



408 Wembley Drive, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 1P2 | Tel: 705.674.3171 | Toll Free: 1.888.421.2661 | rainbowschools.ca

January 13, 2022

RE: IN-PERSON LEARNING RESUMES ON MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022

Dear parents/guardians and students:

In-person learning will resume on Monday, January 17, 2022 in all Rainbow Schools in Sudbury, Espanola and Manitoulin Island. Transportation will also resume. Enhanced health and safety measures are being implemented to keep schools as safe as possible.

While we look forward to welcoming students back to class, it will not be business as usual. Please read this letter carefully so you know what to expect in the days and weeks to come.

Staff Absenteeism

Like other sectors in the community, schools may experience staff shortages due to a high level of absenteeism. We will do our best to replace staff with supply teachers and casual support workers, however, there is a limited pool for both. This will have an impact on students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 who require greater supervision while at school.

In the event that we do not have a teacher and/or supervisor for an elementary class, we will notify parents/guardians early in the morning before students leave to take the bus or walk to school. Please check your email every morning to see if you have a message.

If your child's class is cancelled, you will not be able to send your child to school.

Parents/guardians will be called to pick up children who come to school.

We will not be mixing cohorts from different classes due to staff absenteeism.

Cohorts will continue to be maintained as much as possible, both indoors and outdoors.

Screening

The [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care](#) has been updated to include more symptoms of COVID-19 and new guidance on testing and isolation. Students and staff are required to screen rigorously on a daily basis before coming to school or work.

If you are sick, please stay home. This is essential to limit the spread of COVID-19.

If you or your child have a symptom, even a mild one, please stay home.

Follow the updated guidance in the screening tool.

Daily confirmation of screening

The Ministry of Education has directed school boards and schools to perform daily confirmation of self-screening for students.

Parents/guardians of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 will be required to submit a form to confirm that they have completed the screening tool for their children. Schools will provide the link to parents/guardians via email before the start of each school day. (If you do not have email, please contact the school.)

Students in Grades 7 to 12 will confirm that they have completed the screening tool with their teachers in homerooms. The student's daily attendance will serve as confirmation.

Emergency Contacts

All parents/guardians must ensure they have shared a full list of emergency contacts with the school. This will be important in case parents/guardians are not available. Emergency contacts must be aware that they could be called to pick up children when they are sick.

Masking

Please ensure your child wears a mask to school, including the bus, and send extras in case they get wet. Schools will have a supply of three-ply cloth masks that children will be encouraged to wear. Students will be required to wear masks indoors and outdoors at all times. Kindergarten students have the option of wearing face shields or visors if masks cannot be tolerated. We encourage families to watch these videos on how to properly wear a mask - for [kids](#) and for [teens](#). We have also developed a [fact sheet](#).

Testing

Rapid Antigen Test kits were sent home with in-person learners prior to the winter break. Families were asked to save a test to use before returning to school after the break. Your child's participation in rapid antigen screening is voluntary. Students are not required to complete the testing to return to the classroom. They are also not required to submit results.

For those who do have access to a test and wish to participate, it is recommended students conduct a rapid antigen test on Monday morning PRIOR to coming to school. Students who test positive on a Rapid Antigen Test will be required to self-isolate immediately. Students will no longer be required to confirm the result with a PCR test.

Case and Contact Management

The Ministry of Health has updated its [guidance for schools and child care settings](#) on case, contact and outbreak management. The guidance contains important information on COVID-19 testing and isolation requirements in response to the Omicron surge. We encourage you to read the guidance document and keep it handy for reference.

Dismissal of cohorts

Given the widespread transmission of the Omicron variant and changes to the provincial testing approach, Public Health will no longer be advising school boards of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and/or asking schools to dismiss cohorts or declare outbreaks. As a result, schools will not have access to this information to share with parents/guardians as we have in the past. The COVID-19 Advisory Section on the Board website will not be updated.

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in schools will not be reported on the provincial website. Going forward, school boards will be required to report absenteeism due to illness. As mandated by the Province, if absenteeism rises to a defined level (approximately 30%) in schools, we will notify Public Health Sudbury & Districts and follow their guidance.

