



## Approach to Reopening Schools

(updated Sep 2021 for 2021-22 Sem 1)

### 1. Introduction and Rationale

With prayer and thanksgiving, we are looking forward to again opening the doors of Emmanuel Christian High School to our students on September 7<sup>th</sup> for the start of semester 1 of the 2021-2022 school year. In order to show proper responsibility and care toward one another, and in submission to the government in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have drafted the following protocol for reopening our school. This protocol was originally developed by the board and administration in consultation with the WDG Public Health's *COVID-19 Public Health School Safety Plan Checklist*, published and shared with us on July 13, 2020, the SickKids Hospital document, *Updated COVID-19: Guidance for School Reopening*, published July 29, 2020, and the Ministry of Education *Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools*, published July 30, 2020. It has since been modified to reflect the most current recommendations from WDG Public Health and the Ministry of Education (*COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools (2021-2022): Version 2 [Released by the Ontario Ministry of Education, August 13, 2021]*).

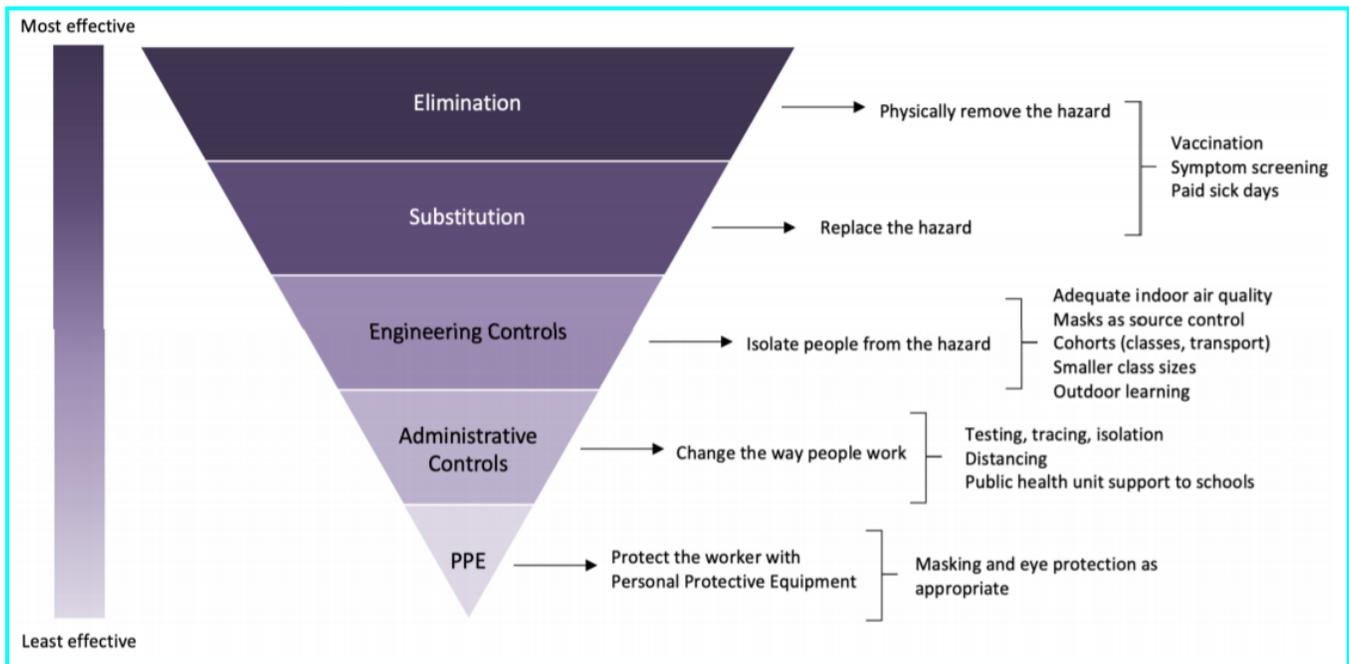
At ECHS, we will closely follow this protocol out of love and care for our families and submission to the earthly authorities God has placed over us. Some of us have more at-risk loved ones in our families. We want to make sure that we are doing our part to help keep them safe while also being able to instruct, in a loving and caring manner, the covenant children of our community. We ask that you read this protocol carefully before the first day of school to be prepared for the differences in routines which staff and students will experience. Some of these restrictions are similar to those experienced last year, while others are different. Keep in mind the changes made since Feb 2021 are marked with blue highlights.

