

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE: 451 Park Street West, P.O. Box 210, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6K1

BOARD MEETING – PUBLIC SESSION
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2021
BOARD ROOM
451 PARK STREET WEST, WINDSOR
5:30 P.M.

AGENDA

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ATTENDANCE

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

D. REPORTS (TO BE RECEIVED)

D.1 Return to School Update

D.2 Vaccination Declaration

D.3 Equity and Anti-Black Racism

page 1-27

E. ADJOURNMENT

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING:

Board Meeting Public Session, Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Chairperson – Alicia Higgison
Vice-Chairperson – Cathy Cooke

Director of Education – Erin Kelly
Executive Assistant – Melissa LeBoeuf



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD MEMORANDUM

TO: CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD
FROM: Erin Kelly, Director of Education
SUBJECT: Return to School Update
DATE: September 1, 2021

Creating Confident Learners

Engaging Communities

Demonstrating Ethical
Stewardship

AIM:

To provide the Board of Trustees with the Greater Essex County District School Board's Back to School Plan for Reopening.

BACKGROUND:

As we prepare for the return to learning in September, our priority is the safety and well-being of students and staff. We have involved the Windsor Essex County Health unit in our planning, while also following the guidance and direction of the Ministry of Education. Extensive consultation has taken place with our union partners, Joint Health and Safety Committees, Principals, coterminous boards, and the Windsor Essex Student Transportation Services.

On August 3, 2021, School Boards received the [Ministry of Education's COVID-19: Health, Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools 2021-22](#) which led to the development of the GECD SB Back to School Plan for Reopening.

The School Safety Plan has been amended to reflect current practices and safety measures.

We will continue to respond to changes throughout the 2021-22 school year, as necessary, based on directions from the Ministry of Education and the Windsor Essex County Health Unit.

We are looking forward to welcoming students and staff back, regardless of the selected learning model.

Financial / Budget Impact:

In recognition that the 2021-22 school year will require enhanced health and safety measures to support the continued safe operation of schools, the Ministry will continue to provide temporary ongoing COVID-19 funding supports to school boards throughout the year. Ministry funding of \$7.5 million has been allocated to the Board for this purpose, excluding connectivity supports for remote learning, which is an application-based funding process. Based on specific direction from the Ministry of Education, the Board is permitted to budget for approximately one-half of these funding supports and accordingly, \$3.9 million has been included in the Board's 2021-22 budget. Further, the Ministry has permitted school boards to unlock their reserves by accessing up to 2% of their operating budget, however school boards may only budget for 1% of its operating budget at this time. Consequently, in addition to the funding supports noted above, the 2021-22 budget reflects a deficit of \$4.27 million to provide greater flexibility for addressing costs associated with the safe operation of schools.

Time-limited COVID-19 funding to support capital improvements in schools was introduced in partnership with the federal and provincial governments through the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program*. Eligible projects must promote occupancy health and safety, improve facility condition, enhance physical distancing and / or facilitate distance learning. The Board will receive funding totaling \$15.6 million, supporting 124 capital projects, with a targeting completion date of December 31, 2021.



