



REPORT TO

CORPORATE SERVICES, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

RETURN TO SCHOOL UPDATE - REVISED

*"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
February 4, 2021	February 11, 2021	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 February 4, 2021 Student Achievement Committee meeting for information and consideration. This report provides additional information concerning items occurring over the last week. The Reopening Action Plan is updated as necessary and is available on the TCDSB website. Key updates and strategies are provided for consideration.

The province recently announced that Toronto area schools will return to in-person learning on February 16, 2021. The additional release of funding, Part II of the federal funding released in the fall, accompanied this announcement.

Toronto Public Health has revised the screening tool questions. These have been updated in the student screening passports and school signage.

School staff and families will be provided with communication and reminders/refreshers for safely attending school facilities.

Installation of bike racks and alternatives for outdoor education continue to be explored and implemented wherever possible.

TCDSB schools will continue to follow safety measures and guidance from Toronto Public Health when schools return to in person learning.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 20 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, Staff Manual and Transition to Distance Learning Plan continue to reflect the process for operating schools safely.* Items from Board motions and Ministry updates that are confirmed

have been included as required. Schools will continue to follow established protocols for virtual and in person learning.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

2. ***The Minister of Education recently announced a return to in-person learning for Toronto, Peel and York public health areas on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.*** As of this date, all school boards in Ontario will have returned to in-person learning. The Minister has indicated that they continue to monitor relevant data and will not hesitate to close schools again in the future should the statistics indicate the need to reduce the spread once again.
3. ***Boards are required to align with the direction provided by their local public health unit (PHU)*** and should continue to follow direction provided by their local PHU.
 - ***Before and after school programs will reopen*** in alignment with the return to in-person learning in their PHUs.
 - The provision of ***emergency childcare for school-aged children will end on the last business day before the return*** to in-person learning.
 - ***Principals have been met with to review protocols*** with instructions to review with all in-person staff.

Toronto Public Health

4. ***TPH has indicated that asymptomatic testing capacity is being increased and decisions about asymptomatic testing remain targeted and specific.*** The criteria TPH uses to determine asymptomatic testing sites remains:
 - TPH cannot identify where the students or staff members got COVID19.
 - There is no apparent epidemiological link.
 - Multiple cohorts are self-isolating.We continue to work closely with TPH and partner when decisions about asymptomatic targeted testing site decisions are made.
5. ***TPH has updated the screening tool for entry into school facilities.*** Symptoms will remain unchanged however; ***three additional questions*** will be included in the TCDSB passport tool and school signage.
 - Does anyone in your household have one or more symptoms?

- Has anyone in your household travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days?
- Has anyone in your household been identified as a close contact or told to self-isolate?

Funding

6. To further promote health and safety for students and staff, ***Ontario recently made an additional \$381 million in funding available for schools.*** Provided under the ***federal Safe Return to Class Fund***, this funding will continue the efforts to improve air quality and ventilation in schools, support online learning, promote student mental health and hire additional staff. In total, the province has provided schools with more than \$1.6 billion to protect against COVID-19. ***The TCDSB received approximately \$8.5M (Appendix 'A') through this release to be applied to the specific areas mentioned above.***

7. ***TCDSB has received a memo from the Ministry of education with high-level information regarding the parameters of the new funding.*** However, the information provided in the memo does not include sufficient detail to make immediate decisions on how the funds can be utilized to support schools. TCDSB has been in contact with several ministry staff to seek clarification on the use of funds and any restrictions.

8. ***Based on information provided by the Ministry of Education, the expenditure of funds should adhere to the limits and categories set forth in the memo as follows:***
 - a. ***Optimizing Air Quality and Ventilation (\$2.0M)***
 - to support the acquisition of additional portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters and other immediate options to improve air quality and ventilation.
 - b. ***Health and Safety (\$2.9M)***
 - to offset costs associated with acquiring PPE and critical supplies and equipment.
 - c. ***Transportation (\$0.16M)***
 - to address cost pressures related to COVID-19 safe protocols by school bus operators.
 - d. ***Technology (\$3.4M)***
 - additional connectivity and technological devices, such as laptops and tablets, to support school boards.