We also realize that there is a diversity of opinion and not everyone will agree with some of the procedures described below. Regardless of your personal opinions, we need all stakeholders to respect and support this COVID-19 policy. We need the board and the parents to encourage it and to speak positively of it in their homes; we need staff and students to follow it without negativity so that it doesn't feel burdensome. We need to follow it for the benefit of one another, and for the benefit of the school's reputation in the community and health department. We really do not want to have an outbreak at our school which would immediately affect so many in our community.

Some of you or your children may have underlying health conditions that might impact your ability to comply with some of the procedures in this document. If that is the case, we will try our best to work with you; please work with your local family health care practitioner, and please contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss your situation.

## 2. Self-Screening & Exclusion - *When should an individual stay home?*

- a. Research shows that besides vaccination, screening is one of the *most effective* techniques to control the spread of a virus like COVID-19. For example, see the graphic diagram below taken from the Science Table COVID-19 Advisory of Ontario *Science Brief* published July 19, 2021 ([https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Science-Brief\\_School-Operation-for-the-2021-2022-Academic-Year-in-the-Context-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic\\_20210719\\_published-2.pdf](https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Science-Brief_School-Operation-for-the-2021-2022-Academic-Year-in-the-Context-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic_20210719_published-2.pdf)).
- b. Individuals (staff and students) **must** self-screen daily using the screening tool provided by the Ministry of Health here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/> If the screening tool tells you to keep your child home, please do so, and contact the school office to inform us.
- c. Parents who are concerned about underlying health conditions are to work with their healthcare provider.



## 3. Attendance and Record-keeping - *Is attendance at school mandatory?*

- a. Yes, we still expect all students enrolled at ECHS for this semester to attend in person each day unless they (or someone in their household) are symptomatic. Parents need to text the office or phone in to let us know if a student is not coming to school. Parents should realize that our regular absent policy is still in place - at 15 absences in a course, a student will be in jeopardy of losing his/her credit. That being said, if a student needs to be kept home due to COVID-19, we will work together with the student to ensure that they remain engaged with the daily lessons and don't fall behind, and we will not count these absences against that students' absenteeism record.

- b. Teachers must share attendance with the office at the **beginning of every class**. This is necessary for contact tracing in the event of a case of COVID-19. The office will check at the beginning of every class and resolve any issues. Additionally, seating plans, busing cohort/seating plans, and daily records of approved visitors will be kept in the office.
- c. The office administrator, Mrs. VanDyk, will work closely with the principal as the dedicated contact between the school, parents, and WDG Public Health.
- d. Grade 12 students who are on prep must work in a dedicated area of the school and must sign in/out at the office if leaving school property during class time.

#### **4. Transportation, Arrivals, and Departures - *What will transportation and entry/exit of the school look like?***

- a. Busing/Transportation
  - i. For busing we rely on working collaboratively with the transportation committees of our 3 feeder schools, MCS, DACS, and CCS.
  - ii. We anticipate that some parents may not feel comfortable with their child riding the bus under the current circumstances, and may opt to transport their child(ren) independent of busing.
  - iii. Only one bus at a time will unload students for entry to the building to reduce crowding at the front doors.
- b. Front doors will be left unlocked during the school day. However, **all visitors** will be required to sign in at the office and screen before they are allowed to proceed further into the building. **Visitors will be required to wear a medical/surgical mask upon entry to the building.**
- c. Hand hygiene stations and signage - We will have alcohol-based hand sanitizing stations at every entrance to the school and at either end of each floor.
- d. Pickup/dropoff - Staff on duty will monitor use of sanitizer stations at the beginning and end of each day.

