



# RETURN TO SCHOOL GUIDE 2020-2021

Welcoming our students and staff safely back to school



**September 1, 2020 – Version 2 (updated)**

**August 14, 2020 – Version 1**



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## **1. Background**

The Upper Canada District School Board is looking forward to welcoming students and staff safely back to school in September. The school district, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and with our local Medical Officers of Health, will be reopening schools for instruction on September 11, 2020. Changes to routines and procedures are to be expected as we put requirements for enhanced health and hygiene practices in place in our schools.

The operational practices that are outlined in this document are based on [UCDSB's School Reopening Plan – July 2020](#), which was reviewed by the UCDSB Board of Trustees (July 2020) and the Ontario Ministry of Education (August 2020). As our school staff turn their attention to the start up to the new school year, we want to ensure that they have the most recent information and specific advice from the Ministry of Education and the Chief Medical Officers of Health to support the reopening of their school site.

These operational procedures and practices will evolve as new information becomes available and adjustments are necessary to respond to the most recent information that translates into maintaining safe, clean, and supportive school settings.

## **2. Equity and Inclusion**

While the pandemic has caused us to revisit and adjust a number of operational practices, our school district remains committed to reducing achievement gaps and improving learning outcomes for all students. To that end, we will provide learning and working environments that promote safe, respectful and inclusive practices. We will do so by reviewing our internal approach to operational planning and continuing to expand our focus on responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy in schools. As well, we will continue to identify and address barriers to learning and take appropriate action to deal with discriminatory behaviour.

The UCDSB and its staff remain committed to our goal of a 90% graduation rate. A high school diploma enables the prospect of each person's pursuit of further learning and employability and, as such, is a key anti-poverty measure that improves the health of all our communities.

## **3. Preparing Our Schools**

The health, safety and well-being of our students and our staff is a top priority as the UCDSB reopens schools for the 2020-2021 school. Current evidence from public health officials and experience from the operation of child care sites throughout the province over the past four months supports the concept that children can return to school when additional measures and specific operating procedures focusing on enhanced health and hygiene are in place.

### 3.1 School Start Up

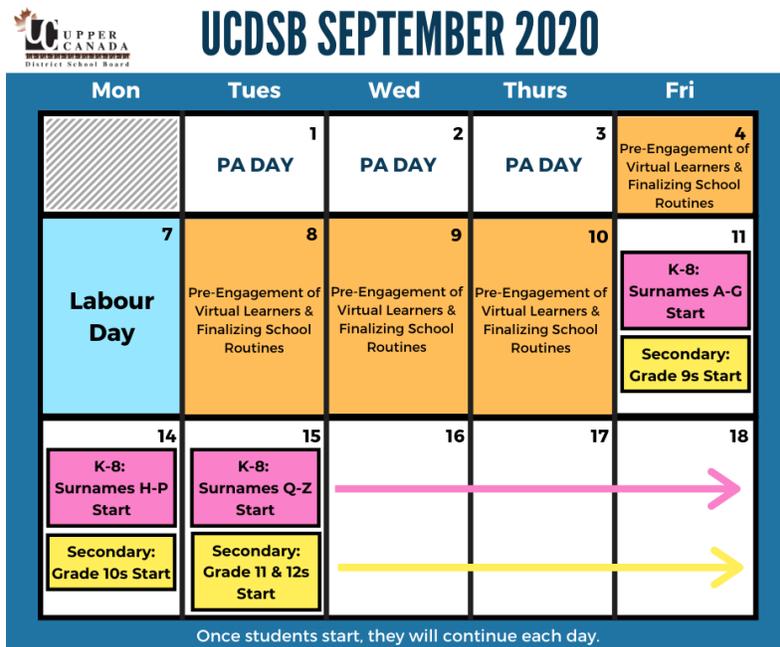
All school sites operated by the UCDSB will be open for the start of the new school year. The Ministry of Education has permitted school boards across Ontario to delay the beginning of the school year and to stagger student entry to school in order to be prepared for a safe return for students. Our schools will open for in-person learning five days a week with enhanced cleaning and safety protocols.