9. ***In addition, through conversations with Ministry staff, the TCDSB has been informed of other general parameters by which the funds are expected to be used.*** Staff's understanding of those parameters is as follows:
- a. Funds should be targeted to expenses incurred ***beyond February 1, 2020*** and not costs incurred before that time.
 - b. Funds should be targeted toward ***COVID related expenses*** as much as possible.
 - c. Funds should be focused on items where there is ***adequate supply and through existing supplier contracts***.
 - d. If a supplier contract is not in place, school boards should wait for the Government to establish a new central contact, through OECM, by which a school board could then purchase items through.
10. ***Based on the information above, staff have determined that best uses of funding using existing suppliers.*** A detailed breakdown of the planned expenditures are outlined in *Appendix 'B'* of this report. Some highlights of the planned expenditures include:
- a. Student Plexiglass barriers for classes ***greater than 15 students***
 - Barriers have been installed in classrooms for all schools in Q5, Q4 and highest density Q3.
 - ***The amount identified will provide barriers to all remaining schools in Q3, Q2 and Q1.***
 - Barriers will be distributed and installed in classrooms over the next few weeks dependent on availability of product.
 - b. Approx. 3,000 additional HEPA Air purifiers for classrooms
 - Purifiers have been provided to all schools, system-wide, with no mechanical or only partial mechanical ventilation systems.
 - ***The amount identified will provide purifiers to all Special Needs classrooms, specialty spaces, main offices and staff rooms system-wide,*** regardless of ventilation systems available in buildings.
 - Purifiers will be distributed and installed in classrooms over the next few weeks dependent on availability of product.
 - c. Approximately 5000 new Chromebooks for students
 - Additional detail is provided in the Technology section of this report.
 - d. Additional PPE for Custodial staff
 - This will include coveralls used for disinfection activities.

- e. Replacement filters, wipes, and other cleaning supplies
 - This will cover the ongoing cost associated with the *increased replacement schedule and increased cost of MERV-13 filters* as well as supplies not covered in the MGCS supply of PPE.
11. ***In addition to the \$8.5M of additional funding committed by the Ministry to the TCDSB, the memo outlines several other funding elements for which boards may receive funds in the future.*** The exact amounts that will be provided to the TCDSB have not been released. The overall (provide-wide) funding amounts are as follows:
- a. ***Summer Learning Opportunities (\$62M)***
 - additional funding for summer learning and supports for students who may have experienced disruptions to their learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. ***Equity Initiatives (6.45M)***
 - provided to support equity initiatives, focused on supports for Black and Indigenous students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with special education needs.
12. ***The Ministry also announced funding for several province-wide initiatives to support students during and after the pandemic. These funds will not be directed toward boards specifically.*** However, TCDSB may benefit from these enhanced services:
- a. ***Student Nutrition Program (\$10M)***
 - The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) will receive funding to support the Student Nutrition Program. This funding will support programs to effectively reach remote learners and address delivery challenges that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - b. ***Online Learning (\$60M)***
 - A funding allocation will be provided to support key initiatives related to online learning such as digital course packs, online course development, technology infrastructure, and support for TVO/TFO.
 - c. ***Addressing Future Pandemic Education Needs (\$33M)***
 - Funds set aside by the Ministry for future COVID related needs.

d. ***Mental Health Supports (\$10M)***

- Funds to support the implementation of the new School Mental Health Ontario Action Kit, which promotes student learning about mental health, and funds to support the operation of Kids Help Phone.

