

# EOHU RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL COVID-19 PROTECTIVE MEASURES IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

August 30, 2021

Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) has developed 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. EOHU is monitoring and is concerned by the current local incidence of COVID-19, particularly given the preponderance of the Delta variant of concern. As such, EOHU 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.

EOHU 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.

Relevant Provincial Guidance ( <i>COVID 19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools [2021 2022]</i> )		EOHU Recommendations for Additional Protective Measures in School Settings
<b>Student Masking</b>	<b>Required:</b> Gr 1 to 12 indoors and in school vehicles. Kindergarten: encouraged but not required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Masking strongly recommended in JK/SK, including on school vehicles.</li> </ul>
	Not required outdoors, but physical distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Masking required outdoors if distancing not maintained between cohorts, including outdoor sports where masks can be safely worn.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Masking/PPE</b>	Medical masks required indoors for all staff, visitors. Not required outdoors. Eye protection required for education staff working in close contact with students not wearing masks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff masking required outdoors when distancing cannot be maintained.</li> </ul>
<b>Screening</b>	All staff and students must self-screen every day before attending school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active screening required daily, confirmation of screening required after OBs, during increased community transmission, after school breaks (e.g. October and December holidays).</li> </ul>
<b>Staff meetings/staff rooms</b>	Congregation of teachers/staff should be limited to minimize potential for transmission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No in-person staff meetings, to be reassessed once case counts have a sustained decline for four weeks.</li> <li>Distancing and masking required in common staff areas, with sign in sheet for all users.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>



Relevant Provincial Guidance (COVID 19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools [2021 2022])

EOHU Recommendations for Additional Protective Measures in School Settings

<b>Recess/breaks outdoors</b>	Students do not need to stay within their cohort during recess and breaks outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged in between cohorts as much as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain distancing between cohorts at recess as much as possible, masking required if unable to maintain distance between cohorts.</li> <li>• Playground structures do not need to be cleaned or disinfected between uses; hand hygiene should be practiced before and after using playground equipment.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared materials</b>	Use of shared materials permitted. Focus on regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, especially when regular cleaning not feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proper hand hygiene before and after touching/handling any shared materials/objects and spaces.</li> <li>• High-touch equipment and shared materials should be cleaned regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared spaces</b>	Permitted. When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masking and as much distance as possible should be maintained between cohorts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Assigned seating (if applicable).</li> </ul>
<b>Cafeteria/lunch protocols</b>	Students may eat together outdoors without distancing. (regardless of cohort)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distancing as much as possible between cohorts while eating outdoors.</li> </ul>
	Cafeterias: capacity limits should be established to enable 2 m distancing between cohorts, and as much distancing as possible within cohorts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distancing maintained between cohorts.</li> <li>• Distancing maintained within cohorts while masks are removed for eating.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Assemblies</b>	Permitted. Follow relevant provincial requirements under Reopening Ontario Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No indoor assemblies, to be reassessed once case counts have a sustained decline.</li> <li>• See above for recommendations on use of shared spaces.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitors</b>	Permitted. Self screen and wear medical mask. SBs must confirm self-screening of all visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular parent traffic (e.g., picking up children from classroom) not allowed.</li> <li>• Discourage non-essential visitors.</li> <li>• School nutrition program volunteers are considered essential visitors.</li> </ul>
<b>Music</b>	Permitted in areas with adequate ventilation. Singing permitted indoors. Masking encouraged but not required indoors if min 2 m can be maintained between cohorts and as much distance as possible w/in cohort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing indoors only permitted within cohort, masking required and distancing between individuals.</li> <li>• Singing permitted outdoors with distancing maintained between cohorts, masking required if distancing not maintained between individuals within a cohort.</li> </ul>
	Wind instruments permitted indoors w/in cohort if min 2 m or more between individuals. As much distance as possible, use of large, well-ventilated spaces should be prioritized.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of wind instruments not permitted indoors, to be reassessed once case counts (i.e., local incidence) have a sustained decline.</li> </ul>
	Wind instruments permitted outdoors in mixed cohorts with distancing encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of wind instruments permitted outdoors with distancing maintained between cohorts.</li> </ul>



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**EOHU Recommendations for Additional Protective Measures in School Settings**

<b>Phys Ed</b>	Use of gym, pools, change rooms, weight rooms, indoor PE equipment and shared outdoor equipment permitted with distancing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masking must be maintained when using gym, pools, change rooms, weight rooms, indoor PE equipment and shared outdoor equipment except upon entering a swimming pool.</li> </ul>
	High-contact activities permitted indoors and outdoors. Masking not required when playing high or low contact activities outdoors. Masking encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-contact and/or high-intensity physical activities permitted outdoors only, unless masking maintained; distancing encouraged.</li> <li>• Low-contact activities permitted indoors, with masking required and distancing encouraged.</li> <li>• Maintain attendance records.</li> </ul>
	School pools permitted, with distancing around pool area encouraged to discourage mixed-cohort congregating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distancing of 2m must be maintained between and within cohorts while using pools and surrounding area.</li> </ul>
<b>Inter-school sports activities</b>	High and low-contact activities permitted outdoors without masking. High and low-contact activities permitted indoors. Masking encouraged for indoor sports where they can be worn safely based on the activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-contact and/or high-intensity physical activities permitted outdoors only, unless masking maintained; distancing encouraged.</li> <li>• Low-contact activities permitted indoors, with masking maintained and distancing encouraged.</li> <li>• Maintain attendance records.</li> </ul>
<b>Extra-curricular activities</b>	Clubs, activities, sports teams, bands, other ECs are permitted. Cohorts may interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, indoors with masking and appropriate physical distancing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masking required outdoors if distancing between cohorts not maintained.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclement weather policies</b>	School boards develop plans and policies which may include pivoting to remote learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distancing maintained between cohorts, pivot to remote learning if distancing between cohorts unable to be maintained due to operational limitations (secondary to inclement weather).</li> </ul>
<b>Inter-provincial field trips</b>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly recommend only fully vaccinated students and staff participate in inter-provincial field trips (e.g., sports and music competitions).</li> </ul>

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