#### **5. Visitor Restrictions - *Who is allowed entry to the school building?***

- a. **The “essential visitor restriction” has been removed. However, visitors will be allowed to enter the school building during school hours only after they have self-screened for COVID-19 symptoms. Visitors must use hand sanitizers upon arriving/exiting the school building, and must wear a medical/surgical mask while in the building.**
- b. A note on the front door will be posted to communicate visitor protocol.
- c. **All facility rental options are currently cancelled until further notice.**

## 6. Daily Procedures - *How will the school routine be different during COVID-19 restrictions?*

### a. General

- i. COVID-19 related signage will be posted throughout the school.
- ii. Some students may experience anxiety or have questions upon arrival back at school. The principal, office administrator, learning assistance coordinator, and student emotional support teachers are available to answer any questions students (or parents) may have and provide assistance or resources to support the students' return to school.

### b. Cohorting

- i. Similarly to last year, we have made efforts to cohort students by grade. Lockers and classrooms have been assigned to limit student contact outside their cohort.
- ii. Once again staggered class change times will be implemented for Gr. 9-10 vs. Gr. 11-12, five minutes apart, to prevent crowding in hallways.
- iii. Lockers will be strategically assigned throughout the building, with Gr. 9-10 students only assigned "lowers" and Gr. 11-12 students assigned "uppers".
- iv. Similarly, classrooms will be assigned per cohort, as much as possible.
- v. Additionally, the learning assistance/guidance office and study rooms will only allow students from one cohort to visit at a time.

### c. Use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

- i. "Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on school vehicles. Masks may be temporarily removed indoors for the following activities, with a minimum distance of two metres maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible within a cohort to:
  - engage in [physical activity in PE class or at lunch in the gym]
  - consume food or drink
- ii. Students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible." (*Min. of Ed., 2021, p. 7*)
- iii. Teachers will be required to wear appropriate PPE (medical/surgical masks) at all times when interacting with students in classrooms, common areas and while gathering in the staff room; when interacting with "unmasked" students, teachers are also required to wear eye protection. (*Min. of Ed., 2021, p. 8*)
- iv. Face shields, disposable NMM's, and disposable medical masks will be available in the office if needed (e.g. for visitors, students not feeling well, etc.).
- v. Students with sensory or breathing difficulties may be exempted from wearing a NMM by the school principal only after completion of a NMM exemption form (on the website in the "documents" tab and on the Edsby news river) and in consultation with the principal.

#### **d. Physical Distancing**

- i. Staff and students will be encouraged to physical distance as much as possible throughout the school day.
- ii. Staff will set a good example by physically distancing themselves in the staff room.
- iii. Desks, tables, and chairs will be spaced out in all rooms (including classrooms) as much as possible. Any unnecessary furniture will be removed from classrooms, and desks will be arranged to face forward rather than in circles or grouping.
- iv. Students are encouraged to spend time outdoors during the lunch break as much as possible, and weather permitting, to reduce crowding in hallways.
- v. As a rule, the gym will be open to student use at lunch, one cohort at a time, at the discretion of the principal. However, gym use may be revoked if students do not take seriously the need to physically distance themselves and use appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Shared materials such as gym equipment are also permitted.
- vi. School assemblies and other student/school gatherings are permitted, as long as they follow gathering regulations as required by the *Reopening Ontario Act*.
- vii. Signage reminding students about physical distancing will be placed in normally high congregating areas (e.g. above couches, in the front lobby, student commons, etc.) as well as strategically throughout the building.
- viii. During lunch break, the teachers on duty will monitor and enforce physical distancing and the wearing of NMM's in the gym, computer lab, front lobby, student lounge, and designated classroom eating areas for cohorts.

#### **e. Programming**

- i. ECHS will supply mental health support for students as much as is reasonably possible. Students struggling with their mental health related to COVID-19 and the reopening of schools should continue to talk to Mrs. Jagt and/or Mrs. Vanleeuwen, who will assist students in collaboration with their parents.
- ii. Phys. Ed. teachers are encouraged to hold class outdoors as much as possible, as well as to practice physical distancing as much as reasonably possible during class activities and during the use of change rooms. Staff and students must practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette before and after class. Shared equipment disinfection is no longer required. Both low contact and high contact sports activities are now permitted indoors. The wearing of masks during participation in sports activities is encouraged but not required.
- iii. Program planning for the Cooperative Education courses will again continue as normal as possible. If a student develops COVID-19 symptoms at work, he or she must stay home from school during "in-service" days as well.
- iv. Field trips or other activities requiring group transportation are now permitted in conjunction with other protocols described in this document.

