

Return to school fact sheet

Elementary schools

All Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) elementary and secondary schools will reopen under a conventional school day model, with enhanced public health protocols and cohorting considerations in place. The plans for reopening have been developed in consultation with the Ministry of Education and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU).

The SCDSB will adopt a staggered start to the school year. Recognizing that the school year will look different than it has in the past, a staggered start will allow for the gradual return of students, and time for learning and adopting new routines and safety practices.

The SCDSB will be implementing the following plan for our students who will be returning to in-school learning in September:

Elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8):

- Students with surnames A-G will attend Tuesday, September 8, 2020
- Students with surnames H-O will join students with the surnames A-G in attending Wednesday, September 9, 2020
- All elementary students will attend Thursday, September 10, 2020
- Junior Kindergarten students will begin attendance on Thursday, September 10, 2020 as previously planned and communicated with parents/guardians

Grade 7 and 8 students attending Elmvale District High School and Stayner Collegiate Institute will stagger entry based on the elementary school framework outlined above.

All students in county class programs (social skills, developmental skills, life skills and autism spectrum disorder) will begin on Tuesday, September 8, and will attend every day.

The staggered entry plan for elementary students ensures that families are able to send all children in their household to school on the same day.

In-school learning

- Students will attend full time, in classroom cohorts that will not mix or combine with other classes.
- Recesses and classes will be timetabled to limit interactions between classes.
- Students will eat in their classrooms.
- Common areas such as libraries will be closed.
- Outdoor learning will be encouraged.
- No assemblies or other large gatherings will be held.
- Staff will be required to wear masks.
- Students in Grade 4 to 8 are required to wear masks. Families are encouraged to provide cloth masks for their children that cover the nose and mouth. The SCDSB will provide cloth masks to students who do not have them.

- Masks are not required from Kindergarten to Grade 3, but are encouraged.
- All students and staff are required to complete a self-screen prior to attending school each day using a self-assessment tool provided by the SMDHU.
- Students or staff with symptoms must stay home.
- The Ministry of Education is developing a COVID-19 outbreak protocol that will provide direction on contact tracing and enhanced health and safety protocols to reduce the risk of transmission. The SMDHU will provide direction to the SCDSB should a positive case of COVID-19 be identified in a school.

Voluntary learn at home

A voluntary learn at home option will be available for students whose parents/guardians determine that they do not want their child to return to in-school learning. The SCDSB is developing a parent/guardian support platform, accessible through the SCDSB website, that will include self-help tools and resources, as well as access to SCDSB staff who will provide individualized support related to technology, learning platforms, curriculum, mental health and special education needs.

Students who are participating in the remote learning program, will be contacted by their teacher in the first two weeks of school and classes will begin on Monday, September 21.

- Students who are participating in remote learning may be clustered in 'classes' from multiple schools.
- Attendance will be taken daily for students participating in remote learning.
- Those who select remote learning may have to remain in that learning environment until a natural term transition in order to allow for consistent organization of schools and classrooms. The natural term transition time to move between in class and remote learning is February 2021.
- Students will be provided with a daily schedule of subjects/courses according to a five-hour instructional day.
- Student learning will be based on overall expectations across all subjects/courses and grades, and will include opportunities for guided instruction, large and small-group learning, synchronous check-ins and asynchronous independent work.
- Synchronous learning time may include students working independently and in small groups while engaged in a virtual classroom with the teacher overseeing their learning and responding to questions.
- Students will be able to meet with educators to address specific learning needs.
- The SCDSB has purchased additional technology to support students whose families select remote learning but do not have access to support it. Distribution of technology will be facilitated at the school level at the beginning of the school year.
- Students will access Google Classroom or Desire2Learn (D2L) as their synchronous learning platform, as determined by their teacher.

The Ministry of Education guide to reopening Ontario's schools can be found here:
www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools#section-3.

Secondary schools

All Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) elementary and secondary schools will reopen under a conventional school day protocol, with enhanced public health protocols and cohorting considerations in place. Plans for reopening have been developed in consultation with the Ministry of Education and SMDHU.

The SCDSB will adopt a staggered start to the school year. Recognizing that the school year will look different than it has in the past, a staggered start will allow for the gradual return of students, and time for learning and adopting new routines and safety practices.

The SCDSB will be implementing the following plan for our students who will be returning to in-school learning in September:

Secondary (Grades 9 to 12):

- Grade 9 students will attend Tuesday, September 8, 2020
- Grade 10 students will join Grade 9 students in attending Wednesday, September 9, 2020
- All secondary students will attend Thursday, September 10, 2020

Our secondary school plan provides our Grade 9 students with a day for orientation, followed by a gradual increase to the school population.

Secondary school schedule

The semester one timetable will be based on a quadmester. This means students will take two subjects from September to November and two subjects from November to February, focusing on one subject per week. This alternating schedule limits the number of students in a cohort, and it reduces the number of students that come into contact with one another each week.