Greater Essex County District School Board

School Reopening Plan 2021-2022

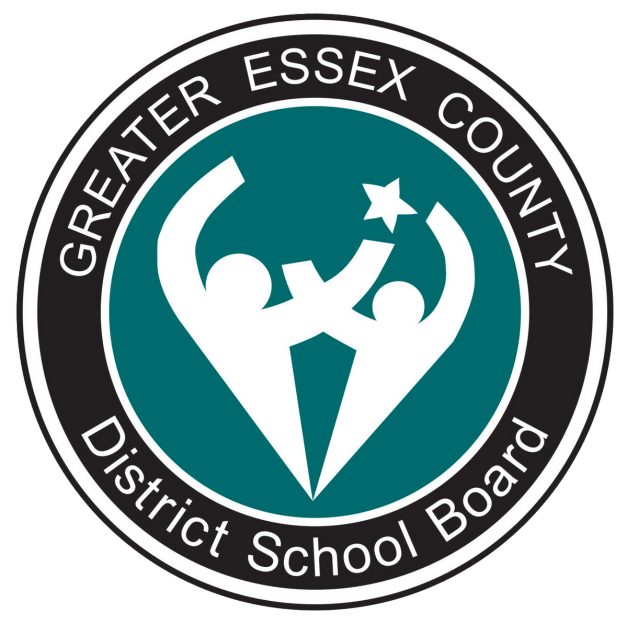


Table of Contents

Message from Erin Kelly - Director of Education.....	3
Guiding Principles.....	4
School Year Start Dates.....	5
Learning Models.....	5
Supporting Students with Special Education Needs.....	7
Before-and After-School Programs (Extended Day Program, Authorized Recreation and Licensed Child Care)....	9
Guidelines for Subject Delivery – Elementary and Secondary.....	10
Field Trips.....	12
Health and Safety.....	13
Outbreak Plan.....	17
Technology/Allocation of Devices.....	18
EQAO.....	19
Well-Being and Supports for Students.....	20
Extra-Curricular.....	21
Vaccinations.....	22
Infrastructure Building Ventilation Systems.....	23
Transportation.....	23
Operations.....	24
Meal Periods, Cafeterias and Other Considerations.....	24
International Students.....	25

Message from Erin Kelly - Director of Education

We are preparing to begin the 2021-22 school year with optimism.

Our goal is to work in the present and keep looking forward. Though the previous 2 school years have helped inform our thinking and planning we will not, unduly, dwell on the past. This new year will, I hope, be one of action rather than just reaction to a series of emergencies.

We will rely on the knowledge our experience has provided but we will endeavor to keep students moving ahead in their learning.

Most of our students will begin the year at school, in a traditional setting, however a number of our families preferred on-line learning and we will continue to provide GECDSB elementary and secondary Virtual Schools for this purpose.

At schools we will continue with our health and safety practices, introduced last year, to minimize risk and increase safety for everyone.

The following document is a guide for learning, instruction and our expectations for operating during the 2021-22 school year. The guidelines have been developed from a variety of trusted sources.

We have a shared obligation to support and promote responsible behavior to make this a successful and safe learning and working experience.

Be kind, stay safe.



Director of Education

Guiding Principles

This plan has been developed in accordance with Ministry of Education guidelines, in consultation with the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

Our decisions and planning are informed by our guiding principles of:

- Maintaining safety
- Maximizing learning
- Protecting programming
- Supporting well-being
- Planning of effective transitions
- Communicating consistently and transparently
- Leveraging partnerships

If there are you have any immediate questions or concerns with the information that follows please contact us [at communications@publicboard.ca](mailto:atcommunications@publicboard.ca).

School Year Start Dates

Elementary & Secondary: In-School (grades 1-12 including all specialized programs) – Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Elementary & Secondary: Virtual (grades 1-12 including all specialized programs) – Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Kindergarten: In School (JK / SK) – Monday, September 13, 2021

Kindergarten: Virtual (JK / SK) – Monday, September 13, 2021

Re-Organization Day

All elementary student schedules and teacher/class assignments are tentative until Reorganization Day on September 27, 2021. During the first 2 weeks of class, all schools will verify their attendance, including new registrations and families who have moved from the area. School staffing is then adjusted to ensure appropriate class size in all schools. This may mean that some student and teacher classes are changed at this time.

[Full 2021-22 Elementary School Year Calendar](#)

[Full 2021-22 Secondary School Year Calendar](#)

Learning Models

Elementary

The GECDSB is planning for a return to in-person learning for all students, K to 12, in September 2021! We believe that this is the best place for our students to learn. Working with the Windsor Essex County Health Unit, we will continue to update school safety plans and protocols.

Elementary students will attend full day, every day in September.

Elementary Remote Learning Model:

Elementary Students who opted out of in-person learning for 2021-2022 will be timetabled in the Elementary Virtual School and will follow a timetable similar to the 2020-2021 school year (including a minimum of 225 minutes of synchronous instruction). Students who enroll in the Virtual School must commit to do so for an entire term (Term 1 – September 7, 2021 to January 28, 2022; Term 2 – January 31, 2022 to June 29, 2022). Students who opt out of in-person learning for Term 1 will have an opportunity to return to in-person learning for Term 2. In-person learners will not have the option to switch to virtual learning in Term 2.

Secondary

Secondary students will attend full day, every day in September.

Secondary students will be scheduled in a four-course, semester model. Students will participate in two, 150-minute classes each day. Students will participate in Course 1 and Course 2 in Week 1, and in Course 3 and Course 4 in Week 2 to limit the number of student interactions throughout the day. This schedule will alternate each week for the first semester. Regular school bell times will be

followed, with a 40-minute lunch break between morning and afternoon courses. Students attending in-person will remain in that learning model for the entire year.

Secondary Remote Learning Model:

The GECDSB has decided that the September 2021 remote learning model for secondary students will be the Greater Essex Virtual Secondary School. The learning platform for secondary students in Remote learning is *BrightSpace (D2L)*.

Asynchronous Learning:

Asynchronous learning is a general term to describe forms of education, instruction and learning that do not occur in the same place or at the same time.

