



Small Schools Make a Difference

August 16, 2021

Dear SGDSB Families,

I hope that this letter finds you well, having enjoyed a restful summer with some relaxed COVID-19 restrictions. It has been a challenging time for everyone however we look forward to the return to school for all students and staff on Thursday, September 2, 2021.

The health and safety of students and staff, and their families continues to be the most important priority for our school board, and we are excited that some of the restrictions are beginning to be lifted, thus allowing for what we hope will be a more typical school year.

As the start of the school year is rapidly approaching, please find below some general information regarding the COVID-19 protective strategies that will be required by the Ministry of Education. Recall that the purpose of these strategies is to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is the combination of these strategies and the consistent application of them that is most effective in reducing the virus spread in schools.

The following directives have been provided to school boards by the Ministry of Education (Version 2 as of August 13, 2021) and are subject to changes over time. Please also note that there may be some regional enhancements to these strategies, with direction from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. Our aim at this time is to provide families with some general information regarding the upcoming school year. More specific information will be provided by your child(ren)'s school prior to start up.

What Can I Expect for the <u>Start</u> of the 2021-2022 School Year?	
Format for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students will return to school each day for full days. ✓ Remote learning will be offered, although in a different format than was offered last year. The format will be dependent upon enrollment. We do encourage all families to return students to in-school, in-person learning.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <u>All students</u> must wear masks while on the bus. ✓ Enhanced cleaning protocols will continue. ✓ Assigned seating will continue to allow for contact tracing. ✓ Weather permitting, windows should be opened to increase ventilation.

<p>Layered Approach to Safety: Distancing and Cohorting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students will remain in their class cohorts for as much of the day as possible. ✓ Distancing will be maximized in the hallways, entrances, and classrooms. ✓ High School students will have two classes per day (quadmester system) for at least Term One. ✓ Students will be permitted to mix cohorts during outdoor recess (while maintaining distancing), and where necessary, for specialized instruction. ✓ Students may mix cohorts while eating lunch outdoors. ✓ Students may eat together indoors, with distancing and with their cohort, as much as possible.
<p>Layered Approach to Safety: Screening, Masks and Hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Daily screening for students and staff will continue. Anyone with symptoms will be required to remain at home and to follow the guidance provided by the Provincial Screening Tool. ✓ Schools will continue with all safety protocols, including mask wearing for students (Grades 1 – 12) and staff. Students must bring their own masks to school. Masks may be temporarily removed outdoors however distancing between cohorts must be maintained. Students in JK/SK continue to be strongly encouraged to wear masks. ✓ Hand hygiene and enhanced cleaning protocols will continue.
<p>Layer Approach to Safety: Physical Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Nutrition programs and hot lunches may resume. ✓ The use of microwaves may resume. ✓ Students will now be permitted to share materials (with proper hand hygiene). ✓ The use of lockers and cubbies will be permitted. ✓ Assemblies may resume following the provincial capacity limits and adhering to cohorting. ✓ Visitors may access the school after confirmation of self-screening and with the use of a mask. ✓ Air quality will continue to be optimized through enhanced ventilation measures. All Kindergarten classrooms will have additional ventilation units.
<p>Supports for Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Student mental health and well-being will continue to be a priority in every school. Resources and supports from School Mental Health Ontario will be utilized by specialized staff to address local needs. ✓ Additional professional learning for staff will be occurring during the first three Professional development days and throughout the school year.
<p>Program Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cooperative Education in-person community placements can take place. ✓ Music programs (singing and the use of wind instruments) can once again take place with some restrictions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Health and Physical Education programs should continue to take place outdoors where possible. Educators will ensure safety procedures including distancing and masking, where necessary.
Extra-Curricular Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clubs, activities, sports teams, and bands are permitted with new restrictions.
Field Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Day trips and overnights stays are now permitted with new safety requirements.
EQAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EQAO will resume for grades 3, 6, and 9 in a digital format.
Graduation Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The OSSLT has been waived for students graduating in the 2021-2022 school year. ✓ Students graduating in the 2021-2022 school year are required to achieve 20 hours of community involvement, rather than 40 hours.

I encourage you to remember that these guidelines all depend upon the level of spread of COVID-19 in our region and may be changed at any time. Each school will be reviewing the guidelines carefully to ensure that they are implementing them fully, as we all continue to work together to keep COVID-19 out of our communities.

Please stay tuned for a school-based Fact Sheet coming from your school principal during the week of August 23, 2021. This Fact Sheet will provide you with significant details to support your child(ren)'s return to school in a safe manner. I encourage you to connect with your school if you have questions or concerns.

Once again, we are looking forward to seeing all SGDSB students returning to face-to-face learning on September 2, 2021, with a very special welcome to all new students. Enjoy the final weeks of your summer break!

Yours in education,



Nicole Morden Cormier
 Director of Education
 Superior-Greenstone DSB