



**RCDHU Recommendations for Additional COVID-19 Protective Measures in School Settings
September 2, 2021**

RCDHU is endorsing the following recommendations for additional COVID-19 protective measures for school settings for the 2021-2022 return to school. These recommendations build upon those developed by the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) School Working Group. The recommendations endeavor to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the school setting while reducing interruptions to in-person learning as much as possible. RCDHU is monitoring and is concerned by the current regional incidence of COVID-19, particularly given the preponderance of the Delta variant of concern. RCDHU is taking a cautious approach as we enter the upcoming school year and will continue to assess the need for these and other protective measures as the year progresses.

RCDHU recognizes that in addition to widespread uptake of COVID-19 vaccination, the best way to keep schools open and students in class in the 2021-2022 school year is to minimize the introduction and spread of COVID-19 within the school setting. Reducing interactions between cohorts is expected to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread between cohorts and reduce the number of individuals dismissed as high-risk contacts if COVID-19 is introduced. In addition, masking and physical distancing between individuals continue to play central roles in transmission risk reduction. As much as possible, these recommendations allow for resumption of activities while minimizing the risk of transmission between and within cohorts.

Where there is a difference between this guidance document and a school board’s internal policies and procedures, the school board’s plan should take precedence.

Student Masking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking strongly recommended in JK/SK, including on school vehicles Masking for all students is recommended outdoors if distancing is not maintained between cohorts, including outdoor sports where masks can be safely worn
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active screening is required daily prior to arriving at the school (e.g., completing the provincial COVID-19 screening tool) Confirmation of screening is recommended during periods of potential increased transmission, such as during periods of increased community transmission and following school breaks that tend to be associated with travel (e.g., after October and December holidays)
Recess/breaks outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain distancing between cohorts at recess as much as possible, with student masking recommended if unable to maintain distance between cohorts Playground structures do not need to be cleaned or disinfected between uses; hand hygiene should be practiced before and after using playground equipment
Shared spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared indoor spaces should be used by one cohort at a time as much as possible; distancing maintained between cohorts if more than one using a shared space at the same time Assigned seating (if applicable)
Cafeteria/lunch protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distancing as much as possible between cohorts while eating outdoors



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing should be maintained between cohorts while eating indoors • Distancing should be maintained between individuals within a cohort while masks are removed for eating • Masks may be removed during the physical acts of eating or drinking (that is, the duration of mask removal should be minimized as much as possible), with particular attention paid to physical distancing when masks are off
Assemblies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor assemblies are not recommended at this time. This will be reassessed once case counts have a sustained decline
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular parent traffic (e.g., dropping of and picking up children) should occur at designated outdoor locations, supervised where applicable • Non-essential visitors should be discouraged
Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singing indoors should only be permitted within a cohort, masking and distancing between individuals should be maintained • Singing is permitted outdoors with distancing maintained between cohorts, masking is recommended if distancing is not maintained between individuals within a cohort
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of wind instruments should not be permitted indoors. This will be reassessed once case counts (i.e., local incidence) have a sustained decline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of wind instruments is permitted outdoors with distancing maintained between cohorts
Physical Education, including inter-school sports activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masking should be maintained when using gym, pools, change rooms, weight rooms, indoor physical education equipment and shared outdoor equipment except upon entering a swimming pool
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks must be worn for indoor sports, and masking is encouraged for outdoor sports when physical distancing cannot be maintained • Attendance records should be maintained
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distancing of 2m must be maintained between and within cohorts while using pools and surrounding area
Inter-provincial field trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly recommend that only fully vaccinated students and staff participate in inter-provincial field trips (e.g., sports and music competitions)