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What you need to know about Ontario?s back to school plan

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The Labour Day long weekend is just around the corner, and Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) students will be making their way back to the classroom.

Students will return-to-school as of Sept. 7, and the UGDSB has released a guide as of Aug. 20 for families as they enter the 2021/22 school year.

Here is what families need to know:

In-Person Learning

Elementary students will return to attending a full-time, five days a week schedule. Secondary students will attend full-time, but to begin the school year, they will have their schedules divided into quadmesters, taking two courses per day.

Heather Loney, communications manager for the UGDSB, said staff are working on finalizing the numbers for in-person learning, but current data shows 22,900 elementary students and 10,500 high school students enrolled in in-person learning across the board.

Students returning to in-classroom instruction this school year will find some changes to protocols and activities that are permitted.

Students can be placed in small groups with students from other cohorts, and cohorts are also permitted to use common spaces including libraries, hubs, resources rooms, music room, and cafeterias. Students from different classes can interact outdoors with distancing encouraged and inside with distance and masking.

School staff are permitted to go into multiple classrooms to provide full programming.

A ?virtual learning environment? will be maintained for these students to support transitions to remote learning if need be.

Remote Learning

A remote learning option for elementary and secondary student is being provided for this school year, with registration for the option now closed.

According to the UGDSB, current enrollment data indicates there are 1,040 elementary students and 480 secondary students set to attend remote learning.

Elementary students will have their curriculum delivered via Google Classroom, with a weekly (Monday- Friday) timetable indicating group sessions provided by a teacher. Secondary student's curriculum will be delivered via Google Classrooms and/or BrightSpace with a set schedule for group and independent sessions.

Elementary students enrolled in remote learning will remain in the option for the entire school year as the UGDSB has said movement between learning modes will cause disruption for students. High school students will be required to remain in remote learning for the entire semester.

Attendance will be taken daily and classes will be taught by dedicated remote learning teachers during scheduled times on school

days.

Screening

Families, students, and staff will be required, as they were last year, to conduct self-screening before attending school for the day.

The Ontario government announced the update of its screening guidance on Monday (Aug. 30). The form is now condensed to the symptoms most commonly associated with the virus, removing symptoms such as runny noses, sore throats, and headaches.

The five symptoms on the screening form include fever and/or chills, coughing, shortness of breath, decrease or loss of taste or smell, and nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Masks

All UGDSB students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 will be required to where a non-medical or cloth mask in-doors per the motion passed by the Board of Trustees in August 2020.

Masks can be temporarily removed indoors with two metres distance when engaging in low-contact physical activity and consuming food or drink. Students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but distancing is encouraged.

Parents seeking a mask exemption will need to contact their school principal directly, who will have a process for access exemptions.

Ventilation

Upgrades to ventilation and filtration systems in UGDSB schools started in 2020-21 school year and are continuing to be worked on.

All UGDSB schools have full or partial mechanical ventilation, with Orangeville District Secondary School (ODSS) and Centre Dufferin District High School the only schools in Dufferin County with partial mechanical ventilation.

The Ministry of Education is requiring standalone High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) units be placed in all classrooms and learning spaces.

Loney said all HEPA filtration units will be placed by the first day of school.

She added that the UGDSB is conducting carbon dioxide (CO_2) testing in school to ensure the ventilation systems are working and where to supplement air quality if needed.

Vaccination

The Ontario government announced on Aug. 17 that they'd be making COVID-19 vaccination policies mandatory for high-risk setting, including schools.

The Ministry of Education also announced they'd be implementing a vaccination status disclosure policy.

Those not vaccinated against COVID-19 will be required to undergo frequent rapid antigen testing.

New for 2021/22

Students will be permitted to interact outside of their cohorts during recesses and breaks. Food programs, field trips, and school assemblies are also permitted to return in 2021/22.

Individuals fully vaccination will have different self-isolation and testing requirements compared to those who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

Students will return to school whether it be in person of remotely on Sept.7. The completed guidance document provided by the UGDSB can be found on their website.