



# Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan

Current as of August 13, 2020



# Back -to- SCHOOL

✧ 2020-2021 ✧

Information for Families





# **Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the new school year! We understand that the past few months have been a challenging time for our students and their families. They have been for us, too, as principals and school staff have adjusted to being away from the children they educate and care for every day. Your family is an extension of ours. While we know the new school year is going to be different than what we're used to, we are filled with excitement at us being able to work, learn, play, and grow in faith together again.

We also understand that parents have a lot of questions about how the new school year will look, as you make decisions on your child's return to school. In addition to reviewing the Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan, we invite you to check out the FAQ section on our Back to School page to find out answers to the most commonly asked questions about reopening schools. It's important to us that all families feel they have the information they need to make a truly informed decision as to whether children will attend school in-person or at home. We also know you want the information in easy to understand language.

This document was created by members of the Niagara Catholic Reopening Task Force, which included: students, administrators, parents, principals, vice-principals, support staff, health and safety, alternative education, business, chaplaincy, communications, equity and inclusion, facilities, human resources, mental health, program and innovation, student support, transportation and union partners. It offers the most current information on how Niagara Catholic will keep students, staff and their families safe when we return to school in September, in clear, fact-based terms.

We are providing you with this information to support parents and guardians in assessing risk, and making the right decision for their families. This is a "living document," being used by our staff to implement our safe return to school for our students and staff. We will update this document as new information is available as we approach the school year.

# Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan

## Background

In June, the Ministry of Education released its *Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year* document. In it, the Education Minister directed all school boards to plan for three possible learning options:

- The continuation of synchronous learning - at home learning, with enhanced remote delivery
- An adaptive, modified school day
- A conventional school day, with enhanced public health protocols

In July, the Minister announced that all elementary schools in the province will open, and education will follow the conventional school day, with enhanced public health protocols. Niagara Catholic is one of 24 school boards that is required to follow the adaptive model for secondary schools.

The return to school for students in September will be voluntary, and based on parent/guardian choice. Niagara Catholic will provide online learning to all elementary and secondary students whose parents/guardians do not wish to have them return to the classroom in September. Parents of all new and returning elementary students will have two choices for their child:

- Full-day return to school
- Voluntary learn-at home

We know it is a difficult decision for parents to make. We encourage you to make the one that best fits your family's individual needs or situation. Whichever option you choose for your child(ren), we want you to know that student success is our primary focus, and all students will be supported.

Students who return to school will attend classes five days a week for the normal school day. There is no option to attend part-time. Students will remain with their cohort - their class - throughout the day for all lessons, breaks and activities. Enhanced health and safety protocols, which will be explained in the Maintenance section of this document, will be in place to ensure all schools are safe environments for students and staff.

# **Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan**

## **Background**

Students enrolled in the voluntary learn-at-home option will participate using the provincial platform D2L Brightspace. This program is provided by the Ministry of Education and students will access it by logging into the Niagara Catholic Virtual Learning Environment (NCVLE).

Students learning online will participate in synchronous (learning at the same time) and asynchronous learning during the school day. Students will work under the direction of a Niagara Catholic teacher, and will complete lessons, assignments and projects, the same as the students attending school in person.

Secondary students in Niagara who plan to attend school in person will follow the adaptive model of learning. Grouped as cohorts (along with their siblings), students will attend school on designated days. Cohort A will attend Mondays, Tuesdays and every other Wednesday. Cohort B will attend Thursdays, Fridays and every other Wednesday. Secondary students who participate in voluntary at-home learning will follow their class online for the duration of the school day.

In each case, secondary students will follow a block schedule. Following a four-period schedule, they will take one class for a full day for 22 days, write a final exam or assessment, and then move on to the next class for the following 22 days.

Students will have a set time for lunch. Families may begin the school year one way, and change to another. Please notify your principal if you wish to make a change. Families moving students from online learning to in-school learning will be given a designated start date to attend in person. Secondary students will remain in the same cohort for the duration of the school year.

The following two pages are an executive summary of the critical operational areas to ensure a safe, healthy and successful return to school in September. The full Niagara Catholic Return to School Plan follows.



# Operational Protocols and Procedures

*How we're keeping our schools safe for our students, staff and families.*

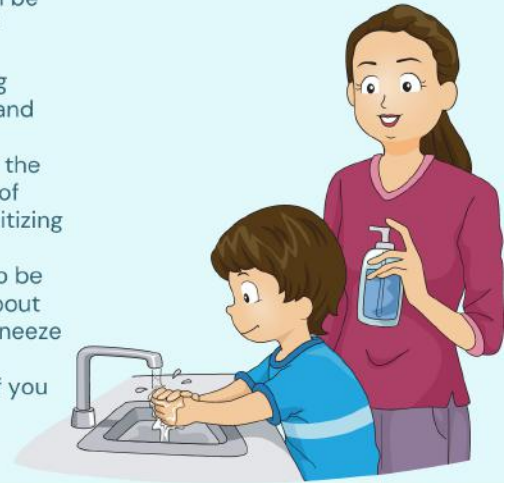
## PPE /Masks/Signage

- Installing plexiglass reception shields as required
- PPE provided to all staff as required
- All staff and students in Grades 4-12 must wear masks indoors. Masks are encouraged for students in K-3
- Exterior signs on front doors of all buildings regarding mask requirements to enter
- Interior signs throughout schools and sites to remind of safety practices
- Directional arrows placed in all schools
- Floor markers to remind of physical distancing
- Cohort assignments on all desks (secondary)