- Not online
- Not 'real time'
- Available all day at any time
- Learning can be completed with flexibility

Synchronous Learning:

Synchronous learning refers to a learning event in which a group of students are engaging in learning at the same time.

- Online
- In 'real time'
- Scheduled time (for a meeting, live chat, direct instruction, group sharing...)

While all school procedures and practices will align with system-wide plans, the implementation may vary from school to school, based on the local school environment and unique circumstances.

Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

As schools reopen, the GECDSB is committed to supporting our students with special education needs. Transition meetings have been held in the spring and will continue to be held in late August to help ensure a smooth transition back to school.

As directed by the Ministry of Education, our elementary schools will follow a conventional in-person school day utilizing enhanced cleaning protocols and increased safety measures. In this delivery model, all students with special education needs will be attending for a full school day, five days a week. If the delivery model is changed by the Ministry due to health guidelines, more information will be provided to parents/guardians.

For students with special education needs, schools will work with their Special Education Coordinator to liaise with parents/guardians and, where applicable, their child's healthcare provider to accommodate a more individualized return to school to ensure a better transition.

At the secondary level, students with complex special education needs (STEPS programming) will attend five days a week.

Our secondary administrators are providing support for the Enhanced Transition Programs that are occurring at all our secondary schools at the end of August for our students identified with a Learning Disability, a Mild Intellectual Disability and our students who are attending MAPS programming. Our students who are participating will have an opportunity to tour their new schools and meet some staff before starting school.

Following Ministry of Education (MOE) guidelines, all students with special education needs who require accommodations and/or modifications will have them implemented as outlined in their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Where applicable, IEPs will reflect remote learning needs.

All students with special education needs, who engage in remote learning, will have virtual contact with a teacher and expectations for synchronous instruction will be determined by the GECDSB.

The GECDSB will continue to support the learning of students with special needs in the following ways:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
Where staff are required to have direct physical contact with students, in which physical distancing of 2 metres (6 feet) cannot be implemented, staff will be provided with PPE such as disposable masks, nitrile gloves and eye protection as prescribed.
- **Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC):** IPRC meetings will continue to be held under any model (face-to-face and/or remotely) using Microsoft Teams.
- **Individual Education Plan (IEP):** IEPs will continue to be developed by teachers following Ministry timelines. Schools will follow requirements to provide parents/guardians/families consultation through the IPRC process/meeting. Schools will follow requirements to provide students with their IEPs in collaboration with the school

team and parents/guardians. If the model requires students to be involved in learning at home the student's IEP expectations must align with individual student needs and the delivery model.

- **School Based Team (SBT) Meetings, IPRCs and Transition meetings** will continue either face to face and/or remotely using the Microsoft Teams platform which is an AODA platform. Psychological and Speech and Language Services staff as well as Special Education Coordinators will be included as usual.
- **Itinerant Staff:** The Behaviour Management Team, Psychological and Speech and Language Services as well as Itinerant Blind & Low Vision (BLV) and Deaf & Hard of Hearing (DHH) will continue to support both remotely and in-person following physical distancing guidelines and a Tiered Approach based on a student's IEP. Consultation will be provided remotely using Microsoft Teams.

Before-and After-School Programs (Extended Day Program, Authorized Recreation and Licensed Child Care)

The GECDSB is dedicated to supporting the operation of before-and after-school programs (BASP) in schools in September, with the health and safety of children, families, and staff at the forefront.

To date, the Ministry of Education has confirmed that standard ratios and maximum group sizes set out in the *Before and After School Kindergarten to Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines* for authorized recreation providers of after school programs and Extended Day Programs will be required to be followed. In addition, licensed childcares are required to develop infection prevention and control policies and procedures as directed by the Health Unit.

School boards and BASP operators will collaborate to ensure that student lists and information are maintained and readily available to be provided to Windsor Public Health for contact tracing purposes. The GECDSB staff will work with BASP operators to facilitate the required cleaning before and after BASP students access shared program space.

While the full return to school supports the continued implementation of BASPs in GECDSB schools during the 2021-22 school year, the decision to operate and determine operating capacities for licensed BASP and authorized recreation programs will be made by organizations and individual program operators.

Guidelines for Subject Delivery – Elementary and Secondary

Cooperative Education

For students enrolled in cooperative education courses, in-person community placements can be arranged in alignment with the relevant provincial requirements under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#), the direction and recommendations of the local health unit, the direction of the school board, and with the safety and curriculum requirements of the [Cooperative Education curriculum \(PDF\)](#). If in-person placements are not possible, students should be offered virtual placements. In the event that public health guidance or direction changes during a placement and the student cannot complete their co-op placement in-person or virtually, educators should work with the student to modify their co-op learning plans that allow the student to achieve the curriculum expectations and earn the credit(s).