In an effort to teach and practice the new school routines with students and to reinforce the new health and safety practices, the UCDSB will welcome students back to school in a staggered entry beginning on September 11, 2020. The following schedule outlines how groups of students will be attending school.

**For Kindergarten to Grade 8:** Students with surnames A-G will start on September 11 and continue, surnames H-P will start on September 14 and continue, surnames Q-Z will start on September 15 and continue. This will have all our students in class by September 15.

**For Grade 9-12:** Students in Grade 9 will start on September 11 and continue, students in Grade 10 will start on September 14 and continue, students in Grade 11 and Grade 12 will start on September 15 and continue. This will have all our secondary students in class by September 15.

Please note that from September 4 to September 10, teachers will be checking in with our virtual learners and finalizing school routines.



The Ministry of Education has indicated that, for the 2020-2021 School Year, in-person attendance is voluntary, and parents may choose between in-person and remote learning. A registration survey was conducted from August 14-August 20 for families to indicate if their children will return to in-person learning at a physical school site or if they will be opting for remote learning at home. Parents had a second opportunity to change their decision through an additional survey that was open between August 24 and August 28.

As of August 28, approximately 80% of our students will be participating in in-person learning. More about the remote learning program in section 5.3.

### **3.2 Admission for Students to Transfer from Remote learning to Local Schools After September 2020**

If families change their decision regarding whether they want their children to attend in person learning after the start of school, their requests for a change will be addressed as soon as possible.

We will ask that families be patient as some time will be required to develop transition plans from one form of learning to another, as we will need to adhere to Ministry of Education and Public Health guidelines that support student and staff health, safety and well-being.

Secondary students returning to in-person learning may be limited to the new quadmester based on course availability, enrolment, and time missed in the course.

In all cases, parents are asked to consult with their local school's principal to confirm timelines and any requirements.

Secondary school students seeking registration to a new school, including transfers between schools in the UCDSB, may not be guaranteed in-person learning and may need to be enrolled in remote learning until the beginning of the next quadmester.

More information is available in the [Remote Learning Guide](#).

### **3.3 Preparing our School Sites – General Site Preparation Measures**

There will be changes evident at schools and the central office. Plexiglass, where possible, has been installed in areas that involve the direct service to members of the public. Hand sanitizing stations have been set up for use immediately upon entering any of our buildings.

Each school will determine where signage and markings are required, inside and outside of the school, to assist students in maintaining physical distance from each other. Locations include entrances to the school, classrooms, exits, washrooms, Learning Commons, areas where students line up for entry or exit and other common areas in the school. Markings and signage may also be used to indicate traffic flow, should schools deem it necessary for physical distancing to identify directional traffic patterns within the school. Explicit teaching and

opportunities for practice by students to develop comfort and familiarity of these requirements will take place early and often upon return to school, and throughout the school year.

### **3.4 Water fountains**

Only water bottle filling stations will be available for use in the schools. All drinking fountains will be decommissioned. Students should come to school each day with a full water bottle, labelled with the student's name.

### **3.5 Custodial support in schools**

All custodians will be conducting stepped-up cleaning with more frequent cleaning of high touch areas and shared spaces. Hand sanitizing stations and/or sinks with soap and paper towel are available in each classroom for frequent hand washing.

### **3.6 Physical spaces within classrooms**

Classroom educators will arrange furniture within the classroom to promote physical distancing. Carpets will be removed from classrooms. Students will be assigned to a workspace within the classroom and the teacher will maintain a record of the seating assignment.

Furniture in Kindergarten classrooms should be arranged to identify physically distanced play areas for smaller groups of students. Plush toys, resources and equipment that are not easily cleaned are to be removed from student access.

### **3.7 Health Screening**

Parents and staff will follow established public health protocols for screening. Parents need to use the [Parent Screening Tool](#), provided by public health, for daily health screening before sending children to school.