## Personal Hygiene

- Students will be reminded of proper handwashing techniques and regularly reminded of the importance of washing/sanitizing hands often
- They will also be reminded about cough and sneeze etiquette
- Stay home if you are ill



## Transportation

- Niagara Student Transportation Services providing enhanced cleaning schedule for buses
- All drivers and students will wear masks
- Information at [nsts.ca](http://nsts.ca)



## Physical Distancing

Signs will be placed in all schools and school staff to reinforce the importance of physical distancing inside and outside of school



## Classroom Setup and Activities

- Desks will be placed facing forward
- Desks will be placed as far apart as possible given the space in the room
- Individual learning materials for all students
- No Fall co-instructional activities



## Enhanced Cleaning

- Clean high-touch surfaces at least twice daily
- Area rugs removed, cleaned and stored
- Water fountains bagged
- Hydration Stations to be used only to fill water bottles
- Staff rooms, cafeterias not to be used



## Attendance and Absenteeism

- Students will be expected to participate daily, whether they are attending in-person or online
- Attendance will be taken daily for both in-person students and those participating online
- Parents may change their child from online to in-person learning. Key times for re-integration will be provided to families.



My mask protects you.  
Your mask protects me.





# Operational Protocols and Procedures

*How we're keeping our schools safe for our students, staff and families.*

## Program Delivery

- Limit use of shared objects
- Limit class visits to Library Information Centres
- Masses permitted by grade/level in chapel/gym if physical distancing can be maintained
- Schools should not plan field trips and activities requiring group transportation until public health data suggests otherwise



## Nutrition and Cafeterias

- Cafeteria and food service will not be provided in secondary schools until further notice
- We are working with Niagara Nutrition Partners to provide "grab and go" healthy snacks for students



## Alternative Programming

- Alternative sites will continue to operate
- Guidelines for various programs and services will be shared with families in detail



## Mental Health and Well-Being/Student and Staff Illness

- Niagara Catholic will continue to support students and staff with health challenges
- Students and staff who are ill will be required follow protocols in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Niagara Region Public Health



## Special Education

- All students with special education needs will be supported by school staff, in collaboration with our Student Services Department, to meet the accommodations of the IEP
- Only items needed for education will be permitted between home and school. Sensory items will be declared for school use to avoid cross-contamination
- Itinerant Special Education staff will continue to support students throughout the system
- Cleaning protocols will be in place for specialized equipment.



## Child Care, Before and After-School Programs and EarlyOn Centres

- Working with Niagara Region Children's Services to reopen before and after-school programs in schools
- EarlyOn Centres will continue to operate virtually



## Technology and Staffing

- Online learning will take place on the D2L Brightspace platform provided by the Ministry of Education, and accessed through the NCVLE
- Staff will be required to perform self-assessments before entering schools



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Your mask protects me.



# Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

## Personal and Facility

Niagara Catholic will provide the following PPE in our schools and sites prior to the start of the school year:

- Interior floor markings and desk shields
- Exterior footprint markers painted at schools
- Protocol signs placed at entrances to all worksites and outside all rooms
- One-way arrows and up/down staircase arrows installed
- Signs on front doors of all buildings regarding safety requirements to be followed by all who enter a building
- Signs placed on or beside all doors outlining safety practices
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be required when physical distancing is not achievable
- Masks are encouraged for students in Kindergarten through Grade 3
- Students Grade 4 to 12 required to wear masks
- PPE for staff will consist of face masks, gloves, face shields, gowns as required based on a specific job class
- Niagara Region Public Health to provide an Outbreak Protocol. Once received, it will be included in this report



**My mask  
protects you.**  
**Your mask  
protects me.**





# Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is extremely important in stopping the spread of COVID-19, and any airborne illness, in our schools and sites.

To help stop the spread of viruses, the following practices will be followed in our schools:

- Staff/students will follow public health recommendations of washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer when water is not available
- Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms without sinks
- Ongoing reminders for students and staff to practice good sneeze/cough etiquette by coughing or sneezing into their elbow or a tissue
- Students and staff are to wash hands after touching objects in any room or office
- Hand sanitizers will be placed at all entrances to schools, classrooms and sites, and there will be access to sinks and/or hand sanitizer near photocopiers, fridges and microwaves (as they become available)
- Shared items are discouraged. However, staff and students are to wash/sanitize their hands before using any shared item rather than covering up touch points to prevent spreading illness



# Transportation

Niagara Student Transportation Services has put the following safeguards in place to ensure students and drivers are protected while on the bus (also published on NSTS.ca):