The WECHU has approved our Board's COVID-19 Safety Plan which includes direction for Experiential Learning Placements for Co-op in September. All cooperative education and OYAP students will attend work placements, however co-op teachers will be required to conduct a site visit and placement assessment to ensure that the work environment is safe, that students are following protocols specific to the site, and they are in accordance with the Ministry of Education curriculum. Students will also be required to complete a pre-placement preparation module that includes a unit on COVID-19 preparedness.

Health and Physical Education

Health and Physical Education (HPE) is an essential component of the curriculum.

In elementary and secondary health and physical education courses, the use of gymnasiums, swimming pools, change rooms, weight rooms, indoor physical education equipment and shared outdoor equipment are permitted with distancing.

High and low-contact activities are permitted indoors and outdoors as follows:

- Masking is not required when playing high or low contact activities outdoors.
- Masking is strongly encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.
- Windows should be open when feasible to increase ventilation.
- Swimming pools are permitted, with physical distancing around the pool area is encouraged. The mixing of cohorts and congregating is discouraged.

While high contact activities are permitted, low contact and no contact activities should be prioritized for physical activity, as wellness breaks during class or in physical education class outdoors.

Some examples of high and low sports activities may include:

High Contact

- Wrestling, Rugby, Football, Hockey, Basketball, etc.
- The Board has chosen to pause Football based on direction from the Windsor Essex County Secondary School Athletic Association in order to keep and maintain the focus of our resources on the healthy and safe return to school for our staff and students. This may be revisited at a later time.

Low Contact

- Individual Running Events, Soccer, Bowling, Golf, Badminton, Curling, Volleyball, Cross Country, Track & Field, etc.
- Individual skill-building drills and movement concepts, yoga / stretching, track and field, as well as play-based games or teaching games for understanding are some other examples of low contact activities.

Outdoor physical education activities are encouraged as much as possible, weather permitting. Physical distancing is encouraged.

Interpersonal greetings or celebrations should not be encouraged (e.g., high fives, hugging, shaking hands).

Spectators/Visitors

The Board has chosen to pause spectators based on direction from the local Health Unit, through December 31, 2021, in order to keep and maintain the focus of our resources on the healthy and safe return to school for our staff and students. This applies to both indoor and outdoor events. This will be revisited at that time.

Logistics may vary between school sites based on factors, including gymnasium size, indoor space availability and outdoor space availability. All schools will assess their site-specific layout and make site-specific plans to accommodate physical education for all students. Proper hand washing and personal hygiene routines will be incorporated before entering any space for Health and Physical Education classes.

Library

The library / learning commons is an essential resource for learning in our schools. Libraries, and computer / technology labs will be open, with appropriate cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces.

Mathematics

An effective environment for math instruction includes social interaction and the use of manipulative tools to support conceptual understanding. Students should continue to have opportunities to work with a partner or small group following social distancing protocols. For example, to adhere to physical distancing, during partner and small groups, students can work on large chart paper, assign a scribe or have each student independently document group strategies and solutions.

Manipulatives may be used in direct modeling of strategies by the classroom teacher. Manipulatives may also be available as a tool for students to access in solving math problems. Manipulatives can be shared within the cohort. To reduce the use of shared objects, manipulative kits may be developed for individual student use or manipulatives can be sanitized between use.

Science/STEM

Hands-on learning experiences in science and STEM based learning activities is typical to support engagement and student learning. Science labs are typically a partnered activity and will support physical distancing. Safety protocols and procedures will continue to be followed.

Technological Education

To support student learning and engagement it is essential for educators to be able to safely

provide students in Tech Education courses with hands-on experiences which resemble as closely as possible industry practices. A *Tech Education Safety Guidelines for COVID-19* is being developed. The document will support educators and administrators in the implementation of routines and procedures for safely managing the use of equipment and tools in Tech Education classrooms.

Arts

Arts education remains an important component of the curriculum and focus for learning in the GECDSB. Our district has always valued the arts in supporting student creativity, exploration, innovation and expression. Arts education is a highly collaborative/social subject area and requires students to “create”, “experience” the arts discipline. We know that the arts experience also contributes to the overall well-being of our students. Schools will make a plan according to the programming needs at their school. All Arts instruction can be creatively adapted to adhere to health guidelines.

