



## 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	First Tabling	Review
October 7, 2020	October 15, 2020	<a href="#">Click here to enter a date.</a>
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<b>INFORMATION REPORT</b>		

#### 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 October 8, 2020 Corporate Services, Strategic Planning and Property Committee meeting for information and consideration. The Plan is updated as necessary and is available on the TCDSB website. Key updates and strategies are provided for consideration.

TCDSB continues to address safety concerns in schools through the addition of precautionary measures such as students plexiglass barriers and air purifiers. Class size reduction continues to be considered although further investments and the supply of certified teachers remains as a barrier to achieving further reductions.

As Toronto Public Health investigates and confirms case of COVID-19 in several schools, classes and in one case an entire school have been following a Transition to Distance Learning plan to ensure continuity of student learning and engagement through periods of isolation.

TCDSB schools continue to adjust to in person routines and safety measures following guidance from Toronto Public Health.

*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.

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

### **Staffing and Recruitment**

2. *The Human Resources (HR) Department continues to focus its efforts on processing internal applications for all school-based positions and ensuring that external recruitment efforts are materializing.* These enhanced recruitment efforts respond to attrition and operational needs.
3. *The Sick Leave & Disability Department continues to liaise closely with both Academic & Support Service departments to determine how to best manage cases involving personal and family status leaves for all employee groups.* Significant caseloads are being reviewed daily and granting employees the ability to work virtually, where feasible, is being considered.
4. *Senior TCDSB staff members maintain regular contact with our union partners to collaboratively address issues.* The fluid and unique parameters impacting our virtual school have required HR staff to dedicate a significant amount of time to considering ways to efficiently deploy staff. The flow of students between the virtual and face-to-face schools will continue to tax HR staff's time as we consider re-organization needs throughout the academic year.
5. *Elementary and secondary school Principals are ensuring that all teachers are proactively maintaining a robust online presence as a contingency strategy. Additional administrative support is being allocated to St. Anne Catholic Academy to enhance administrative oversight and communication.* HR staff is committed to playing a key role on the Board's Contingency Planning Committee to ensure that staff and students can pivot if we must return to a completely virtual delivery model.
6. *Staff continues to be sensitive to maintain lower class caps in higher risk school communities within high COVID incidence areas.* Staff will begin analyzing enrolment data and is currently engaged in re-organization planning.
7. *French Immersion and Extended French staffing needs have been met within our virtual and face to face schools. Given an increase in retirements, COVID-related leaves, and general concerns relating to COVID in our face to face schools, HR continues to fill some residual Core French positions.*

The ability to provide core French at St. Anne Catholic Academy remains a challenge. HR and Curriculum Department staff are exploring virtual experiential program that are aligned with MOE curriculum expectations and can act as a suitable supplemental French resource for virtual school students. We are also exploring options on how to best utilize French teacher time within the brick and mortar buildings to help address this important need.

- 8. In addition to the previously noted infusion of additional transitional staff, the Senior team continues to review and seek legal input into the roles of specific employee groups and how these roles 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).***

#### **Communications – Learning Models**

- 9. We are providing families with an opportunity to switch learning modes.*** In our elementary schools, families may switch from in-person to distance learning or from distance learning back to in-person learning. In our secondary schools, families may switch from in-person/adaptive (partial online) to distance learning (fully online) or from distance learning to in-person/adaptive learning.
- 10. A request to switch learning models must be made through the child's home school.*** Each home school is now able to record your request in a central database for processing. The deadline for response is Monday, October 19, 2020 at 12 noon. If we don't hear from a family by that date, a child will remain with their current learning model.
- 11. After the deadline, the TCDSB will review the responses to determine how many families wish to switch.*** The child's school will confirm selection by November 2, 2020. ***Please note that switches to learning modes, means the child will be assigned a new teacher and begin in the new learning model on Monday, November 16.*** The next opportunity to switch learning models will be in January to February timeframe.

#### **Class Sizes**

- 12. Enrolment transfers between virtual and in person students continues to occur. As requested by motion, a summary reflecting current (as of Oct. 2) efforts to reduce class sizes is included in Appendix 'A'.*** Also included is the in person class size average by elementary school and ward.

13. *In order to increase the number of classrooms that have 20 students or less, further investments in additional teaching staff, relocation of classes and increased transportation would be required.*
14. *Relocation to larger spaces has been implemented at the school level with the use of gyms, libraries and assembly areas for class instruction.* The requirement of face coverings for all students was also approved by Board and by Toronto Public Health in recognition that social distancing may not always be possible.
15. *It should also be noted that even if funds became available for the purposes of reducing class sizes, the supply of certified teachers on the labour market may not be sufficient to fill these positions.*

#### **Transition to Distance Learning**

16. *As an extension to the Reopening Action Plan, the Transition to Distance Learning Plan (Appendix 'B') recognizes that during the COVID-19 pandemic schools need to be prepared to seamlessly transition to distance learning in response to health and safety issues.* This has the potential to impact specific classes, schools, or the entire system for undetermined periods of time.
17. *The plan specifically focuses on the process of transitioning from in person learning to distance learning and does not relate to the operation of the already established virtual school.* The plan outlines roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition and provide a clear plan that students, parents and staff can understand and support. The health and safety of students and staff remain our primary focus. TCDSB continues to follow the guidance of Toronto Public Health.
18. *The TCDSB Transition to Distance Learning Plan focuses on three key components:*
  - PREPARING – What tasks and actions need to be completed before there is a need to transition to distance learning.
  - INITIATING – What steps will be taken to ensure a structured and systematic process during transition.
  - REVIEWING – Following a return from distance learning, how we will review and reflect on the experience in order to improve our practices.