- NSTS will open the parent portal on Monday, August 17 at 10:00 a.m., with preliminary transportation arrangements for all eligible students
- Parents/guardians/students must notify NSTS that they intend to use transportation for the 2020-2021 school year in order to receive service. If we do not receive this notification specific to a student, we will remove transportation.
- Parents can provide this notice when completing your re-registration process by updating your intention to opt-in or opt-out of student transportation
- The final date to make address changes at the school and to notify NSTS your intention to use the service is Monday, August 31, 2020 to have transportation effective on the first day of school.
- Final transportation arrangements for the first day of school will be posted in the NSTS parent portal on Wednesday, September 2 by 10:00 a.m.
- Only riders authorized by NSTS are permitted to ride this bus. Bus drivers are not permitted to allow a student not listed on the route manifest to ride the bus. NSTS ensures consistent communication to all stakeholders responsible for student transportation through our secure portals, meaning if you do not see transportation available for your child in the parent portal on Wednesday, September 2, the bus driver also will not have your child listed on the bus route.

## **Kindergarten Transportation and First Ride**

- Kindergarten families, or families without an Ontario Education Number (OEN), will not be able to log-in to the NSTS parent portal. We will email and/or mail letters with temporary PIN numbers for families to use as the OEN log-in within the next week. If you do not receive this communication by Friday, August 21, please call NSTS. After completing authentication questions to verify the caller's identity to match our student record, we will provide your PIN over the phone.
- First Ride will be online this year! We will have First Ride web page available by Monday, August 24, 2020 to help families and students prepare for their first ride on a school bus. Schools may still book a First Ride program, but we will not hold a community event this year.

# Transportation, continued

## Timelines to Make Changes

- This year it will take 7 to 10 days to make a change to your child's transportation. Changes will be implemented each Monday, and will remain consistent for the entire week.
- All information received by NSTS by end of day each Monday, whether it is an address change for pick-up and/or drop-off information we receive through the school or your circumstances change and you decide to opt-in to receive service, will be updated in the parent portal each Wednesday morning by 10:00 a.m. for routes effective for the following week.
- Address changes are made through your school and NSTS automatically downloads these updates from the school daily.

## Requests for Changes

NSTS will not accept requests for bus stop location changes or exceptions to the policy until October 1, 2020 at the earliest.

## Guide to Reopening Ontario's schools for Transportation

NSTS is following the guidance for transportation from the Government of Ontario, and in some situations, is exceeding this guidance. Below please read information from NSTS about bus transportation for this year. More details are available at [nets.ca](https://www.nets.ca).

- NSTS encourages active forms of school travel, and by Monday, August 24 we will have a dedicated web page and resources to support student pedestrian and cycling safety.
- Elementary buses will operate close to capacity. Secondary buses will operate closer to half-capacity. Routes will remain similar to last year and our goal was to reconnect bus drivers and families this year as much as possible.
- The use of face coverings for students in Grades 4 to 12 are required on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are encouraged to wear face coverings on school vehicle.

# Transportation, continued

- NSTS will establish seating plans for every bus run, seating students residing within the same household or the same homeroom together as much as possible. NSTS is scheduling the first seating row of the bus unassigned in our seating plans.
- The bus driver will open select windows daily for air flow and ventilation.
- Bus drivers/monitors will receive a face mask and a face shield, and will be trained on proper use guidelines. Hand sanitizer will be available on every bus for driver and student use.
- NSTS will disinfect buses more frequently. We have updated our school bus rules, calling on students to help us keep our buses clean, and bus hand rails will be disinfected between every school run and seat tops and backs at least twice daily. Bus drivers will be trained on proper disinfecting guidelines.
- NSTS will work with school boards to accommodate students with identified needs.

We understand parents will make the final decision of whether they decide to opt-in or opt-out of using the school bus. To recognize families may change their mind or have their circumstances change where they may decide to change their opt-in or opt-out status, we have created a weekly process to accommodate changes.

## Updated School Bus Rules

Keeping the bus clean is a shared responsibility, and we encourage students to follow these addition to the school bus rules:

- Students in Grades 4 to 12 must wear a face covering on the bus. Face coverings are encouraged for Kindergarten to Grade 3 students to wear on the bus. The bus driver will not have spare face coverings. Students need to arrive at the bus stop with their own mask/face covering.
- Parents/guardians are to maintain physical distance from others at the bus stop, and arrive 5-10 minutes before your scheduled bus stop time.
- Students are encouraged to arrive at the bus stop with clean hands, and if their hands become soiled at the bus stop, to use the hand sanitizer at the top of the stairs after entering the bus.