Music

Music programs are permitted in areas with adequate ventilation (read [ventilation](#)). Singing and the use of wind instruments will be permitted:

- Use of wind instruments is permitted indoors within a cohort if a minimum distance of two metres or more can be maintained. As much distance as possible should be encouraged and use of large, well-ventilated spaces should be prioritized.
- Use of wind instruments is permitted outdoors in mixed cohorts with distancing encouraged.
- Singing is permitted indoors. Masking is encouraged but not required for singing indoors if a minimum distance of two metres can be maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible maintained within a cohort.

If shared, proper sanitization of wind instruments must occur between use.

Drama

Drama programs are permitted. It is important to note that Drama traditionally involves physical contact, movement, and proximity. During the pandemic period drama will allow no contact and maintain social distancing.

Field Trips

As part of our Back to School safety planning, schools are limiting the number and type of Field Trips and Excursions for students at this time.

For the 2021-2022 school year, there will continue to be a pause on all international travel, including day trips to the United States. Overnight Trips are also not permitted at this time.

Health and Safety

The GECDSB has conducted COVID-19 health and safety risk assessments for its elementary and secondary schools and is currently implementing their associated safety plans and cleaning protocols focused on protecting the health and safety of our staff and students. Our planning is informed by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

The use of a multiple layered health and safety approach is part of this fundamental strategy intended to decrease the number of interactions with others while increasing the safety of interactions. Such multiple layers of health and safety include:

- daily screening
- physical distancing strategies
- increased hygiene (hand washing practices, hygiene etiquette)
- enhanced cleaning and disinfecting
- physical infrastructure ventilation systems
- personal protective equipment
- posting, signage, cues
- prohibitions

COVID-19 Self-Screening for Staff and Students

For each person entering the school environment, [self-screening](#) is required before leaving their home. Parents/ Guardians are requested to complete daily screening of their children before the child boards a school bus or before arriving at school by other methods. Staff are also required to complete a daily self-screening before reporting to work.

Should any staff or students have an unsuccessful result from the daily self-screening, feel unwell or have symptoms of COVID-19, they should seek advice from their health-care professional and not attend school. Non-essential visitors will be restricted and will require that a self-screening be completed prior to entering the building.

Entering and Exiting School

Staff and students will be directed to designated entrances which will be configured with the following:

- COVID-19 screening signage;
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations;
- Visual cues, including signage and floor stickers, to promote physical distancing;
- Log books for visitors, contractors and itinerant staff to support contact tracing;
- Staff and student attendance processes to support contact tracing.

Maintaining Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is an effective measure to minimize the risk of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19. The following measures are being implemented:

- Cohorting of students to limit the number of contacts;
- Visual cues, signage and floor markings, including directional arrows for traffic flow,

where appropriate;

- Educating students about the importance of physical distancing;
- Adaptations to classroom settings and other shared spaces to provide as much space as possible between students and staff;
- Keeping lunchtime in the cohort classroom or outdoors, where possible;
- Staggering measures to minimize traffic in shared spaces such as hallways and washrooms.

Individual schools will determine school specific protocols including identifying entry/exit doors and parent pick up/drop off (Kiss and Ride) protocols.

Recess and Breaks Outdoors

It is recommended that students stay within their cohorts as much as possible during recess and breaks outdoors. The same practices utilized by elementary schools during the last school year (2020-21) should still be implemented. If students are mixing with other students not in their cohort during outdoor breaks then physical distancing should be encouraged as much as is possible.

Assemblies

The GECDSB has chosen to pause school assemblies and other student / school gatherings based on direction from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit in order to maintain the focus of our resources on the healthy and safe return to school for staff and students. This may be revisited later in the year.

Promote Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19. In order to support this important safety protocol, the following measures are being implemented:

- Age appropriate education of students about the importance of handwashing, including promoting the proper technique;
- Visual cues including age appropriate signs;
- Mandatory face masks for all students in grades K – 12 inclusive;
- Classrooms with sinks will be outfitted with soap dispensers and paper towels;
- Classrooms which do not have sinks will have wall mounted alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations;
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations placed strategically throughout the school, including at entrances;
- Lined and no-touch waste baskets;
- Scheduled hand washing breaks throughout the day.

Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”) / Masks

All staff members will be provided with the appropriate PPE to safely interact with each other and with students. PPE provided to staff may include medical masks, eye protection, gloves and gowns, based on their job responsibilities.

All students in grades K – 12 inclusive are required to wear a non-medical or cloth mask when attending in-person instruction at school. A supply of non-medical masks will be available at schools for those students who require one. For those students who chose to wear a cloth mask, parents/guardians will be responsible to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned.

Masks will not be required outside during breaks and activities

Medical Exemptions

In some circumstances, there may be medical exemptions to wearing masks at school.

