



## Small Schools Make a Difference

2020/09/30

Dear Families,

We are one month into the new school year and we hope that students are becoming increasingly familiar with the many new school routines and procedures mandated by the Ministries of Education and Health to keep everyone as safe as possible. We want to express our thanks to families for your continued support and recognition of the necessity for following the many precautions that are required and that may change over time. We all need to work together, now more than ever, to support each other through these challenging times.

We are writing to you today with a few updates.

### **COVID-19 Screening Tool**

Please note that this screening tool, available at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/> has changed since it first became available. If you have downloaded a copy of this screening tool to use daily, please revisit the site to obtain the latest version. These changes impact the student portion of the tool. We anticipate that this screen may see more changes in the future, so we advise you to check the online link regularly when making the decision if your child should or should not attend school that day.

### **Action by The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) Should There Be a Positive Case of COVID-19**

Families, students and staff have an understanding interest in knowing when a positive case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in one of our schools. Should there be a positive case, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit will provide directions to the school and to families who are impacted regarding self-isolation, testing, and when to return to school. Your child's school will support the Thunder Bay District Health Unit in providing necessary details that will help them to identify close contacts of the individual who has tested positive. Should the TBDHU advise that a class or school should be closed for a period of time, parents/guardians will be notified immediately. We have also created a [COVID Advisory](#) page on the [sgdsb.on.ca](http://sgdsb.on.ca) website where we will post information. **Please note that in the interest of privacy, information provided to the school community will not identify a student or staff member that has received a positive test.**

For more detailed information, please visit the [sgdsb.on.ca](http://sgdsb.on.ca) website to review the "[What Should I Expect When the First Positive Case of COVID-19 is Confirmed at School](#)" Fact Sheet.

### **If A School or Class is Required to Self-Isolate...**

In the case where students in a class, cohort and/or school are required to self-isolate at home, students and staff will pivot to "remote learning" to avoid the interruption to in-person learning.

This means that learning will occur at a distance from the children's homes. Students will be loaned a board owned device (e.g. laptop or iPad) to support their learning if necessary and arrangements will be made for students to retrieve essential materials from school. Families who require support in connecting to the Internet are asked to contact their child's school principal to explore options. Edsby will continue to be the main point of contact for families to receive information from their child's school. Students with special education needs will continue to be supported by school staff.

### **Staff Shortages May Be Experienced**

While every effort is being made to ensure that classes continue in an uninterrupted manner, staff shortages may be experienced in our schools due to the requirement for self-isolation and/or illness. It is difficult to predict possible shortages moving forward. Although we are able to combine some classes safely, we want to advise families that it is possible that some classes or even schools could be closed due to a shortage of staff during the pandemic.

### **How Should Families Prepare for a Closure?**

Should a school or class need to be cancelled due to a positive case of COVID-19 OR due to staff shortages, we will notify families as soon as we are aware, and we will strive to give as much notice as possible.

### **Contact Information**

We encourage families to ensure that the school has up-to-date contact information so that the school can reach you immediately. Please be sure to sign up for Edsby and ensure that your School Messenger account is activated. For support, please call your child's school.

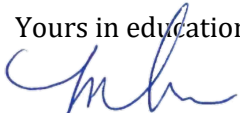
### **Back Up Plan**

We recognize that these are challenging times and that it may be difficult for working families if classes or school for your child is cancelled for a day or for a period of time. We must encourage families to ensure that you have a backup plan for childcare in the case that your child's school or classroom is required to self-isolate and engage in remote learning at home. This will be especially important moving forward.

September has been a month filled with much worry, new learning and many, many smiling faces. We are thrilled to be back at school and to have your children joining us, whether they are participating virtually or in a face-to-face school. We encourage families to reach out to your child's teacher if you have questions and/or concerns. We endeavor to share as much information as we can with you, as it is made available. Please continue to visit the [sgdsb.on.ca](http://sgdsb.on.ca) website for information, as well as the Thunder Bay District Health Unit website for the most recent information. Thank you for your continued patience and support.

Be well and stay safe.

Yours in education,



Nicole Morden Cormier  
Director of Education