Staff will be expected to self-assess for COVID-19 symptoms each day and will report to their supervisor and their local health unit if they are experiencing symptoms.

Students and staff are **NOT TO ATTEND** school or their workplace setting if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. If anyone is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, they are to consult with public health to determine next steps.

### **3.8 Outbreak Protocol**

Our local public health professionals will provide all local school boards with an Outbreak Protocol that schools will need to follow should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed at a school. Any person who has been diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must follow the directions of Public Health prior to returning to school. The provincial government has recently released its [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools](#). The UCDSB has developed, in collaboration with Public Health, a protocol for infection prevention and monitoring.

### **3.9 Contact Tracing – Students**

Records will be maintained at each school site and by each classroom teacher detailing students in attendance at the school. Classroom teachers will also keep records of seating assignments in the classroom.

### **3.10 Parents, Volunteers and Visitors Within Our Schools**

Visitors and volunteers will not be permitted into school buildings or workplaces at this time. This includes family members of our students.

In the case of an urgent matter, visitors wishing to access a school or central office must call the school or central office to schedule an appointment before appearing on site. Unscheduled visitors – including family members of child(ren) – can expect to be asked COVID-19 screening questions prior to entering the school. Also, entry may not be granted immediately. Wherever possible, telephone or virtual meetings with parents/guardians, vendors and outside agencies will be held.

Any visitor or non-employee that is authorized to have access to a UCDSB school or workplace site will be required to provide contact information, such as name, phone number, email address, the time of arrival and the time of departure. Any authorized visitor will be required to respond to on-site COVID-19 screening questions before being permitted to enter the building.

In accordance with provincial regulations, emergency services personnel, public health inspectors, and inspectors from the Ministry of Labour continue to have access to school sites as per past practices.

Representatives of our union groups (ETFO, PSSP, CUPE, OSSTF) have the right to access employer's premises where their members are working. This is a provision under the Labour Relations Act, and we support our employee's rights to meet with their representatives. Union representatives accessing a UCDSB premise must adhere to the health and safety protocols established for access for non-school staff and students.

### **3.11 Meetings**

Until further notice, all meetings involving non-employees are to occur in a virtual manner. This includes School Council meetings, case conferences, assessment feedback meetings, parent-teacher meetings, etc. Further guidance for staff meetings is provided in the School Operations section of this document.

### **3.12 Wellness Room**

Each school will identify a separate room as a Wellness Room. This room will be used for the purpose of isolating a person who has become ill at school. The ill person will remain in the room until they can be picked up from school. A COVID-19 kit will be provided for use by staff and the student in the Wellness room. The kit will contain resources such as personal protective

equipment (e.g., face masks, gloves), along with instructions on how to properly use the resources. Staff will not be doing COVID-19 tests on students. These can only be administered by a healthcare professional.

An internal procedure for the use, management, and maintenance of the room was distributed by email to all school administrators on August 31, 2020 as a separate bulletin.

### **3.13 Transportation**

School bus transportation continues to be available for eligible students. The Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) is encouraging the use of active forms of transportation where possible (e.g., walking or biking).

STEO is providing parents with the option of opting out of student transportation by using the following form: <https://form.jotform.com/202236007099956>.

As students may be in close contact with others for prolonged periods of time while on the bus, and be sharing buses with students that are outside their cohorts and possibly school, STEO is highly recommending that students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 wear non-medical face coverings/masks while traveling on school vehicles. Students in Grades 4 and up are required to wear face coverings on school vehicles, as per the provincial school reopening guidelines.

Further information regarding transportation is available in [the STEO COVID-19 Transportation Response Plan](#) and their website ([www.steo.ca](http://www.steo.ca)).

Schools will be establishing drop-off and pick-up procedures for students that will be taking the bus and those that will be dropped off by parents. These procedures will be communicated by each school as needed.