Rapid Antigen Tests

The Ministry of Education has sent us two rapid antigen tests for students and staff who are learning and teaching in person. These tests will be distributed to students next week. NOTE: If you do not want your child to receive these tests to bring them home and you would prefer to pick them up, please notify your child's school on Monday, January 17, 2022.

Students and staff will be required to actively screen each day, regardless of access to testing and to isolate if symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status and/or test access. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 will now be deemed to have COVID-19. The two rapid antigen tests provided are to be used when individuals are symptomatic.

As per the [COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care: Omicron Surge Guidance](#), if two consecutive rapid antigen tests, separated by 24 to 48 hours, are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 infection, and the individual should isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (or 48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present). We expect to receive more rapid antigen tests from the Ministry of Education as we move forward and will distribute them, as required.

Transfer to In-person Learning or Remote Learning

Throughout the pandemic, we have learned that in-person learning is important for the vast majority of our students, not only from an academic and social perspective, but also for their well-being.

As indicated at the beginning of the school year, the next opportunity to transfer to in-person learning or remote learning will be on February 7, 2022. Parents/guardians will be invited to complete a survey to confirm their status which will remain in effect for the remainder of the school year. The survey will be available January 18 to 20, 2022. Staffing will be adjusted at that time to accommodate requests for transfers. You will receive a link to the survey from your school.

Short-term learning at home

Schools will provide work for students who are required to self-isolate because they have tested positive or are required to quarantine because they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. This also applies to students who are required to stay home based on guidance in the provincial screening tool.

Requests for short-term remote learning will be facilitated through the posting of assignments in Google Classrooms which will be updated regularly. Supporting materials such as anchor charts, success criteria and exemplars will be included, where applicable. Parents can contact schools if technology is required. The Ministry of Education has developed online resources which are featured on the home page of the Board website and can also be accessed at: rainbowschools.ca/parents/covid-19/learn-at-home-resources/. Paper copies will also be available on request where Internet access is limited.

Ventilation

All Kindergarten classrooms have HEPA units. Ventilation devices have also been added to classrooms that do not have mechanical ventilation. Filters are being changed regularly on ventilation systems to ensure they are operating at maximum efficiency and capacity. We are receiving a total of 30 additional units for our schools.

School Based Vaccination Clinics

Public Health may host vaccination clinics for students ages 5 to 11 during the school day. We will advise families if a clinic is being offered at your child's school. Vaccination is voluntary. No student will be vaccinated without signed consent. Parents/guardians will be invited to provide consent to have their child vaccinated, should they choose to do so.

Vaccination Opportunities

There are many opportunities to get vaccinated. The schedule of clinics is updated weekly on the Public Health Sudbury & Districts website. Follow the link from rainbowschools.ca. There are also many resources on the vaccine online, including a [COVID-19 Vaccine Information Sheet: For Children \(age 5-11\)](#) and [COVID-19 vaccines for children and youth](#).

Sports/Music

Indoor high contact and high intensity extra-curricular activities are being paused at this time. Cohorting protocols remain in effect for music classes.

Return of Technology

If you borrowed technology from the school during the remote learning period, please bring it with you when you return to school for in-person learning. It's important that technology be available for student use at school.



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With enhanced Public Health measures, voluntary rapid antigen testing for students, vaccinations for children ages 5 to 11, and the availability of boosters for adults, we remain hopeful and optimistic as we reopen schools for in-person learning.

Health and safety, as always, will remain our first and foremost priority.

Please continue to follow Public Health guidance:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Stay home and [isolate](#) if symptoms appear.
- Practise two-metre physical distancing.
- Wear a mask at all times in indoor public spaces.
- Limit your exposure by limiting your contacts.

More importantly, **please stay home when you are sick.**

To protect in-person learning and keep schools open, only students and staff who are feeling well should be coming to school. When in doubt, wait it out.

Thank you for working together to keep everyone safe.

Your patience and support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Bourget".

Bruce Bourget
Director of Education