

March 12, 2020

Dear School Community:

Re: TCDSB Response to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

As many of us are preparing to enjoy some much needed rest and relaxation during March Break, naturally there are questions about what steps will be taken to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19. The World Health Organization has now declared the Coronavirus a global pandemic. The Public Health Agency of Canada has advised of key strategies to prevent and control respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, in schools and childcare settings:

1. **Stay home if you are sick**: This has always been our practice, whether it's the seasonal flu, or any other infectious illness. Given the current situation with COVID-19, Principals have been directed to heighten their awareness of symptoms among staff, students and visitors, and enforce this requirement.
2. **Practice Hand Hygiene and Cough Etiquette**: Wash your hands with soap and water frequently, including before and after eating, after you cough and before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
3. **Regular and Routine Cleaning**: As always, our custodial staff have been required to follow specific procedures to ensure the cleanliness of our schools, using approved disinfectants safe for school environments.

Information on COVID-19 is evolving, and the global situation changes day by day. For this reason, anyone who is considering travel is strongly advised to refer to the [Government of Canada Travel Health Notices](#). This site provides region-specific recommendations for travellers. As of March 12, 2020, for the safety of travellers as well as the safety of all Canadians upon their return, the Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending the following:

- **avoid all cruise ship travel;**
- **avoid non-essential travel to Italy, China and Iran**
- **take additional precautions when travelling to South Korea, Japan, France, Spain, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore**

Toronto Public Health (TPH) also advises (letter attached) that anyone returning from Hubei Province, Italy or Iran are to **self-isolate** (stay at home) for 14 days, contact a medical practitioner and TPH. If TPH asks you to self-isolate, TPH will provide a letter that should be given to the school administration via email. If you travel anywhere outside of Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada asks that you monitor your health for 14 days after you return home as you may have come into contact with COVID-19. If you develop a fever, cough and difficulty breathing within 14 days of travel, even mild symptoms, self-isolate, avoid contact with others and contact **Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000** for further instructions.

What steps is the TCDSB taking to reduce the risks of spread of COVID-19?

1. **Actively Cooperating with Toronto Public Health:** Toronto Public Health is our community leader with respect to containing and mitigating COVID-19. The TCDSB has been communicating and cooperating with Toronto Public Health regularly as the situation continues to evolve, and we are committed to bringing you the most up-to-date guidance as it becomes available. The TCDSB will take direction from Toronto Public Health for measures needed to reduce the risk of community spread of COVID-19, including requirements or recommendations for management of individual cases as they arise.
2. **Pandemic Planning:** The TCDSB Pandemic Plan was developed in 2006 and incorporated much of the experiential knowledge that was gained during the initial SARS outbreak over 15 years ago. The TCDSB's Pandemic Planning Committee has been mobilized to regularly assess emerging information about COVID-19, and has been instrumental in addressing board-specific responses from a number of perspectives, including: communications, infection control measures, maintenance of custodial supplies, supply chain and procurement challenges and business continuity.
3. **Cancellation of Student Trips:** Out of an abundance of caution, and in consideration of rapidly changing information regarding the global impacts of COVID-19, all student trips to Europe have been cancelled until further notice. The Board is currently assessing the viability of student trips planned within Ontario and the United States.
4. **Monitoring Absenteeism:** School Administrators have been asked to closely monitor absence rates in their schools, and to report any anomalies to their local Superintendent for further advice.
5. **Raising Awareness of Hand Hygiene and Cough Etiquette:** Instructional signage on handwashing techniques as well as cough etiquette have been supplied to all schools, for posting in washroom areas, handwashing areas and main entrances. School staff are continually reminding students about good hygiene habits.
6. **Custodial Supplies:** The TCDSB has taken steps to ensure that our supply of hand soap, paper towels and disinfectant cleaners are adequate to last for the remainder of the school year. Custodians have been instructed to frequently check supplies of soap and paper towels in washrooms during each day. Staff and students are asked to immediately notify the school administration if supplies in washrooms have run out.
7. **Hand Sanitizer:** As a supplement to handwashing, all TCDSB schools will be supplied with hand sanitizer, located in a supervised area at the main office and/or front entrance, for use by visitors as they enter. Additional hand sanitizers may be added in other areas of the school as identified by School Administrators. A larger supply of hand sanitizers will be shipped to all schools during the March break.
8. **Disinfection:** Custodial staff continue with daily cleaning and disinfecting of all hard surfaces (hand contact areas), including door handles, drinking fountains, sinks, faucets, telephones, handrails, door push plates, classroom desks, counter tops, tables, cafeteria tables, urinals, toilets, toilet seats, and washroom fixtures. Custodians conduct daily cleaning and disinfecting of all washrooms and do frequent checks to ensure that paper

towels are stocked, and soap dispensers are filled as well as checking status of hand dryers and do daily cleaning of all floors.

School bus service providers have also increased their frequency of disinfection with additional focus on touch points such as railings.

During the March break, custodial staff will focus their efforts on disinfection of all schools.

We have received requests for TCDSB to direct all those returning from travel abroad during March Break to self-isolate for 14 days. We have not received that direction from local, provincial or federal health agencies at this time, and the guidance of public health officials on this matter is critical.

In order to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, **everyone has a role to play**. For more information on how you can stay informed, seek out reputable sources of information:

Toronto Public Health: <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/diseases-medications-vaccines/coronavirus/>

Public Health Ontario: https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus?_ga=2.184384934.1072155291.1583885458-954825015.1559313815

Health Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

The TCDSB website <https://www.tcdsb.org/forstudents/healthandsafety/pages/coronavirusinfo.aspx> also provides information from Toronto Public Health and the Public Health Ontario.