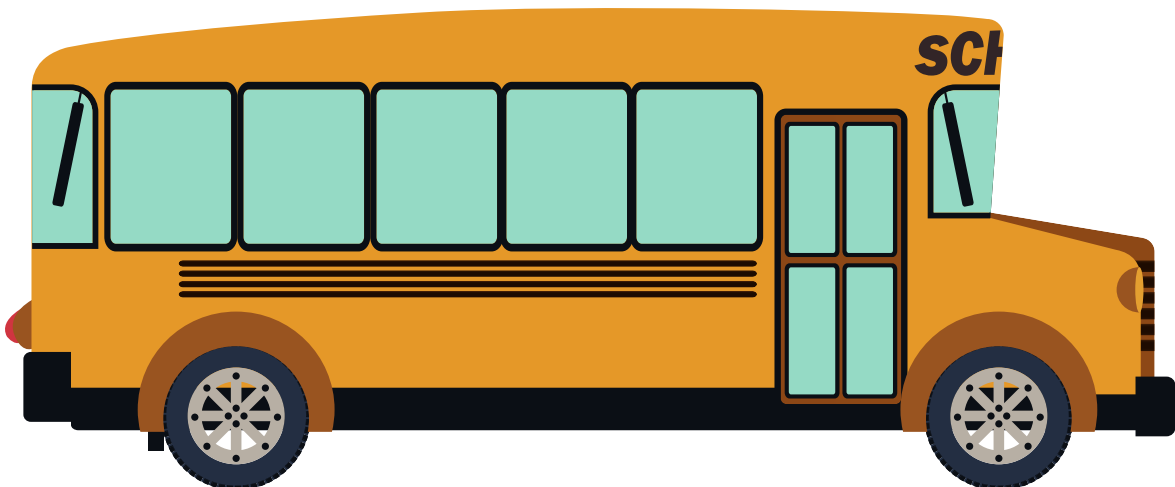
# Transportation, continued

- Students are required to board the bus one at a time, and to only enter the bus when the stairwell is clear.
- Students are encouraged to use the handrail as they enter and leave the bus. The handrail will be disinfected between school runs.
- Students are encouraged to limit their touch points on the bus to keep the bus clean. Seat tops and backs will be disinfected twice daily.
- NSTS is required to implement a seating plan for every bus run, and students are expected to sit in the designated seat as communicated by the bus driver.
- The bus driver will open select windows for air flow. Students must not adjust windows.
- NSTS will be required to share the bus route, seating plan and seating information with Public Health upon request, to complete case contract tracing.

School bus rules and disinfecting protocols will be updated, as we strive to provide the safest bus ride possible for students. Please visit [nsts.ca](https://nsts.ca) on September 3 for final information that will be effective on the first day of school.

## Contacting NSTS

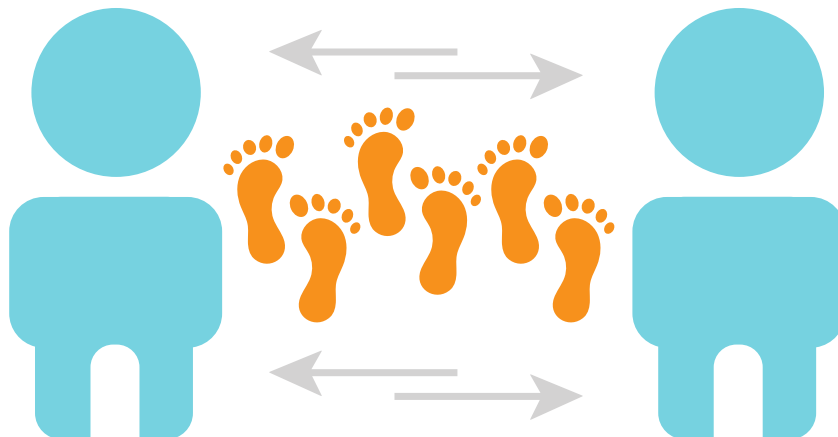
NSTS support team began early this year to answer parent phone calls. This support is being provided remotely. If they cannot answer a question, NSTS has a tracking system for all incoming calls to help NSTS staff respond as quickly as possible. NSTS strives for a 24-hour response time for non-emergency situations, whenever possible, Calls are recorded for quality assurance.



# Physical Distancing

In addition to wearing a mask, physical distancing is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. The following are the physical distancing measures that will be put into place by Niagara Catholic to keep our students, staff and families safe:

- Physical distancing markers placed inside and outside a building
- Interior floor markings and directional arrows to be installed at all schools, CEC and Board facilities, including Alternative Programs, Information Technology Services and Facilities Services
- Exterior footprint markers painted at schools
- Protocol signs placed at entrances to all worksites and exterior to all classrooms/meeting places
- Cohort A and B desk stickers to be provided to secondary schools from CEC
- Elementary: direct and indirect contacts in schools for students should be limited to approximately 50; Secondary: limit indirect and direct student contacts to approximately 100 students in the school per week
- Staff will instruct students/staff throughout the day to maintain 1-2 metres distancing
- All interior doors will be left open and closed if the building is evacuated
- All classroom desks facing the same way forward.
- Entry and exit controls to limit the number of people entering at one time and walking one direction down hallways
- No use of staff rooms, Library Information Centres
- Staff and students eat in classrooms/offices
- No fall athletics/co-instructional activities. Certain (individual) sports may be permitted. Others may be moved from fall to the spring, if approved by Niagara Catholic Athletic Association, if determined to be safe



# Physical Distancing, continued

Contact between occupants of the building to be minimized by:

- Classrooms/offices are set up so that students/staff can maintain the required 1-2m physical distance from other students/staff wherever possible
- Hallway protocols are developed to ensure students/staff remain a safe distance apart while moving throughout the building
- Students bring and leave with materials (no use of lockers)
- Washroom access controlled to ensure physical distancing is maintained
- Reduce areas for students to congregate
- Masks
  - Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces
  - Students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear masks indoors on school property. Students may wear their own non-medical masks, and non-medical masks will also be made available for students
  - Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply
  - Schools may make masks available for students who do not have a mask but require one.
  - Students may wear masks in school colours if they choose
  - A mask that is dirty, damaged in any way, has gaps or doesn't fit well or has been used by another person should not be used
  - Itinerant staff required to wear masks if working with more than one class

Please don't make us ask.  
Wear your mask!