Sample daily schedule:

Class	Time
Period 1 - Week A	8 to 10 a.m.
Period 2 - Week B	120 minutes (8-minute break)
Lunch	10 to 10:40 a.m. 40 minutes (5-minute break)
Period 1- Week A	10:40 a.m. to 12:40 p.m.
Period 2 - Week B	120 minutes (8-minute break)
Study Hall	12:40 to 1:55 p.m. 75 minutes

In-school learning

- Students will attend full time in a quadmester approach for Semester 1, with students taking two courses at a time instead of four.
- Courses will run from September to November and November to February.
- Students will have a lunch period in their classrooms.
- Common areas such as libraries will be closed.

- Lockers will not be available for student use at the start of the school year.
- Outdoor learning will be encouraged.
- No assemblies or other large gatherings will be held.
- Students and staff will be required to wear masks. Families are encouraged to provide cloth masks for their children that cover the nose and mouth. The SCDSB will provide cloth masks to students who do not have them.
- All students and staff are required to complete a self-screen prior to attending school each day using a self-assessment tool provided by the SMDHU.
- Students or staff with symptoms must stay home.
- Staff will be available to address timetable questions beginning on August 31.
- The Ministry of Education is developing a COVID-19 outbreak protocol that will provide direction on contact tracing and enhanced health and safety protocols to reduce the risk of transmission. The SMDHU will provide direction to the SCDSB should a positive case of COVID-19 be identified in a school.

Voluntary learn at home

A voluntary learn at home option will be available for students whose parents/guardians determine that they do not want their child to return to in-school learning. The SCDSB is developing a parent/guardian support platform, accessible through the SCDSB website, that will include self-help tools and resources, as well as access to SCDSB staff who will provide individualized support related to technology, learning platforms, curriculum, mental health and special education needs.

Students who are participating in the remote learning program, will be contacted by their teacher in the first two weeks of school and classes will begin on Monday, September 21.

- Students who are participating in remote learning may be clustered in 'classes' from multiple schools.
- Attendance will be taken for students participating in remote learning.
- Those who select remote learning may have to remain in that learning environment until a natural term transition in order to allow for consistent organization of schools and classrooms.
- The natural term transition time to move between in class and remote learning is February 2021.
- Students will be provided with a daily schedule of subjects/courses according to a 5-hour instructional day.
- Student learning will be based on overall expectations across all subjects/courses and grades, and will include opportunities for guided instruction, large and small-group learning, synchronous check-ins, and asynchronous independent work.
- Synchronous learning time may include students working independently and in small groups while engaged in a virtual classroom with the teacher overseeing their learning and responding to questions.
- Students will be able to meet with educators to address specific learning needs.

- Some secondary school courses may not be available through the voluntary at-home/distance learning option, in which case students will be offered alternative courses.
- Students will access Google Classroom or Desire2Learn (D2L) as their synchronous learning platform, as determined by their teacher.
- The SCDSB has purchased additional technology to support students whose families select remote learning but do not have access to support it. Distribution of technology will be facilitated at the school level at the beginning of the school year.

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Health and safety

We want to assure you that the health and well-being of our students and staff remains our top priority. We are in regular contact with our local health authority, the SMDHU, and continue to take their direction on all matters related to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Education has developed a COVID-19 [management document](#) that provides school boards with additional direction on contact tracing and enhanced health and safety protocols to reduce the risk of transmission. Students and staff will be required to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment daily, prior to coming into SCDSB schools and buildings. Students and staff who experience symptoms of COVID-19 will be required to remain at home and follow the direction of the SMDHU. Students who are required to remain home due to symptoms of COVID-19 will have access to learning materials provided by their teacher on the learning platform assigned, either Google Classroom or D2L.

Masking

- Students from Grade 4 through 12 and staff will be required to wear masks.
- Students from Kindergarten through Grade 3 will not be required to wear masks, although it is encouraged.
- Staff will be required to wear masks.

Enhanced health and safety protocols

- Hand sanitizer will be provided in each classroom for student and teacher use.
- Students will receive training on proper hand hygiene including instructions on [hand washing and sanitizing](#).

Enhanced cleaning

Enhanced cleaning protocols will be implemented including:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting at least twice a day of frequently touched surfaces and shared resources such as doorknobs, light switches, toilets and faucet handles.
- Buses will be sanitized twice daily with frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces.

Physical distancing

- Directional arrows and signage will be installed in schools to support physical distancing measures.
- Schools will have designated entry and exit doors and staggered entry and exit times.
- Acrylic shielding will be installed in school office.

Mental health and well-being

Staying connected to mental health supports, whether in school or participating in remote learning, is important for students experiencing mental health concerns. Human connection and ongoing conversation are essential to supporting and enhancing student well-being, coping, a sense of belonging and readiness to learn.

