



**YELLOWKNIFE EDUCATION
DISTRICT NO. 1**

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**ADMINISTRATION SCOLAIRE DE
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January 24, 2022

To all Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1) parents and guardians:

Re: Return To In-Person Learning – What to Expect

As YK1 prepares to return to in-person learning on January 24, 2022, we recognize that parents, guardians, and students likely have a lot of questions. We want to provide the latest information regarding public safety measures in schools from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) so families know what to expect upon the return to in-person learning.

Due to the increasing level of vaccination among the school-aged population, as well as other safety measures in place in school settings (masks, daily symptom checks, classroom bubbles, avoidance of high-intensity physical activities, etc.), the OCPHO believes schools are well prepared to support Public Health's response to occasional cases of COVID-19 among the student population, with a decreased risk of a widespread outbreak.

What to Expect

- With the emergence of the Omicron variant, there have been changes to the public health approach used in responding to school-based COVID-19 cases. The OCPHO has developed a decision-making algorithm that will guide the Public Health approach to managing COVID-19 outbreaks in a way that keeps students in school with the least disruption to learning as possible
- Attached to this letter, you will find a basic summary of that algorithm; **Public Health Management - COVID-19 in School Settings**
- Parents of any students exposed to COVID-19 will be notified, even if no transmission is evident
- If there are signs of transmission in one or more classrooms in a school, Public Health has clear protocols in place, and next steps will be communicated to parents and guardians

Masks

While cloth masks are acceptable, it is encouraged that staff and students wear disposable, 3-ply masks when possible. The Public Health Agency of Canada [provides advice for masking in community settings](#) that you may wish to review.

When to Return to School After a Positive Test

See basic summary attached: **Public Health Management-COVID-19 in School Settings**.

Testing

If families have access to a test kit, students are encouraged to do a test before returning to in-person instruction as per the instructions in the attached **Public Health Management - COVID-19 in School Settings**.

The OCPHO is prioritizing the use of at-home rapid tests for surveillance purposes in classrooms when COVID-positive exposures occur at school. This 'test to stay' approach will support students who are contacts of a COVID-exposure in school to safely remain in the classroom to access in-person learning. More information will be provided in the coming days.

With the emergence of the Omicron variant, the NWT is modifying its approach to responding to school-based COVID-19 cases. This approach uses data to guide decision-making based on various circumstances that can happen within schools and classrooms. It manages COVID-19 outbreaks in a way that keeps students in school with the least disruption to learning as possible. This tool has been shared with education leaders to inform understanding of the revised approach. **National data continues to show that children remain at low risk of severe symptoms of COVID-19.** However, children are experiencing the impacts of school closures as it relates to social interactions and accessibility to other services that our schools provide.

The OCPHO is reminding everyone that the best defense is getting vaccinated, staying home when you are sick or have even mild symptoms, and practicing healthy habits.

Public Health Notes

Public Health does not provide COVID-19 assessment cards, isolation notes or sick notes for returning to school and/or exam exemptions. If you are unable to take an exam due to isolation requirements, please contact your child's school.

Mental Wellness

We recognize that this continues to be a challenging time for families and students. Students are encouraged to take time for mental wellness and reach out if they need support. Below is a list of available supports:

- School-based child and youth care counsellors (**please contact your child's school**)
- **BreathingRoom:** A newly launched e-mental health program for youth aged 13-24 that supports youth and young adults in learning new ways to manage stress, depression and anxiety, as well as strengthening their existing coping skills. NWT youth can access this program [here](#)
- **NWT Help Line:** Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is 100% free, confidential and anonymous. Call **1-800-661-0844**
- **Kid's Help Phone:** Young people needing to talk to someone can call Kid's Help Phone at **1-800-668-6868** or visit www.kidshelpphone.ca
- **NWT Community Counselling Program:** This program is available free-of-charge to every NWT resident in every region of the NWT. It helps people deal with a variety of issues including family violence, mental health issues, and addictions

Sincerely,



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