

- Provincewide access to **targeted asymptomatic testing** for students and staff, using a combination of lab-processed PCR and rapid antigen tests;
- Mandatory masking for students in Grades 1-3, including outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Enhanced screening of secondary students and staff;
- New guidance discouraging students from congregating before and after; and
- Temporary certification of eligible teacher candidates who are set to graduate in 2021 to stabilize staffing levels, following high levels of absenteeism.

“With these enhanced measures, we are making good progress towards a province-wide return to in-person learning, while keeping the safety of children, teachers and schools at the forefront,” said Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health. “Moreover, I am pleased to be getting more children back in class, which greatly benefits their development and well-being.”

Teachers and staff will be provided clear direction to discourage students from congregating and to ensure that all school safety guidance is followed. With the requirements for masking in schools being expanded, parents/guardians are expected to provide masks for their children to attend school each day. To ensure a back up supply is available if needed, the Government of Ontario says it will be providing an additional 3.5 million masks for students with a high-quality standard.

Targeted asymptomatic testing has helped to identify cases early, inform public health action, and manage outbreaks. Expanding access to targeted asymptomatic testing will be a valuable tool for local public health units and schools. To support the expansion of targeted asymptomatic testing, the Ministry of Education has procured test collection capacity for up to 50,000 tests per week, to be deployed at the discretion of local public health units in collaboration with schools.

To address labour needs and staff absenteeism, the Ministry of Education has worked with the Ontario College of Teachers to introduce a new temporary certificate to help stabilize staffing levels in our schools. This will allow school boards to employ eligible teacher candidates when there are no occasional teachers available from their current lists. This decision underscores the shortage of available certified teachers in the province, following the hiring of over 3,300 net new temporary teaching positions according to the province.

In areas where elementary school is not returning to in-person learning on February 1, 2021, emergency child care for front line workers will continue. Additional categories of workers **eligible for emergency child care came into effect on January 27, 2021.**

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