## **f. Shared Equipment, Materials, and Spaces**

- i. Disinfection of equipment and materials that are shared (e.g. computers/chromebooks, gym, science lab equipment, art supplies, etc.) is no longer required.
- ii. Students and staff will be required to practice hand hygiene before and after any use of shared equipment and materials (e.g. science labs, computer lab, etc.).
- iii. Use of shared spaces (e.g. gym, computer lab, learning commons/library/science lab) will continue to be monitored by staff to ensure physical distancing and wearing NMM's.
- iv. Larger shared spaces, including the Learning Commons/Library, Computer Lab, and Student Commons may now be used by multiple cohorts as long as students maintain proper use of masks and distancing as much as possible - as such these spaces will be consistently supervised by a staff member.

## **g. Eating and Drinking**

- i. All staff and students may remove their masks while eating and drinking, but must perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating and use appropriate respiratory etiquette.
- ii. Gr. 9-10 will continue to eat lunch together in their homerooms for the first 10 minutes of lunch break.
- iii. Designated eating areas are set aside for Gr. 11-12 if they choose not to go outside; these are: Student Commons, and Rooms 305, 306, 307, and 309. However, eating and socializing outside is encouraged as much as possible.
- iv. Students are encouraged to avoid sharing food, drink, or water bottles - every student is encouraged to use their own labelled water bottle and other supplies.

## **h. Hygiene**

- i. Hand hygiene stations will be at every entrance to the building, at the entrance to the gym, as well as at the top of every stairwell. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water and/or use hand sanitizer frequently throughout the day, along with practicing other appropriate elements of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (e.g. coughing/sneezing into elbow, etc.)
- ii. If a teacher grants permission for a washroom break during class, 3rd floor students MUST use the 3rd floor washroom; 1st/2nd floor students MUST use the 1st floor washrooms.

## **i. Cleaning and Disinfection**

- i. The school has purchased an Electrostatic Spray disinfection system which it will continue to use to disinfect classrooms and shared spaces once at the end of each school day. Additionally, all high contact surfaces (door knobs, handrails, washrooms, etc.) will be disinfected a minimum of twice per school day.

## 7. Extracurricular Activities - *Will we be able to continue with sports practices, ECO rehearsals, clubs, and other activities?*

- a. We rejoice that Extracurricular activities, teams, and clubs will be able to **resume** this school year!! Coaches and teachers responsible for the clubs/teams will ensure that appropriate distancing, masking, and other COVID-19 precautions are followed to the extent possible given the context of the activity involved.
- b. ECO will take precautions to ensure all students are masked by playing, wind instruments are filtered and distancing between performers is maintained.
- c. For health and physical education and athletic activities, both high- and low-contact activities are now permitted indoors. Masks are required to be worn at all times when spectating or in general when not participating in the physical activity.
- d. It is not yet known to what extent inter-school competitive activities will be allowed and under what circumstances.

## 8. Vaccination - *Are vaccinations required for students?*

- a. The provincial government has not mandated required COVID-19 vaccinations for students. Students together with their parents are encouraged to make an informed decision about whether or not they should get vaccinated. "Vaccination is an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and allow students, families, and staff to safely resume normal activities." (Min. of Ed., 2021, p. 16) For more information about the vaccine, check here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-youth> or here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccine-safety>

## 9. COVID-19 Response Plan - *What if someone gets sick while at school?*

- a. All members of school staff are responsible for implementing this COVID-19 Response Plan immediately in the event that a student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms (see #2a above) while at school. Staff and students will be regularly reminded to report COVID-19 symptoms as soon as possible.
- b. Parents should expect a phone request to come pick up their child if...
  - i. he/she develops one or more COVID-19 symptoms while at school.
  - ii. he/she has a temperature of 37.8 C (100 F) or greater.
  - iii. a teacher discovers that a student exhibited COVID-19 symptoms *in the last 24 hours*.
- c. If a teacher suspects or discovers a symptomatic student in their classroom, the student will be sent to the office (which will be equipped with a COVID-19 response kit to confirm symptoms) immediately where they will be given a fresh **medical/surgical mask** to wear and will be isolated and supervised in the weight room, until picked up by parent or guardian - the weight room will therefore be closed for regular use.
- d. Other students in that class may continue with regular classroom activities unless instructed otherwise.