## **4. The Learning Environment**

### **4.1 Elementary Class Organization**

All Kindergarten to Grade 8 students will be cohorted with their assigned class. Schools that typically practice blending of students in French Immersion and Core programming **will not** blend students during the period of the pandemic in order to reduce the number of direct and indirect contacts that students will have throughout the school day.

As a result of this direction to schools, some reorganization of classes may need to occur. Students will remain in the same classroom throughout the day and teachers who teach multiple classes will travel to the classrooms where their students are located.

## 4.2 Secondary Class Organization

UCDSB secondary schools will return to full-day instruction for all students in September. However, the day schedule will be different from past years to accommodate cohorting of students.

Secondary schools will adopt a quadmester system that allows for fewer student-to-student and student-to-staff contacts. Students will take two courses at a time over a nine-week period. Each class will consist of 150 minutes of instruction and will have a lunch break incorporated into the schedule. Students will take one class in the morning and one class in the afternoon.



## SAMPLE SECONDARY TIMETABLE

Late Lunch	Early Lunch
<b>Period 1</b> 8:00 am - 10:40 am Includes 10 min break (160 minutes)	<b>Period 1</b> 8:00 am - 9:50 am Includes 10 min break (110 minutes)
<b>Lunch</b> 10:40am - 11:30am	<b>Lunch</b> 9:50 am - 10:40 am
<b>Period 2</b> 11:30 am - 2:10 pm Includes 10 min. break (160 minutes)	<b>Period 1</b> 10:40 am - 11:30 am Includes 10 min break (50 minutes)
	<b>Period 2</b> 11:30 am - 2:10 pm Includes 10 min. break (160 minutes)

## 4.3 Arrival and Dismissal

Each school will identify an arrival and dismissal procedure for the school. Arrival and dismissal procedures developed by schools will include practices to receive and dismiss students who take the school bus, students who walk or ride a bike to school, and students who are driven by parents. Procedures will be developed by schools, in collaboration with on-site child care personnel, for the transfer of students from and to on-site child care.

Each school will identify entry procedures making use, where possible, of multiple entry doors to promote physical distancing. Schools may need to stagger the entry and dismissal times in order to maintain physical distancing.

Schools will also develop their own procedures for receiving students who are late to school as parents will not be able to enter the school to sign students in, as is current practice.

#### **4.4 Health and Safety practices – Hand Hygiene**

All staff and students will be expected to sanitize their hands upon each entry into the school building, including re-entering after recess and outdoor time. Students will practice routines for regular hand washing or hand sanitizing. Students will also be explicitly taught respiratory etiquette, including coughing into their elbow, proper disposal of tissues and the proper wearing of face masks.

#### **4.5 Health and Safety practices - Wearing of Masks or Face Coverings**

All staff and students in Grade 4-12 must wear masks or face coverings while inside the school when walking in common areas and where physical distancing in the classroom is not possible. It is highly recommended that students in Kindergarten – Grade 3 also wear masks. Where Grade 3 students are part of a Grade 3 / Grade 4 combined class, any Grade 3 student continues to have the option to wear a mask if their families wish them to do so, but there are no provincial requirements for this to occur. Staff will work with students to demonstrate how to safely put on, and take off a mask, and how to properly store it when it is not being used.

Limited exemptions on the requirement for students to wear masks or face coverings can be presented to the school principal by the student’s parent/guardian when the child:

- has an underlying health condition that prevents them from safely wearing a mask, or;
- is unable to put on or remove their mask without the assistance of another person, or;
- is reasonably accommodated by not wearing a mask under the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended.

Parents who wish to have their child exempt from wearing a mask must complete the [COVID-19 Mask Exemption Form](#) and submit it to the school Principal before the child attends school.

Masks are not necessary in outdoor spaces. Educators will develop routines in their classrooms to prepare students for lining up and walking to the recess yard in a physically distanced manner as masks will not be taken outside to the recess yard.

In accordance with the direction from the [Ministry of Education](#) “medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shield) will be provided for all teachers and other staff of school boards. All school-based staff will be required to wear masks, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.”

