

hospitalizations across Ontario. However, the province stated in a news release that keeping schools and child care open is critical for children's mental health and well-being.

"Schools and child care will remain open for in-person care and learning in public health regions where it is permitted, with strict safety measures in place," the release stated. Individual public health regions will be able to make their own decisions and close specific schools if deemed necessary.

On April 8, the province announced the new school measures, which will include on-site confirmation of self-screening, refresher training after spring break, outdoor instruction when possible, enhanced cleaning during spring break, curriculum-linked activities for students, information sent out to parents about best practices over spring break and an expansion of asymptomatic testing.

"Nothing is more important than keeping Ontario's schools safe and open for students, staff and their families," Education Minister Stephen Lecce said. "Our students deserve a safe return to their classrooms on April 19 so that they can keep learning, and we are committed to delivering on that."

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Ford announces state of emergency, stay-at-home order for Ontario starting April 8

Asymptomatic testing will be expanded over the break to pharmacies that currently offer testing, as well as 180 assessment centres across Ontario.

Ford also announced yesterday that beginning next week, workers who support students with special education needs across Ontario, and education workers in high-risk neighbourhoods, will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccinations will begin in priority areas of Toronto and Peel, before being rolled out in other areas.