- e. Students who need to be picked up will not be allowed to interact with teachers or peers during this time.
- f. After the symptomatic student is picked up, all surfaces which the student interacted with, including the isolation room, will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- g. By Ontario law, any **suspected** case of COVID-19 **must** be reported to public health as well as the Ministry of Education. The principal and office administrator will serve as the main point of contact between ECHS and WDG Public Health.
- h. Students (or staff) who are sent home due to suspicion of COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to **consult and follow the guidance of a health care professional and** get tested at a COVID-19 Assessment Centre as soon as possible. To find the assessment centre nearest to you, click here:  
<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>
- i. As each situation is unique, the school will work closely with WDG Public Health on **exclusion and isolation requirements for those in contact with the symptomatic individual. In general, those who are considered by public health to be “high risk contacts” (e.g. members of immediate family/household, members of the same classroom cohort, members of the same sports team, etc.) will be contacted by public health and/or the school to determine exclusion and isolation requirements. Generally those asymptomatic students and teachers who are not fully immunized (defined as having received their 2nd dose at least two weeks prior to contact) or not previously positive (within the last 90 days) will be required to isolate at home for 10 days and may not attend school during that time. They are also strongly encouraged to get tested on or after day 7 of their isolation period. All contacts who demonstrate COVID-19 symptoms will be required to isolate and are encouraged to get tested regardless of their immunization status.**
- j. While some families in our community are opposed to the concept of treating contacts differently based on whether or not they are vaccinated, it is helpful to keep in mind:
  - i. As a school we are under the jurisdiction of WDGPH. Therefore we do not have any choice in determining who is or is not a high-risk contact of a positive case of COVID-19 and who is or is not required to isolate for a period of time and thus stay home from school.
  - ii. Since the vaccination rates of ECHS students is likely to be only ~33% of the population, the reality is that if we have a positive case of COVID-19 in a cohort, the entire cohort will be sent home anyway, as only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the cohort will likely be vaccinated and it is not practical for the teacher to instruct  $\frac{1}{3}$  at school and  $\frac{2}{3}$  at home concurrently. Thus in practice this will function the same as it did in the 2020-21 school year.

## 10. Outbreak Management

- a. In the case of a staff member or student testing positive, that is, a confirmed case of COVID-19, this information will be promptly communicated to the school community but for privacy reasons the personal information of the individual will not be shared.
- b. If public health advises that a class, cohort or a school should be closed for a period of time, parents, students and staff will be notified immediately.
- c. Notice of any closures of classes, cohorts or schools will be communicated and posted on Edsby and on the school website.
- d. In the case of a COVID-19 outbreak at ECHS (defined by WDG Public Health as “two or more lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students or staff (or other visitors) in a school with an epidemiological link, within a 14-day period, where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the school (including transportation)” (*Min. of Ed., 2021, p. 27*), administrators, teachers, and staff will closely follow the direction of WDG Public Health in accordance with the document last updated Aug. 11, 2021 COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management (link: [https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19\\_school\\_outbreak\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19_school_outbreak_guidance.pdf)) including:
  - i. Working closely with public health officials regarding contact tracing and, if necessary, requiring one or more cohorts to remain home and possibly closing school operations temporarily until the outbreak is managed, declared over, or until public health deems education of students safe to resume.
  - ii. Communication with the school community in a timely fashion, via Edsby, in the event of (a) confirmed COVID-19 case(s) at the school and to offer advice and support as needed.

## 11. Summary

Because the COVID-19 pandemic can evolve quickly, this is a living document which will be reviewed and reassessed on an ongoing basis (e.g. this protocol will be reviewed at a minimum at each monthly board meeting).

Last updated: Thursday, Sept. 2, 2021