

Dear DSBN Families:

On Monday, January 17, we will be welcoming your child(ren) back to in-person learning. We are continuing to keep our schools safe and in addition to our current safety protocols, some new measures will be in place. These include the new COVID-19 screening tool, two Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) for each student and offering high quality masks to students and staff.

In preparation for next week, we want to make sure you are aware of our health and safety processes and guidelines. [These practices follow the Ministry of Health guidelines](#), which are mandated by the Ministry of Education.

Masking:

As we know Omicron is highly contagious, so we want to do everything we can to keep students and staff safe. Starting this Monday, masks for Kindergarten students will be mandatory. For Kindergarten students who haven't worn a mask yet, teachers and DECEs will work with them so they can gradually become accustomed to wearing one.

All students will be offered 3-ply cloth masks, and staff will be given unfitted N95 masks.

Self-Screening:

It is important that you ensure your child(ren)'s self-screening has been completed each and every day. The new self-screening includes symptoms specific to the Omicron variant. The self-assessment is linked to every school website for elementary students. Secondary students log into their portal and complete the screening from there. We will continue with daily reminders for families who do not complete the screening tool each day.

Staying Home When Feeling Sick:

If your child doesn't feel well, and has not passed the self-screening tool, please keep them at home and follow the guidance of the screener.

Rapid-Antigen Tests:

Before the break, families had the option of using a rapid antigen test (RAT) at home. In the coming weeks, you will be provided with two more RATs to use if your child shows symptoms.

You are not required to report the results of these RATs to your child(ren)'s school as school board reporting has changed. Positive rapid antigen or PCR tests can be reported to your family health practitioner or Niagara Region Public Health.

COVID-19 Case Reporting at Schools:

The Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, has directed school boards to stop reporting positive COVID-19 cases at schools. This is due to the availability of COVID-19 lab testing, and Public Health Units are no longer communicating lab-confirmed test results with school boards, doing contact tracing, or dismissing school cohorts.

In place of reporting lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases, school boards will be reporting absenteeism rates of 30% or higher due to illness in schools. More information will be announced by the Ministry of Education.

To help keep schools safe, families and staff must continue to do the daily self-screening and keep their child home when they're sick. The DSBN continues to support vaccinations as the most important way to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.

Alternate Learning Options:

If you prefer that your child returns to in-person learning at the end of January instead of Monday, your child's school would be pleased to discuss the learning options that are available to you. Please contact your child's school to start the conversation.

We are thankful for you and your family's ongoing patience, kindness, and understanding as we keep moving through this pandemic. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact your school directly.