



November 26, 2021

Dear Education Colleague:

RE: Medical Officer of Health Recommendations for Enhanced COVID-19 Protection Measures

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to keeping schools safe and open for in-person learning.

Given the local surge in COVID-19 cases, and as the Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, I am issuing **strong recommendations** to area Boards of Education to implement enhanced COVID-19 protection measures. These measures are to mitigate further transmission of COVID-19 in schools and protect our school communities. They are in addition to the [enhanced public health measures](#) that Public Health Sudbury & Districts is implementing which, as they relate to schools, are also summarized below.

Working together, I am confident we can reduce the burden of COVID-19 in area schools and continue to protect in-person learning and the health and wellbeing of school-aged children.

[Summary of measures in this document:](#)

Schools:

1. Enhanced protection for extra-curricular sports
2. Strengthened health and safety measures
3. Mandatory daily confirmation of symptom screening
4. Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) for students

Public Health:

1. Fully vaccinated contacts of a case – no extra-curricular activities
2. Unvaccinated child/youth with an unvaccinated household member who is self-isolating – stay-at-home
3. Certain vaccinated high-risk close contacts required to self-isolate

[Recommended actions for schools:](#)

1. [Enhanced protection for extra-curricular sports](#)
In alignment with the Ministry of Education's initiative to protect high contact, indoor, extracurricular sports and activities, I am strongly recommending that you require screening with Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT), where proof of vaccination cannot

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be provided, for students and coaches prior to participation as an additional risk reduction strategy. The school board has the responsibility for the implementation of this policy, including the required reporting on use of tests, monitoring, verification, distribution, and compliance with necessary privacy obligations under applicable legislation, and as outlined in recent communication from the Minister of Education.

For those actively participating in high contact, indoor, extra-curricular sports, I am outlining the following:

- For those aged 5-11: require a negative RAT prior to participation
- For those aged 12 and over: require a negative RAT prior to participation OR proof that student or staff is fully immunized¹ against COVID-19

Where Rapid Antigen Tests are implemented, the testing is to be three times per week OR testing within 48 hours or less of engagement in sports, as relevant to the circumstances.² More information will be forthcoming.

This enhanced protection for extra-curricular sports should be implemented as soon as possible and by December 1, 2021 at the latest.

2. Strengthened health and safety measures

To mitigate risk and further protect in person learning in our current context of elevated case rates in area schools and the community, I am strongly recommending that strengthened, time-limited health and safety measures be implemented immediately. These measures include:

- Virtual only assemblies in elementary and secondary schools.
- Mandatory masking for students while outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Maintain distancing between cohorts when outdoors as much as possible.
- Pausing on school field trips that require group transportation and that are not outdoors for both elementary and secondary students.
- Limit visitors into the schools and require strict protocols for those entering (e.g. confirmation of symptom screening, masking, limited access).
- Mandatory daily confirmation of symptom screening (see further information below).

These strengthened health and safety measures should be implemented as soon as possible and by December 1, 2021 at the latest.

¹ An individual is **fully immunized** if at least 14 days prior to their high-risk exposure they have received: the full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines; OR one or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada; OR three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada

² Circumstances are defined as follows: where participation in extracurricular sport is regular and ongoing throughout the week, tests are required three times weekly. Where participation in extra-curricular sport is sporadic or not frequent, testing is required within 48 hours, or less, of engagement.

3. Mandatory daily confirmation of symptom screening

While the Ministry of Education requires daily on-site confirmation of screening prior to/upon arrival at school for at least two weeks following the winter break, I am strongly recommending that local schools implement this process as soon as possible and no later than December 1, 2021.

Further, as outlined in our [letter to parents](#) dated November 19, 2021, everyone is asked to stay home and get tested if they have any COVID-19 symptoms, even mild ones, regardless of vaccination status. As the *COVID-19 school and child care screening* tool does not list all COVID-19 symptoms, we ask that parents and staff use the [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) when doing daily symptom screening.

4. Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) for students

In addition to the expanded testing strategies announced by the [Government of Ontario](#) on November 18, 2021, and given the local surge in school-associated cases, I have strongly recommended that select local schools participate in Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) screening. For participating schools, RAT screening kits are available for students in both elementary and secondary schools. As identified in the email to Directors of Education dated November 25, 2021, RAT screening is intended for students who are not fully vaccinated, are asymptomatic, and who are not considered high-risk close contacts (i.e., are not part of a dismissed cohort or otherwise advised by Public Health to self-isolate) to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and to continue to support school communities. Kits and parent and guardian letters are to be distributed to all [elementary](#) school students from kindergarten to grade 8 and made available to [secondary](#) students as part of this voluntary screening program. Students who test positive must not attend school and must complete follow-up PCR testing for confirmation. Additional details on this program are available on our [website](#).

Enhanced Public Health measures in support of schools

To decrease the number of COVID-19 cases in schools, mitigate transmission, and reduce the number of cohorts being dismissed, Public Health Sudbury & Districts is implementing more protective protocols for COVID-19 contact management.

5. Fully vaccinated contacts of a case – no extra-curricular activities

Who: Students and staff who are fully vaccinated³ or previously positive within the last 90 days⁴, asymptomatic and have had exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19 (“high-risk close contacts”).

What: These individuals will be immediately dismissed as per current process while they review their dismissal letter. Effective immediately, this letter now instructs that if they remain symptom-free, they **may return to school immediately** but are **not permitted to participate in**

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⁴ An individual is considered previously positive if they tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have since been cleared from their infection.

extra-curricular activities within the school or in the community for 10 days following the dismissal date. This is in addition to testing instructions and direction to monitor for symptoms.

Those that are identified as high-risk close contacts will continue to receive a letter from Public Health Sudbury & Districts advising of the exposure and steps that must be taken. These steps will include return to school if asymptomatic, monitor for symptoms and do not participate in extra-curricular activities (includes inside or outside of school) for 10 days from dismissal date.

6. Unvaccinated child/youth with an unvaccinated household member who is self-isolating – stay-at-home

Who: Children and youth who are not protected (i.e. not fully vaccinated or previously positive within the last 90 days) and are living with someone who is self-isolating because they are an unprotected contact of a COVID-19 case. These are “contacts of contacts” where both are not fully vaccinated (or a previous case of COVID in the last 90 days). For example, this could be the unvaccinated sibling of an unvaccinated student who is part of a dismissed class.

What: These individuals are required to stay-at-home and away from school and daycare for the duration of the exposed person’s isolation period. They are not required to self-isolate but are directed to not gather with others outside of their household who are not fully vaccinated for the duration of their stay-at-home period. Public Health Sudbury & Districts letters to high risks contacts of COVID-19 now include this instruction with accompanying [infographic](#) to explain the new direction.

7. Certain vaccinated high-risk close contacts required to self-isolate

Who: Fully vaccinated or previously positive individuals who are high risk close contacts of a case of COVID-19 who is fully immunized (“breakthrough case”), a **household** contact of a case, or who are associated with a **vulnerable** setting.

What: These individuals are required to self-isolate regardless of their vaccination status or if they were previously positive in the last 90 days. Public Health Sudbury & Districts letters to high risks contacts of COVID-19 now include this instruction with accompanying infographics to explain the new direction.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the health and safety of students in area schools. Our priority remains keeping students, staff and our communities safe. As these measures are temporary, we will continue to monitor the location situation and context and adjust any measures accordingly. I am confident with these increased measures and our efforts to combat COVID-19 can be successful in protecting in-person learning.

If you or any member of the school community have any questions, please visit our [Schools and COVID FAQ](#) page, or contact Public Health Sudbury & Districts at 705.522.9200 (toll free 1.866.522.9200).

Sincerely,



Penny Sutcliffe, MD, MHSc, FRCPC

Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer