



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

RESPONSE TO SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MOTION REGARDING CLEAR MASKS

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Collosians 3:17

Drafted

February 7, 2022

Maria Meehan, Superintendent, Special Services
Marta Radic, Senior Manager, Health and Safety

Meeting Date

February 17, 2022

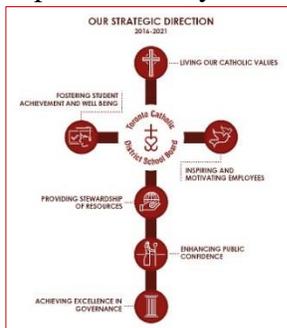
INFORMATION REPORT

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
Director of Education

Adrian Della Mora
Associate Director of Academic
Affairs & Chief Operating Officer

Derek Boyce
Associate Director of Facilities,
Business & Community Development

Ryan Putnam
Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TCDSB is committed to supporting the learning and communication needs of our students to allow for full participation and inclusion in all aspects of program instruction. Further, the TCDSB is committed to meeting the accommodation requirements of students with exceptionalities, including those students who are identified through the Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) process as Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Given the ongoing COVID-19 worldwide pandemic, the TCDSB continues to be responsible for providing staff with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure that the TCDSB is compliant with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Toronto Public Health, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Ontario Public Health direction.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 15 hours

B. PURPOSE

1. This report is provided in response to a motion that was passed at the November 18, 2021, Regular Board Meeting. It is provided in response to the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting motion, by Geoffrey Feldman, representative of Ontario Disability Coalition. The motion requested, “That the responsible staff member research the fully transparent, anti-fog masks available to help healthcare providers and essential workers to protect themselves, communicate better, and ease confusion manufactured by *ClearMask* and make them available to all school staff who wish to use this clear mask shield to fully communicate, instruct, etc. with students who rely upon the full facial expressions that includes lip movement to enable them to provide full and inclusive education.”
2. The report will provide a summary of the TCDSB acquisition and distribution of clear masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

C. BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in direction to school boards to provide PPE to staff to mitigate the transmission of Covid-19 in the school environment. The below outlines the steps the TCDSB has taken to procure and distribute clear masks.

1. In August 2020, the TCDSB Health and Safety Department staff, in collaboration with the Superintendent responsible for ensuring adherence to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Superintendent of Special Services, reviewed and tested the viability of a variety of masks with clear windows for use by staff who are teaching students who are served by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing department services. A clear mask product was selected and purchased through the purchasing procurement process. Unlike the masks that were procured and provided to school boards for staff use by the Ministry of Education, these masks were not classified as personal protective equipment. The distribution of the masks was facilitated through the itinerant teachers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
2. The next product procured by the TCDSB was *ClearMask*, authorized by Health Canada as a Class I medical device for COVID-19 use. Beginning January 2021, these clear mask products were provided as an option for staff to facilitate communication. The distribution of these masks was facilitated through the itinerant teachers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and were provided to support instruction of students in regular class placements and intensive support class settings, including classes for students with multiple exceptionalities and development disabilities. *ClearMasks* were also provided to psychologists and speech and language pathologists for use, as required, for some student assessments and interventions. While these *ClearMasks* provide an excellent view of facial expression, they only provide protection from direct spray or heavy droplets. They do not filter out particles that are suspended in the air, as the mask has openings at the sides.
3. During November 2021, Ontario school boards were advised that a clear window, medical grade PPE mask, had been procured by the province. These masks are now available to all Ontario school boards through the

provincial PPE ordering process, through the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (MGCS) and the Ministry of Education. These medical grade, clear masks are marketed through the brand name *Humask*. They are in high demand in the province to meet the accommodation needs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. These masks are not meant to be ordered as an alternative to the ASTM Level 2 medical grade masks available to all staff but are provided for specific staff as required to accommodate their teaching needs.

4. As of January 2022, N95 PPE masks can be ordered through the provincial PPE ordering process. These masks are provided as an alternative to the ASTM Level 2 medical grade masks available to staff, or the clear window, ASTM Level 2 medical grade *Humask*.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. The following acts and organizations guide TCDSB considerations regarding the acquisition and distribution of clear masks.
 - a. Occupational Health and Safety Act
 - b. Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
 - c. Ontario Ministry of Education
 - d. Toronto Public Health
 - e. Ontario Ministry of Health
 - f. Government of Canada - Ministry of Health

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. As of the writing of this report, there are eighty-three students with the exceptionality of Deaf and Hard of Hearing attending TCDSB schools.
2. Clear window *Humasks* are ordered each month for distribution to appropriate staff through the provincial PPE ordering process.
3. Individual requests for clear masks for staff serving students who are not identified with the exceptionality of Deaf and Hard of Hearing are addressed

on a case-by-case basis, and clear masks are made available as necessary to support student learning. Priority, for the use of these masks, continues to be for the purpose of supporting students with the exceptionality of Deaf and Hard of Hearing to ensure that there continues to be an adequate supply of this equipment.

4. As the *Humask* has been vetted and procured by the Ministry of Education, is available to school boards through the provincial PPE ordering process, and complies with all health and safety requirements, the board is not, at this time, investigating other clear mask products.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the information of the Board of Trustees.