### **COVID-19 Reporting**

19. *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 and continues to be updated as information changes.*
20. *TCDSB maintains a dashboard of [confirmed cases of COVID-19](#) to assist families, school and child care staff, to stay up to date and informed of ongoing cases in TCDSB schools.*

### **Distribution of Resources**

21. *As referenced in the Executive Summary, the Board has motioned the deployment of various resources to schools as additional health and safety measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. A detailed listing of the distribution of resources (Appendix 'C') actioned through various Board motions throughout the Return to School period has been prepared.*

### **Water bottle Filling Stations**

22. *Water fountains have been out of use in schools since the beginning of the school year as recommended by Toronto Public Health. A project has been established to replace water fountains with water bottle filling stations to ensure each school has two (2) filling stations. Implementation will follow the established regional approach addressing schools in high transmission areas and then extended to other schools throughout the Board. Schools admin will be consulted to determine the proper place and number of units required. A budget of \$1M has been identified in the 2020-2021 Renewal Plan to fund this initiative. The Renewal Plan is expected to come to the Board for approval in November, however staff will be proceeding with the installations immediately utilizing planned contingency funds from the Ministry approved 2020-2021 Renewal allocation.*

### **Outdoor Classrooms**

23. *Site investigations for Phase 2 of the outdoor classroom tent pilot have been completed. Installation of the eight additional tents should be complete by the end of the week of October 12 or early the next week. The first ten tent installations have received some positive media attention. A few additional schools have requested tents. Feedback from the pilot and security/maintenance issues will be evaluated over the next couple of weeks to determine whether expansion is recommended. A competitive procurement is recommended if large scale expansion is to be pursued.*



**24. *Initial feedback from the first ten tent installation indicates that they have been well-received and well-used by the schools.*** School principals have reported that they are using them for gym classes, but would like to have mats or tree stumps for seating. As of the date of publication of the Board agenda, there have been two reported incidents of vandalism in which the wall panels were slashed. Another school reported that the wall panels that were left open at the end of the school day have been found to be closed in the morning. Staff are investigating options for securing the panels in the open position. Facilities staff are maintaining an incident log which will inform decisions on continuing or expanding the pilot.

**25. *Facilities staff have been pursuing a number of avenues to obtain tree stumps and/or logs for outdoor classroom seating.*** The City of Toronto was contacted and responded with a number of questions, which staff have answered. We are awaiting the outcome of an internal City meeting. Staff also contacted private tree removal companies but to date have not received any response. Preparation of an RFQ for unit prices for both logs and stumps is underway. If these cannot be obtained by donation, the Board may consider purchasing them for a number of schools that don't currently have outdoor classroom seating.

### **Cycling to School**

**26. *Capital and Renewal teams are working together to expedite site reviews to locate bike racks at 89 schools, prioritizing COVID hotspots.*** The City of Toronto bike grant program will be rolled out simultaneously and includes increasing the number of bike racks at larger schools that already have them. Preparation of a unit rate RFQ for supply and installation of the bike racks, as well as concrete pads where required, is underway.

### **Indoor Air Quality**

**27. *Installation of CO2 sensors at three schools is anticipated during the week of October 12.*** The sample schools are:

- Mother Cabrini – large awning windows, mechanical ventilation
- St. Jane Frances – vertical sliding windows, mechanical ventilation
- St. Raphael – vertical sliding windows, no mechanical ventilation

**28. *Sensors will remain in place for a minimum of one month, after which Pinchin Ltd. will provide a report that will consider the following:***

- Overall was there adequate ventilation in the functional areas tested?

- Were there were exceedances were there any identifiable factors that contributed to the exceedance?
- Did having windows open in the classrooms lead to improved ventilation?
- Was there indication that awning style or vertical sliding windows resulted in superior ventilation outcomes?
- Did the size of the window openings impact ventilation rates based on the number of open windows and CO2 concentrations in the classes?
- Was the building effectively flushed via the HVAC system or natural ventilation in the vacant period between school days, over the weekend?
- Were there classroom occupant densities that lead to better controlled carbon dioxide concentrations?

As well, Pinchin's building science group will provide comment on how larger window openings might be achieved safely in classrooms with vertical sliding windows.

### **Technology**

***29.A total of 1,399 devices have been ordered for Student Needs to date since the start of this school year.*** Devices include a mix of Chrome books and iPads. Of the above total, 149 of the devices will also be enabled with Internet access through a Rogers Internet cellular data plan.

***30.Devices have started shipping to the schools as of October 5<sup>th</sup>. The school principal will arrange with parents/students to pick-up the devices from their home school.*** Additional orders in response to student needs are coming in weekly and being fulfilled as needed.

### **Financial Analysis**

***32.A reconciliation of expenditure incurred to address COVID-19 related issues has been completed for the information of the Board.*** Appendix 'D' has been drafted to provide details on academic resource allocation across the system. Appendices 'E' and 'F' pertain to the current financial analysis of the Return to School plan.

## **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.