# Classroom Setup and Activities

As much as it is possible to to adapt the layout of classrooms, Niagara Catholic will make every effort to ensure safe physical distancing is maintained in our classrooms. We will do this by:

- Keeping desks in classrooms and marking desks with Cohort A or Cohort B stickers
- Teachers will coordinate distribution/storage of individual learning materials for students
- There will be no activities that involve sharing materials, food or beveragesNo fall athletics or co-curricular activities
- Locker use will be restricted. Students will take any personal belongings home with them every evening
- Washroom access will be monitored by school staff to ensure physical distancing measures are in place

## Attendance and Absenteeism

It is important that students participate in their lessons daily, whether they are learning at school, or participating in voluntary at-home learning. The following guidelines are in place for attendance to ensure student success:

In-person attendance attendance is optional for the 2020-2021 school year

- If not attending in-person, students are expected to attend remotely
- Students participating in remote learning will have attendance taken daily
- Families that wish to reintegrate their child to in-person learning from at-home learning will be given a date of re-entry based on key times set by the Board
- For secondary, principals will establish and assign cohorts of no more than 15 students per course
- Students with Special Education needs as identified by the IPRC/identification process will be a separate cohort
- A teacher will be assigned to each cohort Minimum expectations will be set for students participating remotely

Parents of students not registered for school will be directed to the Niagara Catholic Homeschooling Administrative Operational Procedures and Ministry Policy/Program Memorandum to submit their intention to homeschool their children to the Board. For courses offered through the Independent Learning Centre, parents must have notified the Board of the intent to homeschool. To enroll students with the ILC, parents must submit the enrollment form, along with a letter from the Board, indicating that the secondary student is being homeschooled and excused from attendance at school.



# Maintenance and Cleanliness

Niagara Catholic has always been committed to ensuring that our schools and sites are safe, healthy environments for all who enter. Cleaning will continue to be a priority throughout this school year. Please see our cleaning plan below:

- Clean high-touch surfaces at least twice daily
- Provide ready-access for hand hygiene
- If performing duties where physical distancing is not possible due to the nature of the work, staff are to wear face coverings
- Desks will remain in all classrooms, facing forward. Teachers will assign desks
- Area rugs will be removed, cleaned and stored
- Staff rooms, Library Information Centres and cafeterias will be closed until further notice
- Water fountains will be bagged. Hydration Stations will be used for filling water bottles
- Water flushing will be performed as necessary

## Program Delivery - General

This school year will look very different. To continue to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff, many of the programs and services students are accustomed to may not be feasible this year. The following is a list of the changes families can expect to program delivery this year.

### General

- There will be no activities requiring singing, cheering, loud voices
- Limit use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, drama props, art supplies, toys, games)
- Shared objects to be set aside and cleaned/disinfected between each cohort use
- Remove and store items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected (e.g. plush toys, items absorbent in nature, drama props and costumes, carpets)
- Limit class visits to Library Information Centres - health and safety protocol provided by Coordinator of Health and Safety for loaning and returning of materials
- Masses in Chapels with physical distancing, virtual Masses and assemblies (based on permitted numbers to gather)
- Suspend field trips/school outdoor education trips to Saint Kateri

# Program Delivery - Specific

## Kindergarten

- Plan instructional activities that do not require children to work within close physical proximity of each other
- No use of water and sensory tables/centres
- No activities requiring singing, cheering, use of wind instruments
- Minimize use of shared items; shared items are to be set aside and cleaned/disinfected between each use
- Any materials/toys that are mouthed by a child must be removed, cleaned, and disinfected before being used again
- Instances of close personal contact that violate physical distancing (e.g. handshakes, hugs) should be gently corrected and followed by a reminder to hand wash or sanitize

## Music - Elementary

- No sharing of musical instruments
- No use of wind instruments, recorders
- No activities related to vocal music/choir/band
- In-class learning can focus on string instruments (with appropriate cleaning/disinfecting protocols in place after student use and for use between cohorts),
- Creating using body percussion, use of music program software for curriculum

## Music - Secondary

- No co-curricular activities related to vocal music/choir/band
- No learning activities related to vocal music/choir/playing of musical instruments to take place during in-person class instruction
- Instruments can be assigned to students 1:1.
- Secondary students may be loaned instruments to use at home to start and send electronically recorded videos for assessment virtually through D2L Brightspace
- Students provided with list of home care kit for instrument cleaning/maintenance
- In-class learning focuses on non-performance aspects of curriculum
- Percussion/String/Guitar/Keyboard can occur during class ensuring appropriate cleaning and disinfecting procedures after student use and for use between cohorts
- Return of loaned instruments to be bagged/labelled and set aside for a minimum of seven days (rest period);
- Cleaning and disinfecting of instruments prior to redistribution and use between cohorts

