitate distribution.

14. *Appropriate clear masks are still being reviewed and tested.* TPH advice for communication for DHH staff and students is to maintain physical distancing, use of face shields and the speaker may remove their mask while speaking for lip reading purposes.

- For staff, medical grade masks have been identified and sourced however they are back-ordered to mid to late October for delivery.
- Two types of clear masks have been investigated for student use. Of those only one is viable at a cost of \$9 each. Multiples would be needed per student as they require washing and are not as durable as regular cloth masks. Staff have ordered 200 of these masks and will pilot test them with groups identified by Special Services.

Ventilation

15. *To improve the air quality and increase the ventilation at the schools, HVAC systems were scheduled to operate continuously for three (3) days before the*

schools open. Systems are being scheduled to operate daily for two hours before the school regularly starts and two hours after school ends.

Plexiglass

16. *The Board motioned staff to implement the purchase of Plexiglass desk barriers for classes of over 15 students.* Plexiglass barriers have been ordered and the first group of approximately 5,000 units is expected for delivery to the TPH identified high needs schools in approximately 10 days. Additional distribution will occur in schools in order of risk priority within the available funding amounts.
17. *Plexiglass barriers for office and administrative areas has arrived and is being delivered by the Warehouse Courier service.* Plexiglass dividers for administrative areas are being distributed to schools. Installation in all locations will be complete by the end of this week.

Play Structures

18. *TPH has advised that play structures can now be safely utilized by separate cohorts of children, under the supervision of staff.* The TCDSB continues to follow the guidance of Toronto Public Health (TPH) on COVID safety related issues and protocols. To date, our play structures have remained closed based on TPH advice. As you know, where possible the TCDSB encourages outdoor activities as safe and healthy options for our students. Hand hygiene will be encouraged before and after playground use.
19. *School administrators will determine local guidelines for usage of play structures,* to ensure that cohort recommendations are followed and children can safely access play structures at our schools.

COVID-19 Reporting

20. *The Ministry requires Boards to post an advisory on the Board website with information related to confirmed COVID cases; as such, an [Advisory page](#) has been created.*
21. *[School reporting protocol for positive cases of covid-19](#) has been developed and shared with Principals, posted on TCDSB's website, social media and scheduled for weekly parent communication.*

Toronto Public Health Nurses

18. *TPH has provided a list of COVID-19 Liaison Public Health Nurses (PHN) available on their website: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/liaison-public-health-nurse/>*
19. *Additionally there is a tab ("liaison public health nurse tab") linking to the above page from the [Elementary & Secondary Schools](#) page. The schools are listed by name and school board. Principals can look up the name of their school in the search tab and then see whom the Public Health Nurse that is assigned.*
20. *TPH has also provided some New Parent Resources available on their website:*
- [*How to Self Monitor if Someone Tests Positive for COVID-19*](#)
 - [*What to do if your child has symptoms*](#)

CSPC Fundraising Guidelines

21. *Staff have developed CSPCs fundraising guidelines, specific to COVID-19 safety issues. Pursuant to the Trustee's motion regarding CSPC fundraising, staff have developed Operational Guidelines (Appendix 'A') for fundraising during pandemic times. The document takes some guidance from the Ministry Fundraising Guidelines, and is responsive to needs within the system. Upon receiving any further feedback from Trustees, staff will communicate the guidelines to CSPCs and work with CPIC and OAPCE to establish a reporting/monitoring process.*

Student Transportation

22. *Special needs transportation has been relatively smooth, however full transportation beginning next week may be challenging. The first week of transportation only included special needs students and was therefore a significantly reduced number of runs. It is expected that the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) will be challenged to implement full runs by next week. Bus driver shortage and absenteeism will likely be a factor. The TSTG is currently working with bus carriers to identify deficiencies and make plans, however, as has been noted over the last couple months, the provision of transportation services will be dependent on bus driver availability. By Friday September 18th, should there be known deficiencies in transportation services either with individual runs or as a system, TCDSB and TSTG will make every effort to ensure communication with parents is activated through multiple channels and as early as possible.*

Technology

23. *Starting this week, elementary home schools are reaching out to students in the virtual school, who may need technology, to confirm device and internet service requests.* The first wave of device requests will be collected on Friday September 18th. Delivery to home schools for distribution will occur the week of September 28th. Order processing will continue weekly until all devices are distributed. *Secondary Schools are also processing requests for students.*
24. *The TCDSB is trying to target devices to students who are most in need and encouraging others to purchase their own device, if they can.* The TCDSB Digital Store has links to discounted hardware from select vendors along with recommend models by grade. (www.tcdsb.org/DigitalStore)
25. *The TCDSB currently has a limited supply of 2,500 Chromebook and 400 iPads for distribution to students in need.*
26. *It is important to note that most of the 10,500 devices distributed in the spring remain with students in the current academic year.*

Virtual School Update

Scheduling & Staffing

Teams have been working all week to build classes for elementary and secondary students.

- We continue to work at staffing classes.
- There have been many transitions between the in-person and virtual schools.
- Currently there are 17453 elementary students and 5790 secondary students.
- We continue to work closely with Special Services to ensure support for our students with special needs and individual education plans.
- Elementary students are being grouped to ensure that they are with some classmates from their in-person school where possible.

27. Orientation Week

Influenced by the Ontario Catholic Schools Graduate Expectations, the TCDSB Virtual School provided students with opportunities to grow in their understanding of digital citizenship, share student voice and take part in

equity and anti-racism education. This week has provided an opportunity for students to grow and share with the promise of an enriched Catholic online experience that promotes faith-filled academic, social, emotional and spiritual wellness.

28. Challenges

- *We have grouped students according to specialty programs but are still assessing available staffing for some of these programs.*
- *The volume of transactions related to tracking and sorting students and staff has been a challenge.*
- *Our Student Information System has struggled with the amount of information it has to process in such a short period of time.*
- *Communication has presented some challenges but has been getting better since School Messenger has now been available.* Once students are in classes and teachers assigned, communication should also become better.

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. *Communications Department has released a Return to School video, providing families with a sense of what to expect when they return to school in-person.* Some features include signage, classroom setup, plexiglass shields, daily screening before school bus transportation is taken and before attending school, screening stations and logbooks for contact tracing, sanitizer, enhanced cleaning surfaces, water bottle filling station markers and discontinued water fountains, mask expectations, lunch and recess information, and more.
3. *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.