Staffing and Recruitment

9. ***The Human Resources (HR) Department continues to support critical school-based programs during the school lockdown period.*** We are capitalizing on recent rule changes that expand the use of retired teachers and administrators. In particular, we are using retired administrators to bolster school-based administrative and supervision needs in cases involving family status needs. Occasional teachers are also being used temporarily to support in-person Special Education Program instruction.
10. ***HR staff is developing a strategy on how to leverage the College of Teachers' announcement that they will be issuing Temporary Teaching Certificates*** (effective until December 2021) for students who are nearing the completion of their formal Bachelor of Education program. The TCDSB will endeavor to use these talented teachers to address class coverage needs that are not being addressed through normal channels.
11. ***Senior HR staff is analyzing enrolment projections to proactively plan for potential staffing scenarios related to September school staffing requirements.*** Timely communication with the Ministry of Education will inform our approach.
12. ***The Sick Leave & Disability Department continues to diligently manage its extensive active sick leave cases. HR staff is closely monitoring absences during the school lockdown period and has implemented a process allowing Principals to advise HR staff of instructional/support gaps. The careful and regular review of sick leave metrics for all employee groups remains a priority.*** Significant caseloads are being reviewed daily and granting employees the ability to work virtually, where feasible, is being considered. Enhancing employee awareness of our employer-sponsored Employee Family Assistance Plan remains a priority.
13. ***Senior TCDSB staff members have maintained regular contact with our union partners (TECT, TSU, and CUPE) to collaboratively address issues.*** Recent discussions have focused on how we can sustain robust instruction and

enhanced support staff monitoring/supporting students' learning/social/emotional needs during the school lockdown period.

14. ***The SMASH Education virtual experiential Core French program has been successfully launched.*** This program provides St. Anne students (Grades 1 – 8) with a Ministry of Education aligned core French supplemental resource. Senior staff continues to work with our union partners to provide direct remote core French instruction at St. Anne Catholic Academy where possible.
15. ***HR staff is monitoring all quarantined staff to ensure that proper parameters are maintained.*** We continue to communicate with all employees regarding travel plans, quarantine requirements that may apply, and the need to commit to the employer to ensure continuity of program delivery and service.
16. ***Timely recruitment efforts are being sustained as we endeavor to bolster supply pools for key employee groups.*** All efforts reflect a deliberate focus on equity.

Cycling to School

15. ***Contracts have been awarded for the supply and installation of bike racks and installation will begin shortly.*** Phase 1 will be installation at 37 schools where an existing suitable hard surface is available (no concrete pad required). This is expected to take about one week. New concrete pads will be required where there is not a suitable surface and these will be installed once weather allows. Installation of bike racks at all schools is anticipated to be completed by end of May 2021.

Outdoor Classrooms

16. ***A contractor has been secured to pick up logs provided by the City of Toronto, cut these into stools and deliver them to schools.*** Based on the approved budget, we will be able to provide log seating at all schools with tents and all Q4 and Q5 schools that requested seating. As a reminder, funding for additional outdoor classrooms has been requested through the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS). Announcement of the allocation of this funding is expected shortly.

Indoor Air Quality

17. ***The report on the results of the Indoor Air Quality study has been received.*** Staff are still waiting the final report and presentation. A presentation of the

results and recommendations will be made by the consultant, Pinchin Ltd., as soon as possible after the report is finalized.

Technology

18. ***The ministry has announced provision of additional funding for devices, however, TCDSB requires clarification on some restrictions. The allocation to support remote learning and technology for the TCDSB is \$3.473M.*** Unlike previous device funding, the ministry is asking school boards to refrain from sourcing items on their own. TCDSB, along with other boards, have OEM-based vendors, standardized configurations and management systems, and matured logistics already in place for processing, delivering and supporting student devices.
19. ***Orders continue to flow; however, supply levels are running low. There are 600 iPads in our supply with the vendor.*** In addition, more than 600 un-assigned Chromebooks were pre-shipped to elementary schools at the beginning of the closure period. Due to the TCDSB's limited supply levels and time required to finalize the ministry funding, the TCDSB may run critically low or run out of supply for student device needs before the end of the school year.
20. ***Measures are being taken to efficiently manage the remaining supplies.*** This includes the collection of excess pre-shipped devices at schools and collecting devices returned by students who no longer need the device or have left the system. In addition, as students return to in-school learning we anticipate that some families may wish to return the student device. Information has been provided to principals on how to handle and accept those devices and return them to central supply for student needs across the system. Any families wishing to keep the student device for remote learning may do so until the end of the school as per a trustee motion on June 18, 2020.

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. ***Staff and family communications were issued including information about the return to in-person learning on February 16, 2021.*** One-pager refreshers for staff and families are also being prepared to assist with transition back to in-person learning.
3. ***TPH will be updating their screening tool.*** Updates will include new questions. Upon receipt of the final tool, the TCDSB passport screening and checklist will be updated and shared with school administrators and families.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board.