Outdoor times like recess can be used as opportunities for students to have breaks from wearing masks within their cohort. Masks may also be removed if a student is at least 2m apart from other students. Students would be required to put the mask back on if they move around

the classroom and are close to other students. In addition, students may take off their masks when performing vigorous physical activities and while eating and drinking.

#### **4.6 Personal belongings & storage**

Students are to limit the personal belongings that they bring to school. Items that are permitted are a backpack, water bottle, sunscreen, lunch, clothing (e.g. change of clothes for Kindergarten students). Personal belongings will be stored at the students' desks. Lockers will not be used by staff or students. Hooks and cubbies that are located outside of classrooms will not be used by staff or students. This will be reviewed as the colder weather approaches and heavier clothing and boots become necessary.

Schools will determine if students require indoor shoes to be left at the school. This will be communicated to parents by the individual school.

#### **4.7 Learning materials**

Staff will limit the sharing of learning materials between students. Students will be provided with the materials necessary to access the curriculum. Parents may wish to provide additional materials (e.g., pencils, scissors, etc.) for their children. These resources are not to be shared between children. Classroom materials and resources that must be shared will be disinfected between use by students (e.g. computers, headsets, etc.).

#### **4.8 Recess**

Schools may develop a staggered recess schedule with designated spaces on the yard for cohorts to play. Students will engage in recess with their specified cohort of classmates. Schools are encouraged to provide bins of equipment and toys to cohorts for their specific use during outdoor play. Play structures may be used by cohorts of students when physical distancing can be maintained. Handwashing/sanitizing before and after recess will be required.

#### **4.9 Lunch**

Elementary schools will develop a lunch schedule that respects contractual obligations for staff. Students will eat in their own classrooms and schools will develop supervision schedules to ensure adequate supervision is in place when students are eating. This may result in changes to the length of time provided for students to eat lunch and the time allocated for play outdoors.

Hot lunches will not be available in elementary schools during the pandemic.

Cafeterias will be available for food service following all health and safety requirements. Food will be in a 'grab and go' format. Schools will ensure that staff and students follow physical distancing, masking and hand hygiene protocols.

Lunch breaks will be staggered to reduce the number of contacts for students throughout the day. It is the expectation that students will remain with their cohort for the lunch break, when eating their lunch at school. Secondary students who wish to leave the school during the lunch

break will require parental permission to do so and must follow all health and safety measures upon return to the school (hand hygiene, etc.).

#### **4.10 Washrooms**

Where possible, schools are to designate specific washrooms to specific cohorts of students. Teachers will also be required to maintain a tracking record to note when a student has left the classroom to use the washroom and when the student has returned. Schools will develop a washroom schedule to limit the number of students accessing washrooms at one time.

#### **4.11 Classroom doors**

Where possible, classroom doors should be left open to limit the number of people who are touching the door throughout the school day.

#### **4.12 Use of outdoor space**

Educators are encouraged to use outdoor space for teaching and learning as much as possible.

#### **4.13 Communication to Parents/Guardians**

Schools will communicate with parents/guardians through electronic means or by phone. The school agenda will not travel between home and school during the pandemic. Parents are encouraged to sign up to use My Family Room ([myfamilyroom.ca](http://myfamilyroom.ca)) and to follow the school on the social media platforms used by the school.

Educators will communicate early in the school year to parents about the means and frequency of communication that they should expect from the classroom level.

Information about specific school routines will be shared with parents by the schools.

#### **4.14 Learning Commons**

Each school may develop a schedule for the use of the Learning Commons by cohorts of students. Where possible, it is recommended that bins of books be assigned to each cohort and placed in the classrooms. Students may select reading material from the bins for use in the classroom. Books will not travel to and from homes. When books are returned to the Learning Commons, they will remain out of circulation for seven days.