Medical advice:

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit was consulted in the making of the exemption plan. This plan may change when further direction from the Ministry of Education is received.

COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools (2021-22) (updated August 13, 2021) document indicated that some students may not be able to tolerate wearing masks due to sensory, mental health or cognitive issues. Further, it suggested that students who are unable to put on or remove their masks without adult assistance should not wear masks.

Procedure:

1. Medical documentation must be received from a regulated health professional that indicates that the student has a medical condition that will not allow them to wear a mask.
2. Discuss options with family on the best course of instruction, i.e. in-person or remote learning
3. The medical documentation is to be attached to the written plan.
4. Plan with school team on accommodations that may be needed in accordance to medical advice other than not wearing a mask.
5. Create a plan to address:
 - a. That the student is properly distanced of 2 metres at all times from other students and staff members while in the classroom and in the hallways;
 - b. Disinfecting of the desk / table and chair after use;
 - c. Routine hand washing protocols are adhered to;
 - d. That staff review and monitor respiratory etiquette routines with student: cough or sneeze into elbow or in tissue then immediately disposing of tissue and washing hands;
 - e. Staff members are required to wear eye protection in addition to masks if the student is not wearing a mask
 - f. Parent/guardians are to sign plan;
 - g. This plan will be accessible to all staff members who work with the student;
 - h. This plan will be shared with transportation as per usual protocols;
 - i. The students are not to be ostracized or stigmatized due to not wearing a mask.

All medical masks and non-medical masks have to cover the nose and mouth. The non-medical masks can be cloth or homemade, and can include hijab, nigab, burka, scarf, or bandana. In line with the Windsor Essex County Health Unit, we will not accept face shields in place of masks.

Training

All staff will be provided with COVID-19 training, prior to the start of school, which will include the following:

- Background information on COVID-19 and how it is transmitted;
- Protective measures including the care, use and limitations of PPE, proper hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and physical distancing measures;
- Prevention and mitigation.

Cleaning and Other Additional Measures

The board recognizes that the health and safety of our staff and students is paramount. Implementing enhanced cleaning protocols is a key consideration from a health and safety perspective.

Custodial staff will perform routine cleaning of general facilities through the day and will conduct enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces twice daily including:

- light switches
- handrails
- door handles
- faucet handles
- sinks
- toilet handles
- bottle fill stations
- swing lids of hallway recycle and garbage containers

Shared items will be cleaned between users. Porous shared materials are prohibited.

To support the cleaning initiatives, day custodians will disinfect areas mid-way through their shift and at the end of their shift. Afternoon custodians will start their shifts early to clean and disinfect their areas, and to clean and repeat the process at the end of their shift. Additional replacement custodians are being hired to support the enhanced cleaning protocols.

Water fountains have been bagged and will be unavailable for use. Bottle filling stations have been installed in all schools and will be available for student use. All students are encouraged to bring a reusable water bottle to school.

Visitors

All visitors to schools are required to self-screen and to wear a medical-grade mask while on school premises. The school will provide an appropriate mask if required.

All visitors, contractors and itinerant staff must sign the log book to support contact tracing.

Outbreak Plan

An updated Outbreak Plan for GECDSB schools is being prepared, through consultation with the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit and inter-organizational groups.

This information will be posted as soon as it is fully approved.

Technology/Allocation of Devices

Plan for the Deployment of Technology for GEC Virtual School Students

The Board plans to support students in virtual school with access to devices for use at home. Families that do not have access to devices will be encouraged to call the elementary virtual school to inform administration who will submit the requests on their behalf. Requests for secondary students should be sent to the home school who will submit the requests on their behalf. At this time, requests would only be for elementary and secondary students that are attending the GEC Virtual Schools.

Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Personal and Board Owned

Students are allowed and encouraged to bring their own device to school daily to allow access to digital learning tools. Students can bring their own personal device or one that was loaned to them by the GECDSB for distance learning. The GECDSB has set up a link on the website for parents/guardians to purchase devices through board approved vendors. ([Student Device Purchase Options](#))

GECDSB Approved Platforms for Learning

The use of board supported resources is done because of privacy and security concerns with non-supported platforms and applications. The goal is to provide staff with consistent ways to communicate with families and their students.

Board supported platforms include Edsby, Brightspace (D2L), Office 365 and myBlueprint. Students are able to utilize the existing Microsoft Suite of Products including Outlook for Email, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, OneNote, Microsoft Forms, and Microsoft Stream. Microsoft Teams is also used for video and audio conferencing.