# **Program Delivery - Specific, continued**

## **Co-Op Education**

- Workplace-Employment Agreements to be updated for informed consent
- Placements to be offered virtually, where feasible
- In-person community placements can be arranged in alignment with the direction and recommendations of the local health unit, the direction of the school board, and with the safety and curriculum requirements of the Cooperative Education curriculum
- Electronic signatures accepted
- Update safety training to include COVID-19 precautions/protocols

## **SHSM/Technological Education**

- Comply with regular classroom safety expectations
- Off-site classroom locations will follow secondary schedule and comply with safety expectations
- Students to be transported (from school of origin) in line with transportation expectations
- Students to practice proper hand hygiene before and after equipment use
- Follow equipment cleaning protocol between student use and at the end of the day
- Certifications to be offered virtually where possible
- Certifications in person will be offered by cohort
- Certification service provider to follow established access protocols
- Technology consultant to inform teachers/guidance/Program Chairs of Business/Technology/Principals of certification and delivery method. Teacher to work with employer/student/family to sign off

## **Launch Centre**

- Will follow secondary schedule and comply with safety expectations
- Students to be transported (from school of origin) in line with transportation expectations
- Follow equipment cleaning protocol between student use and at the end of the day
- Students not permitted into Seaway Mall area

# **Program Delivery - Specific, continued**

## **SCWI/Niagara Link**

- Online programming only for enrolled students delivered by Niagara College staff/Niagara Link teacher
- Schools to develop supervision model for enrolled students when attending school in-person
- Liaise with Niagara College staff/Niagara Link teacher regarding programming/attendance

## **Co-Curricular/Sports**

- No fall athletics/co-instructional activities. Certain sports (individual) may be permitted, or may be rescheduled for the spring, if safe and approved by the Niagara Catholic Athletic Association

## **Masses**

- Masses in chapels with physical distancing, virtual Masses and assemblies (based on permitted numbers to gather)

## **Assemblies**

- May be livestreamed

## **Community Service Hours**

- Graduating students will also need to meet the 40-hour community involvement graduation requirement. Virtual hours are permitted

## **Health and Physical Education**

- Whenever possible, address overall expectations of the Active Living and Movement Competence strands outside, for both elementary and applicable secondary Health and Physical Education courses
- Gymnasiums to be used only where physical distancing measures can be followed
- Capacity in change rooms to be monitored and limited
- Teachers to plan physical activities that support physical distancing while also limiting the use of shared equipment
- Shared equipment to be cleaned/disinfected after each use
- Students to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use

# Special Education

All students with special education needs will be supported by our school staff (in collaboration with our Student Support department) in order to meet the modifications and or accommodations of the IEP. Students will be supported in the following ways:

- All vehicle operators will be provided with PPE to maintain safety of all students
- All vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use
- Although students in grades K-3 are not required to wear masks, all students that are able to do so are encouraged to wear a mask
- Students will be assigned seats and seating plans will be kept in order to assist with contact tracing
- All safety routines will be reviewed regularly with students at school and shared with the home in order to create consistency in practice
- PPE and physical distancing protocols and routines will be confirmed and shared at both the home and school to generalize routines and establish consistency
- Special Needs Facilitators and ABA Team will provide school staff with the resources to create Social Stories and prompting techniques in order to assist all students with special education needs to develop understanding of all safety routines
- All schools will establish and communicate safety protocols to parents driving their children to and from school
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to consult with their health care providers regarding the most appropriate back to school plan for their child(ren)
- Students are encouraged to practice wearing masks at home
- Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks for staff and students with sensory or breathing difficulties or any other medical condition or special need that prevents masking will be considered
- All school/board staff that regularly work in close contact with students will be provided with all appropriate PPE
- Where a return to school may not be possible for September, school staff, in consultation with the Student Support Department, will provide remote learning opportunities that are consistent with the goals of the IEP. Students will be supported through both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities during the day

# Special Education, continued

- Training regarding the health and safety protocols/expectations for staff working with students with Special Education needs (when physical distancing is not possible) will be provided. Students with complex Special Education Needs in low-ratio Special Education classes in secondary school will have the option to attend school every day.
- Itinerant Special Education Staff in the Student Support department will continue to support students in school and remotely.
- Only items that are required for health and safety and student learning will be permitted to be shared between home and school.
- Sensory items will be designated for at school use only in order to avoid contamination.
- Cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be followed for specialized equipment essential for student learning and transition.
- Signage/decals will be used throughout the school to assist students follow transition routines.
- Orientation and transition visits to school will be scheduled by school staff in collaboration with parents and in consultation with the Student Support department.
- Transition planning will be developed and implemented collaboratively with parents/guardians to the greatest extent possible.
- All changes made to the learning environment will be considered when reviewing and updating the goals of the IEP.
- The Student Support department will work with community partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated health professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services for both at school and remote delivery where in school delivery is not possible.
- Modifications to the physical setting to facilitate safe arrival, transition, and dismissal of students will be implemented to the greatest extent possible.
- Communication of training of safety guidelines and procedures for staff, students and parents will be shared with the school community.
- Safety protocols established for the use of elevators.
- Train staff on protocol for personal care. If personal care requires toileting training will involve the appropriate use of PPE as safe physical distancing may not be able to be maintained in such circumstances.