## **5. Teaching and Learning**

### **5.1 Mental health and well-being**

A focus on the whole student will be the priority for the return to school. Staff will work diligently to create warm, welcoming and supportive classrooms for their students and will assist students in becoming familiar with the new routines and practices that will be in place for health and safety purposes. A primary focus upon returning to the school environment, secondary to health and safety, will be on mental health and well-being. Resources and

professional learning will be provided to schools with an expectation that daily activities will occur in each school that will focus on mental health and well-being. Targeted interventions will be available throughout the school year, as they have been in the past, to students who are identified by schools as requiring further support.

## 5.2 Transition to a new grade

Class composition is never homogeneous, and students bring different levels of prior knowledge with them. Educators will spend time determining areas of academic need for each student, and they will differentiate the instruction to support each student. Educators will focus on the big ideas of the curriculum, identify learning gaps, and use high yield strategies to support student learning and readiness for new content and skill development.

## 5.3 Remote learning for the 2020-2021 School Year

By its very nature, remote learning is not the same learning experience as what students experience when attending in-person at their local school.

The options for remote learning are:

Remote Learning Option	Key Factors	School Support/Affiliation
Remote Synchronous (Digital learning, in real-time, from home)	→ Access to a teacher in their regular school for synchronous learning → Students connecting with their in-person learning peers	Instruction is provided by the local school and the child's classroom teacher through a live video stream.
Remote Asynchronous: Digital (Digital learning, not in real time, from home)	→ Digital access (email, phone, etc.) to a teacher during scheduled times and by appointment.	Instruction and support provided by UCDSB Virtual School
Remote Asynchronous: Non-Digital (Learning is completely offline, at home, using print materials)	→ Printed booklets to complete and return to a Virtual School teacher.	Instruction and support provide by UCDSB Virtual School

Remote synchronous learning and remote asynchronous (digital) learning , both elementary and secondary, requires internet connectivity and access to a personal computer or laptop for the duration of the school day. Students can expect to have five hours of learning opportunities throughout the day. The remote learning program using digital tools will provide online instruction to students using:

- Microsoft Teams
- Brightspace – D2L

- UCDSB assigned student email address

Students who do not have a device may be able to borrow one from the UCDSB. There is a limited supply of devices available therefore it is possible that not all requests for devices will be fulfilled.

Classroom teachers will use video/audio conferencing functions of Microsoft Teams to facilitate remote synchronous learning. Only those invited to the class Team will have access to the video/audio conferencing taking place. Parents must provide consent at the beginning of the year for a student to have his/her image shared via an MS Teams session. Remote learners may use the camera function or may participate using audio only. It is recommended that microphones within MS Teams are muted when the remote learner is not speaking.

Asynchronous Learning (non-digital) will be provided to students who request an Exemption from Synchronous Learning and will involve the use of pen/paper learning resources.

Secondary online programming will be aligned with the quadmester model being implemented in the face-to-face program at all UCDSB secondary schools. In this model, students will study and complete two courses in the first nine week of the school year. Students then take two additional courses in the next nine weeks. As such, students will complete four full courses by the end of January 2021. A copy of our quadmester schedule for secondary students [is available here.](#)

#### **5.4 Assessment and Evaluation**

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning. Assessment and evaluation practices should include assessments to identify students' strengths and any gaps in learning to ensure that students have the fundamental building blocks in advance of new content. Assessment practices will allow both flexibility and multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding and application of curriculum expectations.

At the secondary level, in addition to completing learning activities and assignments to demonstrate understanding of the curriculum, secondary school students will be expected to complete large projects (known as summative tasks) and final examinations in some courses.

#### **5.5 Provincial EQAO Assessments**

Grade 3 and 6 provincial EQAO assessments will not occur this school year. Information regarding the Grade 9 EQAO assessment and the Grade 10 Literacy Test is not currently available.

#### **5.6 Music**

Most overall learning expectations for the music curriculum can be met without the use of instruments in both the elementary and secondary program. A variety of delivery options may be considered to meet the music curriculum's overall expectations, which could include lower-

risk creative performance opportunities (e.g. in-school instruction in larger spaces, restricting the type of instruments in a group setting) or in-person teaching and instruction with no live performance.