Edsby

Edsby is the platform that teachers use to communicate with their students and parents/guardians. It is a fully functional Learning Management System (LMS) accessible to staff, students and parents/guardians with group communication and calendaring, news sharing and a closed social network for students, staff and parents/guardians. It is a closed system with access only provided to those who have been granted a login based on the GECDSB Human Resources and Student Information System databases. Edsby is a tool that helps to organize, share, publish and distribute documents.

Office 365

Microsoft Office 365 is available to all staff and students in the GECDSB. Staff and students can take advantage of all of Microsoft's tools such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel. Microsoft Office makes it possible to create, collaborate and share files between students and also with their teacher. Staff and students are also entitled to five downloads of Microsoft Office for use on multiple devices.

Brightspace (D2L)

Brightspace (D2L) is the virtual learning environment provided to Ontario school boards by the Ministry of Education. This platform allows teachers to offer online and blended learning opportunities to students. While many of the courses are prepopulated with course material, teachers can also load in their own files, record video lectures, and hold web chats with students. Other features include announcement posting, discussion area, quizzes, surveys, email, O365 account linking, and many more.

myBlueprint

myBlueprint is a powerful tool that can be used by students, parents/guardians and educators to facilitate the exploration of careers, pathways, and course selections. The Individual Pathways Plan on myBlueprint will help students explore their interests, abilities and identify their strengths to plan for their initial post-secondary destination.

EQAO

For the 2021-22 school year, regular EQAO assessments for grades 3 and 6 will resume in the new digital format for math, reading and writing. Students in Grade 9 math will write the Grade 9 math digital adaptive assessment and the results of the assessment may count towards up to 10% of the student's final mark. EQAO assessments are required to be done in-person at the school. Students learning remotely can choose to participate in the EQAO assessments in-person at the discretion of the school board as long as all applicable health and safety measures can be met.

Literacy and community involvement graduation requirements

The literacy graduation requirement is waived for students graduating in the 2021-22 school year. The literacy graduation requirement will be restored for students graduating in the 2022-23 school year. Students in grades 10 and 11 and non-graduating students, including those who are learning remotely, are required to work towards the literacy graduation requirement, through participation in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), adjudication or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC).

The community involvement graduation requirement has been reduced from 40 hours to a minimum of 20 hours of community involvement activities for students graduating in the 2021-22 school year. Temporary changes to reduce barriers students may face to earn their community involvement hours and provide greater flexibility in how they earn their hours will continue for the 2021-22 school year. The community involvement graduation requirement of 40 hours will be restored in 2022-23 and students working towards their OSSD should be supported to meet these requirements in time for their graduating year.

Well-Being and Supports for Students

Students and families have all had different experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. When returning to school, students may not have connected with their school friends or been able to share with others about the impact of being out of school during this time. School is a natural place for them to express themselves.

Anxious feelings in students about a return to school in the Fall are perfectly understandable and natural. As a board, we prioritize student mental health and well-being and recognize it as the basis for students to learn and engage fully in their education. Mental health and well-being will be key priorities in our return to school strategy for students and as a board we recognize the key role schools play in their promotion. Students can expect regular school activities specifically focused on mental health and well-being as they re-engage with in-person learning. Schools also have access to additional supports such as social workers and community mental health agencies as needed.

Additional social emotional learning resources will be available to our school-based staff members to integrate into their lessons and activities for tier one and two learning. The first 10 days of classes all teachers will follow the same social emotional learning lessons.

At the board level, we have a team of social workers who will be offering support in the schools and through virtual means. Every school has access to the support and services of qualified mental health clinicians. Our social workers will continue to be available to students, as appropriate, for trauma/crisis support, for individual counselling and new this year evidenced-based group sessions. Social Workers frequently consult with families, provide information, and make appropriate clinical referrals to our community mental health providers.

If a student is struggling and requires extra support, our Student Success/School-based teams work with classroom teachers to provide students with interventions, access to the expertise of various specialized staff members, and other school-specific supports. The social worker can be part of these Student Success/School-based teams to provide particular recommendations, strategies, and overall advice.

All school-based mental health clinicians will strictly adhere to the health and safety guidelines when providing services to our students.

Extra-Curricular

Although not prohibited, in person extra-curricular group/gathering events, such as clubs, sports teams and bands will be cautiously and gradually re-introduced during the initial return to school in order to maintain the focus of our resources on the health, safety and re-engagement of our staff and students. Cohorts may interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, and indoors with masking and appropriate physical distancing.

Band – must maintain a minimum distance of two metres between students playing wind instruments.

Inter-school sport activities

Measures for inter-school sport activities will follow the Health and Physical Education requirements.