Supports for student mental health and well-being, including mental health and wellness promotion and prevention and intervention strategies, will continue to be provided by Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) staff. Available options include brief intervention services, wellness check-ins and referrals to community mental health services.

- SCDSB social workers will continue to provide direct support to students with emerging or identified mental health concerns, along with resource and consultation support for staff and families.
- SCDSB child and youth workers will continue to promote and to provide social emotional skill building support to students.
- Families can continue to access resources and supports on the SCDSB website, and make contact with the SCDSB school mental health team for consultation and discussion.

Transportation

Home to school transportation for Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) students is provided by the Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC). The SCSTC is working in partnership with the SCDSB and bus operators to develop and implement physical distancing and enhanced cleaning protocols, based on Ministry of Education guidelines, for students who will be riding in school buses and other vehicles.

- SCSTC contracted school vehicle operators will follow enhanced cleaning protocols for frequently touched surfaces. This includes increased disinfecting protocols for frequently touched surfaces (e.g. handrails, seatbacks) twice daily.
- SCSTC staff are working with schools to create seating plans to support maximum physical distancing, and to keep students from the same family and the same cohort together, where possible. Students will be required to remain in their assigned seats while on the bus.
- Prior to going to the bus stop in the morning, families must ensure that students complete the self-assess and stay home if they are displaying symptoms or if they feel ill.

- Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to respect physical distancing of at least 2 metres between students at assigned bus stop locations.
- Students in Grades 4 through 12 are required to wear masks while taking school transportation. Masks are not required from Kindergarten to Grade 3, but are encouraged.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks and face shields, will be provided for bus drivers, who will be expected to wear them as students board and exit the bus
- Students are encouraged to follow proper hand hygiene and sneezing and coughing etiquette.
- For students approved for specialized transportation, parents/guardians of students riding on school purpose minivans will be required to wear a face covering if their child requires assistance boarding or exiting the vehicle or buckling their seat belt.

Program-related information

Special education

Regardless of the instructional model that families determine is appropriate for their child (in-school or remote learning), special education supports and services will continue to be provided based on students' Individual Education Plans (IEP). For families that choose distance learning, the student's IEP may be adjusted to accommodate specific items related to the learning environment at home.

In-school learning

- For families that choose for their children to attend school in-person, special education supports will continue to be provided at the same level (e.g. direct instruction, instruction and environmental accommodations, access to specific staff such as special education resource teacher or educational assistants, educational assessments, etc.).
- Students who access an elementary learning centre will continue to participate in that program as per their IEP. In accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Education, we will be reducing student travelling from class to class as much as possible, providing it does not impact programming needs of a student.
- Students who access a sensory room based on their IEP will still be able to do so. Where possible, sensory equipment that is prescribed to a specific student (e.g. weighted blanket) will be limited to use by that student.

Voluntary learn at home

- For families that choose remote learning, students will be provided with special education supports through a combination of their 'classroom' teacher as well as special education staff (e.g. special education resource teachers, educational assistants, speech and language therapists, etc.).
- Support will be provided virtually both synchronously (real-time) and asynchronously, depending on the needs identified collaboratively between the family and the school, and as reflected in the student's IEP.

- Students that are formally placed into a special education class and receive specialized instruction within that class will continue to maintain their placement within the class, regardless the model of instruction (in-school or remote learning).

French Immersion and Extended French as a Second Language

The SCDSB will offer students the option of attending the French Immersion (FI) and Extended French as a Second Language (EFSL) programs either in-person or via at-home/distance learning. Depending on the number of students that choose at-home/distance learning, as well as the availability of French teachers, the SCDSB cannot guarantee that the at-home/distance learning program will be delivered in French. As long as the student continues to be registered in the FI or EFSL program, they will be able to return to the program at an agreed upon natural transition time when the family determines it is appropriate.

Students entering into the FI program in Grade 1 must start in either in-person or distance learning in order to retain their place.

Cooperative Education

Cooperative Education placements will be offered virtually, where feasible. In-person community placements may be offered provided they align with the direction and recommendations from the SMDHU.

Kindergarten

The SCDSB is excited to welcome Kindergarten students this fall. School staff will connect with families prior to the start of the school year to complete the Kindergarten registration process and provide further information about the school year.

Athletics

On Aug. 12, the Ontario Federation of School Athletics Association (OFSAA) announced that all championships and festivals are cancelled for the fall season. Following this decision, the SCDSB made the decision not to hold a fall season for athletics. There will be no SCAA championships held for fall 2020 sports.

Schools may have athletics clubs in their buildings to support training and friendly competition, as long as they meet sport-specific requirements provided by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU). The SMDHU has given permission for schools to participate in the fall sports of golf, cross country and tennis following the return to play protocols that they have provided.

The status of 2021 winter and spring sports will be determined at a later date in coordination with the SMDHU.

Health and physical education

Physical activities that support physical distancing, while also limiting the use of shared equipment, will occur.