# Special Education, continued

- Protocol for responding to student accidents identifying cleaning and sanitation procedures for the area as well as any specialized PPE used
- Eliminate/reduce non-essential movement throughout the school/schools for both school staff, and Board-level teams/departments such as; ABA Team, BRT, SNFs, Speech and Language, Chaplaincy, etc.
- Identify routes/areas and schedules in compliance with guidelines to ensure the safe flow of staff and students throughout the building
- Scheduled times to access designated spaces throughout the school (i.e. sensory rooms) for program and student-specific need
- Safety protocols must be communicated in a manner that respects the various learning modalities of all students
- Designated workspaces identified throughout each school to facilitate the work of system level staff
- An early focus for all staff on the best practices of the Behaviour Management Systems in order to be proactive in meeting the needs of all students
- Review of BMS/SMG Protocols with Special Needs Facilitator, Applied Behaviour Analysis, and Behaviour Resource staff, regarding the possibility of modifications needed due to the use of PPE and the potential for staff/student injury
- Review all Special Consultation reports and Behaviour Support Plans with the appropriate school staff
- Limit travel throughout the school in order to facilitate safe transitioning for students with special education needs

## Health considerations for staff and students

- Establish a protocol for the reporting and tracking of well being of students who may be immunocompromised and medically fragile
- Communication of physical distancing protocols to staff/students and families
- Communication of procedures and protocols for all students done so in age and developmentally appropriate ways
- Special attention and consideration for students who may not be able to understand or communicate their symptoms
- Signage, storyboards, visual schedules for each student, social stories to reinforce safety protocols
- School work location schedule established for Itinerant staff, Occasional Teachers, community partners, Facilities Services staff, Student Support Services and Program and Innovation Departments/Chaplaincy/IT/Contracted Services, e.g.:nurses, to reduce cross-contamination between schools

# Special Education, continued

## Accommodating Student Programming Goals

- Determine scheduling of student use of extra learning spaces throughout the school
- Determine protocols for the cleaning and disinfecting of extra learning spaces in the school
- Review and revise IEP in order to address any changes in programming goals needed in order to accommodate the adaptive program delivery model
- Considering changes in the school environment and classroom space in order to facilitate physical distancing as well as instructional goals
- Deployment and training for all staff and students in the use of physical distancing and PPE (if necessary)
- Eliminate or substitute the off site model for such programs as the gifted program, student co-op, and community engagement opportunities.
- Establish a private secure area (meeting professional college and health and safety requirements) for assessments (Kauffman Testing, Psycho-Educational assessments), and program intervention, therapy, interviews and rehabilitation services (e.g. speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and physical therapy)





# Child Care, Before and After-School Programs and EarlyOn Centres

The Minister of Education has announced that child care centres may open at full capacity as of the first day of school.

Niagara Catholic is working with our child care providers and the Niagara Region Children's Services Department to determine the best way to offer child care to families in our schools. EarlyOn Centres will continue to offer virtual programming until further notice. Families will be notified when full-day and before and after-school child care is available in schools



# Alternative Programming

Niagara Catholic will continue to maintain Alternative Learning Sites for students who are unable to attend regular school. The following information explains the operation of our Alternative Programming Sites for the 2020-2021 School Year.

## **David S. Horne**

- Monitor class size - usually fewer than eight students
- Comply with regular classroom safety expectations
- Thermal temperature to be taken
- Teacher to wear mask

## **Saint Kateri**

- Will follow elementary schedule
- Will comply with classroom safety expectations as outlined

## **Pope Francis**

- Elementary to attend every day
- Exemption applied for secondary to attend every day
- Comply with classroom safety expectations
- Cohort students when student count exceeds 15

## **Young Moms Program - Branscombe**

- Exemption sought to attend every day
- Region staff do not have to wear masks unless they are in close proximity and changing a child
- If there is a case of COVID in the building, the program will be shut down for two weeks and reported to Niagara Region Public Health. The Niagara Catholic teacher would deliver the program remotely

## **Re-engagement Program**

- Review of program delivery expectations at the various locations
- Online programming through Continuing Education and/or NCVLE

# International Students

Niagara Catholic will once again host International Students in our school, pending approval from the Government of Canada. The following is an outline of the steps taken to keep students and staff safe:

- While in their home country, students to be provided with *Niagara Catholic International Student Pre-Departure and Arrival Guide*
- Prior to departure, students to provide Niagara Catholic International Education Office with *International Student Travel and Arrival Protocol* form and *Support for Travellers Self-Isolation Plan*
- Students to quarantine upon arrival for 14 days prior to attending school - students to provide documentation of a negative test for COVID to the International Education Department
- International Education Department will communicate with schools concerning visa students returning from travel and their ability to attend following the quarantine
- Once permitted to attend, will need to follow classroom expectations of all students
- If students travel home, during the semester they will need to self-quarantine upon return