High and low-contact activities are permitted outdoors without masking.

High and low-contact activities are permitted indoors. Masking is encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.

Vaccinations

The Greater Essex County District School Board encourages all who are eligible to register to receive their COVID-19 vaccine. It is a significant measure to maintain each person's health and well-being and to prevent further spread of this disease in the community.

Young people, aged 12 and up, are eligible to be vaccinated. Please check the information on this link - [to the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit's website](#) . This link to [the Government of Ontario Website](#) contains more information for families on vaccinations for young people.

The Ontario Ministry of Education intends to release information, in the near future, regarding a vaccination disclosure policy for all publicly-funded school board employees and rapid antigen testing for staff who have not been immunized for COVID-19.

Infrastructure Building Ventilation Systems

The GECDSB is optimizing air quality in schools through improved ventilation and filtration. Implemented measures are dependent on the type of ventilation and feasibility within the context of school facilities and related building systems. The GECDSB's ventilation strategy includes:

- Air filtration units have been installed in all teaching and office spaces with only natural or exhaust ventilation.
- Forced air ventilation systems in all schools operate from 4:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. to ensure buildings are flushed out prior to the start of school. MERV-13 filters are being used in all systems with regular filters.
- Outside air has been maximized in all forced air ventilation units while ensuring occupant comfort.
- All schools with natural or exhaust ventilation only will receive forced air ventilation systems prior to December 31, 2021. These spaces will use air filtration units until this work is complete.

For further ventilation information about your school, please refer to the School Board Ventilation Profile posted on our website at www.publicboard.ca

Transportation

Transportation is provided to students in Windsor and Essex County by the Windsor Essex Student Transportation Services (WESTS), which is a separate legal entity providing transportation to the Greater Essex County District School Board, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, Conseil scolaire catholique Providence, and Conseil scolaire Viamonde.

Student transportation safety and cleaning protocols are informed through consultation with the WECHU, the Ontario Ministry of Education and federal guidelines. Please refer to the "Back to School Guidelines for Transportation" at www.buskids.ca for further information. Please note that courtesy ride requests will be suspended for the 2021/22 school year.

For any transportation-eligible students who were enrolled in the virtual school for the 2020-21 school year and who are returning to in-person learning this year, please contact your school to complete a transportation application.

Parents/guardians with questions may contact the WESTS office at 519 776 6431 or through email at info@buskids.ca.

For secondary students who utilize Transit Windsor, please note that capacity limits on buses may be limited to 40 passengers. Please check the Transit Windsor bus schedule prior to the start of school at the Windsor Transit Website.

The GECDSB encourages all students to use active transportation methods to and from school.

Operations

Community Use of Schools

All community use of indoor school facilities will be paused until at least January, 2022. This will be reevaluated in the new year.

Meal Periods, Cafeterias and Other Considerations

Students may eat together indoors, with a minimum distance of two (2) metres maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible within a cohort.

Cafeterias may be used, however capacity will be limited.

Cafeteria food services will not be available in secondary schools. Students are asked to bring their lunch on a daily basis or they are permitted to leave campus during their lunch period.

Food Programs

Breakfast and nutrition / third party food programs and non-instructional food event (such as pizza day) are permitted, provided the food handlers use adequate safety practices. This includes Culinary Arts food handling and preparations programs.

Lockers

The use of lockers / cubbies / coat hooks will be permitted. Lockers and cubbies must not be shared.

General Prohibitions:

The Principal / Site Supervisor will work with staff and students to help ensure the following prohibitions are implemented:

- Staff, students, parents / guardians are prohibited from congregating on the way in or out of the school.
- **Portable Fans** are prohibited and **must** be removed from all spaces.
- **Ceiling fans need to be turned off and not used**
- **Portable Plexiglass Barriers** are prohibited
- **Sensory tables** such as rice, sand, water, etc., cannot be utilized.
- **International Field Trips** are prohibited.
- **Cloth chairs** cannot be utilized in communal settings / multiple users.
- **Porous shared materials** are prohibited (e.g. sittings rugs, stuffed animals) and **must** be removed.
- **Water Fountains** – are not to be used. Use bottle fill stations instead.

International Students

A school or private school within the meaning of the [Education Act](#) may provide in-person teaching or instruction to a person who holds a study permit issued under the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act \(Canada\)](#) and who enters Canada, only if the school or private school:

- has a plan respecting COVID-19 has been approved by the Minister of Education, and
- operates in accordance with the approved plan

Further direction may be shared throughout the year should there be federal or provincial changes regarding international students.

We are happy to be back to school with you!