

December 23, 2020

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
School Authorities
Director of Centre Jules-Léger Consortium

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

Thank you for your continued support as we keep students and staff safe in this unprecedented school year. I am writing to provide further information about supporting students with special education needs during the provincewide shutdown period.

The measures announced by the government as part of the provincewide shutdown are intended to reinforce that Ontarians should stay home as much as possible to minimize transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Most students with special education needs will be learning remotely during this period. In-person learning should be reserved for students that cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

This approach aligns with the practices of several other jurisdictions. School boards are best positioned to determine which students with special education needs may require this accommodation.

School boards have flexibility in determining how to deliver in-person instruction in such circumstances, based on local conditions. However, consideration should be given to limiting overall movement and limiting the number of sites that will be open. School boards are encouraged to consider a central school location model where students from different classes or neighbourhood schools attend class together at one site. These students would be considered a cohort for the duration of the closure period. School boards should also consider how to support continuity of staffing for students while respecting collective agreement provisions. As part of setting up in-person learning locations, school boards should develop a plan for transportation during the provincewide shutdown period.

Where in-person instruction is offered, schools must continue to follow the protective measures outlined in the *Guide to Re-Opening Ontario's Schools* and *Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools*, as well as any additional guidance provided by their local public health units. Daily screening will continue to be an important practice for students and staff.

We recognize that school boards have entered the winter holiday period. Given the current circumstances, we nonetheless encourage you to communicate early with

families, labour partners and service providers (e.g., Local Health Integration Networks, Children's Treatment Centres) as you plan your in-person programming.

For students with special education needs who will be learning remotely, school boards should continue to fully leverage the capacity of education workers and board professionals to support their remote learning. Instructional support staff should, as appropriate, be involved in planning for student supports as they would be during the regular school operations. As part of planning, boards are asked to work with labour partners to proactively define roles and responsibilities for staff during this period.

The ministry is committed to ongoing communication with and support for boards. Should you require any additional information or have any questions please contact Jeff Butler at Jeff.Butler@ontario.ca.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and willingness to work together to support students.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

- c. Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'ontario (ACÉPO)
- Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
- Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
- Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
- Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
- Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
- General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
- General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
- General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
- President, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
- Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
- Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
- Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
- Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
- Superintendents of Special Education
- Chair, Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education