## Technology

### Devices and Connectivity

- Niagara Catholic will continue to provide devices and internet connectivity to students who would otherwise not be able to participate in remote learning
- Students will use the D2L Brightspace platform for learning, access through the Niagara Catholic Virtual Learning Environment (NCVLE)
- Teachers will ensure all students know how to use the platform
- Students will participate in synchronous and asynchronous learning
- There will be expectations as to the timetable for teachers to engage in synchronous/asynchronous learning with students
- Students will be provided with a daily schedule of subjects/courses according to instructional day for frequent, live contact with a teacher and expectations for synchronous learning

# Staffing

Niagara Catholic is committed to providing a safe, healthy workplace for our staff as well as students. Below is an overview of expectations of our staff

- The principal/supervisor is responsible for the worksite, and the safety of all people in attendance
- On-site social gatherings are strictly prohibited
- Where feasible, all staff shall allow at least one parking space between other vehicles
- Access will be permitted through the main entrance to the school/worksite, as designated by the principal/supervisor
- All staff will sanitize their hands when entering and exiting the building. Hand sanitizer and paper towels to cover any touch points will be available for this purpose as provided by Facilities Services
- Staff are not permitted to remove any furniture (e.g. chairs) from the building
- All teachers must conduct a self-assessment before entering any site. Access to the site will only be granted to those who have passed the self-assessment with no COVID-19 symptoms
- Classroom teachers will be with their classes
- Itinerant teachers (French, Itinerant Arts, ESL) will join classes with appropriate safety requirements



# Faith Formation and Spiritual Care

The impact of Covid-19 has been felt in many ways, and as people of faith we endured the challenge of Church closures and an inability to receive the Sacraments. In times of trial such as these, a great surge or decline in ones faith life is very common, as we question why this happened and the impact that has been felt around the world.

- Recognizing the importance of faith during these challenging times, the Niagara Catholic Chaplaincy Team continued to provide spiritual care during the school closure, and will remain a strong support for students and staff this school year
- The Niagara Catholic Chaplaincy Team will continue to support elementary and secondary schools by providing chaplaincy services and faith formation opportunities for students and staff
- The Board Chaplaincy Leader will liaise with the Diocese of St. Catharines to ensure liturgical celebrations and reception of the Sacraments are available at all schools, as permitted based on gathering numbers
- Elementary Chaplaincy Leaders will facilitate modified classroom retreats to continue to support the faith development of students through digital learning platforms as well as in class facilitation with appropriate safety requirements
- The implementation of the 2020-2021 Board Theological Theme, *Seeds of Faith: Mission*, will provide resources to support our shared mission to spread the Good News of Christ, amidst, and especially during, the global pandemic



# Mental Health and Well-Being

The experience of living through a global pandemic has left many struggling with mental health issues. For some, existing mental health challenges were compounded by being separated from family and friends, laid off from jobs or isolated. Others experienced mental health challenges for the first time due to the pandemic. Niagara Catholic's Mental Health and Well-Being Team supported students following the school closure in March, and will continue to support students in the coming school year. Below is a list of how Niagara Catholic will support students:

- The Niagara Catholic Mental Health and Well-Being Team will implement the *Draft Supporting a Mentally Healthy Return to School Restart Plan Supporting a Mentally Healthy Return to School-Reflection Tool* to provide mental health services and supports for students.
- School Mental Health-Ontario will also provide a *Mental Health Tool Kit* to school boards to support students transitioning back to school.
- Administrators and staff will find CASEL's re-entry guidelines, *Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning, as you Prepare to Reopen and Renew Your School Community* at [casel.org](http://casel.org)
- The Niagara Catholic Mental Health and Well-Being Team will provide professional learning for administrators/staff on how to differentiate between stress and anxiety. The Mental Health Lead, in collaboration with community partners, will provide professional learning for administrators and staff on complex grief
- The Niagara Catholic Mental Health and Well-Being Team will provide professional learning sessions to educators and staff on the topics of worry/anxiety, and how to work with students with anxiety using Board platforms and virtual services
- The Mental Health Lead will update the *Niagara Catholic Mental Health and Addictions Strategy 2020-2021 and Action Plan*
- Seven Niagara Catholic school-based social workers will address the mental health needs of students through the Niagara Catholic referral process
- Pathstone school-based social workers, community addictions school-based workers, and Mental Health and Addictions Nurses will provide school-based services.
- Child and Youth Workers will continue to support elementary and secondary schools, along with Alternative programs, with evidence-based programming

# Student and Staff Illness

- Students who show signs or complain of feeling unwell will be isolated in a designated area of the school and the parent or guardian notified immediately to pick their child up
- Staff attending to the child will be required to wear PPE in the form of mask and shield at a minimum and expected to follow hygiene practices once the child is released. Direction will be given to parents to contact their family doctor prior to returning
- Staff who feel unwell must notify their supervisor immediately and distance themselves from others.
- Supervisors will recommend that staff see their family physician before returning



Designed by the Communications Department