Choir practices/performances and band practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher risk of transmission. As such, it is recommended that these be cancelled at this time. This recommendation will be reviewed as more information is made available.

### **5.7 Physical Education, Science, The Arts, and Technology-Based Courses**

These courses may continue, and educators will ensure that health and safety requirements are in place to maintain physical distancing and to limit the shared use of equipment. Where equipment is needed for different classes, the equipment must be sanitized before use and frequent handwashing will be practiced.

Compulsory courses will be available to students who have chosen remote learning. Remote learning students will have a range of online elective classes to choose from however physical education and technology-based elective courses may not be offered in the remote learning setting.

### **5.8 Sports (Intramurals and Interscholastic Athletics)**

Inter-school sports will not be occurring at this time. Schools may, however, offer co-curricular (such as some intramural sports activities), if cohorting requirements can be maintained and physical distancing is possible. Areas that are used must be able to be cleaned between cohorts.

## **6. Secondary School Program Consideration: Student Success Focus**

The UCDSB remains committed to its goal of a 90% graduation rate. Student Success teams in schools will monitor student achievement and intervene when necessary to ensure the best outcome for each student.

### **6.1 Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Programs**

SHSM programs will continue. Some programs may need to be modified based upon student access to co-op and some certification courses that may not run during the pandemic. SHSM leads and school administrators are encouraged to reach out to our Learning Partners regarding procedures for 'overrides' and other solutions to ensure program completion.

### **6.2 OYAP and Dual Credit programs**

OYAP and Dual Credit programs will also continue. Some programs will be limited by pandemic restrictions. Students should check with their Guidance Department regarding courses and programs impacted.

### **6.3 Co-operative Education**

Co-operative education will continue. Some traditional placements may be possible, and others will be required to be completed in a virtual format.

### **6.4 Community Involvement / Community Service Hours**

The completion of 40 hours of Community Involvement will resume as a requirement for secondary school graduation for 2020-2021. Students may complete their hours in virtual setting if possible, or in a safe setting outside of the school.

### **6.5 Literacy Requirement for Graduation**

Graduating students must also complete their literacy requirement. Students who do not have their literacy requirement who wish to graduate mid-year should ensure that they take the Literacy course in the first or second quadmester.

## **7. Special Education**

### **7.1 Supporting Students with Special Education Needs**

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) will continue to be a key document in supporting students with special education needs. It is recognized that goal development, implementation, monitoring and assessment will look differently for students who are continuing in the remote learning environment. The school-based team, with the support of the central Special Education Team, will develop and implement programming for students with special education needs for either of the learning options available to students (face-to-face or on-line).

[Please refer to the Special Education, Student Mental Health and Wellness Companion Document for full details.](#)

### **7.2 Supporting Students with Mental Health Needs**

Mental health and well-being will be a prevalent focus, particularly at the outset of the school year. The central Mental Health and Wellness Team will provide professional development and resources for use in schools to support social-emotional learning, resilience, re-engaging in learning, while continuing to be responsive to particular concerns and needs that are brought forward by schools. Counselling supports and connections to partner agencies will continue to be areas of focus for members of the central team.

[School Mental Health Ontario](#) will be providing boards with a toolkit of resources and professional learning materials directed at system staff, school-based teams, students and parents. Further information will be shared when the toolkit is available.

The Special Education and Mental Health and Wellness Department will continue to publish regular newsletters for parents which will be shared digitally by schools and posted to the UCDSB website. Information will also be shared through Twitter ([@UCDSBWellness](#)).

[Please refer to the Special Education, Student Mental Health and Wellness Companion Document for more details.](#)

## **8. Transition to Kindergarten**

School closures, in many cases, did not provide an opportunity for students and parents of junior kindergarten students to visit the school as would typically have occurred as part of the transition process. All schools engaged in various virtual transition activities to welcome students and families to the school community.

All Kindergarten students will follow the same staggered entry schedule as grades 1-6 students.

Students in Junior and Senior Kindergarten whose last names begin with:

- A-G will begin school on September 11, 2020.
- H-P will begin school on September 14, 2020.
- Q-Z will begin school on September 15, 2020

All students will be attending school by September 15, 2020.

Noting that Junior Kindergarten marks the beginning of the school experience for our youngest of learners and their parents school teams may offer orientation visits to Junior Kindergarten children and their parents between September 4 and 10, 2020. These visits may be offered virtually or in person. If offered in person, the school team will establish a date and time for a short visit to the school. The visit will be individual in nature, one family at a time with an educator team. All health protocols must be followed including, screening before entering the school, hand hygiene, and the provision of information for the purposes of contact tracing.

Schools will also have the flexibility to determine class compositions. Some schools may choose to organize kindergarten classrooms according to first and second-year cohorts or may choose to continue blending year-one and year-two students.

## **9. International Education**

All school boards in Ontario must follow the Federal Public Health Institutional Readiness Requirements for International Students to admit international students to any school program operated locally. International students who have remained in Canada since school closure in the spring of 2020 will return to learning in UCDSB schools for 2020-2021 in either the in person or remote learning model. Students who returned to their home country will have the opportunity to engage in remote learning with the UCDSB. We look forward to the time when international students are able to travel and safely rejoin our UCDSB programs.

## **10. Preparing Staff**

### **10.1 Health and Safety: A Shared Responsibility**

UCDSB, in collaboration with our local Public Health departments and our Joint Health and Safety Committee, will provide training to all UCDSB staff. The plan, including requirements for training, will be provided to staff during the professional development days prior to the beginning of the school year for students.

The School Environment COVID 19 Prevention Checklist was distributed to all school administrators as a separate bulletin and will be used at all UCDSB sites to ensure the site is ready for occupants and prepared to meet the requirements related to the pandemic response.

### **10.2 Staff meetings, staff rooms, and gatherings**

Staff may meet in person and two meters of physical distancing is required. Staff may remove medical masks when seated and two meters of physical distancing is maintained. If at any time, a staff member is required to get up from seated position, medical mask must be worn. Consideration should be given to offering a remote staff meeting option, with staff joining from different locations in the school.

### **10.3 Shared resources and materials**

Where resources and materials must be shared by staff, cleaning and disinfecting practices will be established and communicated to all staff.

## **11. School Operations**

### **11.1 Fire and Lockdown Drills**

Fire drills and lockdown practices will continue to occur. Educators will work with their classes to identify safe and effective ways to meet the requirements of both fire drills and lockdown drills.

### **11.2 Field trips**

Field trips will not be occurring at this time. Educators are encouraged to explore virtual field trips.

### **11.3 Community use of schools**

Community use of schools, for indoor use, will be delayed and re-evaluated the week of October 5, 2020. Requests to use exterior spaces will be accepted starting August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

#### **11.4 Assemblies**

Large gatherings and assemblies will not occur. Considerations should be given to offering sessions virtually.

#### **11.5 Electronic payments**

Any collection of funds should be done through electronic means. Cash should not be collected in schools. It is anticipated that there will be minimum requirement for collection of money.

#### **11.6 Play Structures**

Play structures may be used by cohorts of students when physical distancing can be maintained. Handwashing/sanitizing before and after recess will be required.

#### **11.7 Student Nutrition Programs**

Nutrition programs may continue in schools where a “grab and go” format for the distribution of food can be introduced.

### **12. Conclusion**

As schools prepare to reopen, the UCDSB continues to work in close collaboration with our local Medical Officers of Health and receives guidance from the Ministry of Education. We will continue to need to be flexible during the pandemic response as the landscape is ever-changing and new information is received regularly. The health and safety of our staff, our students and our families remain at the forefront of all of the planning and preparation that is occurring for the return to school. We are excited to welcome students back to the school environment in September and are thankful for all of the work and effort of all staff in the preparations that they have undertaken in these unprecedented times.