



January 8, 2021

To: All schools and school boards within the geographical area served by Algoma Public Health

RE: Instructions and recommendations from the Medical Officer of Health on the restart of in-person learning in January 2021

I am writing to all school boards within the geographic area served by APH, to thank you for your tremendous work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and to seek your ongoing support in protecting Algoma communities.

As announced on January 7, 2021, the Province of Ontario has made the decision to continue the provincewide shutdown until at least January 23, 2020. The province has also announced that in-person learning will resume for northern Ontario elementary and secondary students on January 11, 2021.

COVID-19 activity is not the same throughout the north, nor throughout Algoma. In local areas where there has been an increase in COVID-19 activity, there is a vital need to keep strong preventive measures in place. At the same time, we must work together to minimize impacts on student learning, to support the school community, and to support families and essential worker parents, who depend on in-person learning, and whose essential work is critical to the pandemic response.

Under Ontario Regulations [82/20](#) Section 2(2) (or as current), of the *Reopening Ontario Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c.17*, as Acting Medical Officer of Health, I am issuing the following instructions and recommendations to school boards within the geographical area served by Algoma Public Health, and to persons responsible for operating associated elementary and high schools, effective immediately.

School boards and persons responsible for operating elementary and high schools are **instructed** to take the following actions:

1. For high schools in Sault Ste. Marie, delay the provision of in-person teaching or instructions to students in grades 9-12 until at least January 25.
 - a) Exception: In-person instruction to students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning and who wish to attend in-person instruction may continue.

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School boards and persons responsible for operating elementary and high schools are furthermore **strongly recommended** to take the following actions:

2. In schools across Algoma, continue to provide both online and in-person learning options to all elementary students, which allows for parental choice, and balances the need to minimize risk of exposure while supporting families with essential work, health or other needs so that their young students can learn in-person.
3. In schools across Algoma, encourage parents and students to delay return to in-person learning in January 2021, in the following circumstances:
 - a) The student and/or their household has recently travelled out-of-district; OR
 - b) The student and/or their household has recently received out-of-district visitors
Delay would be for a 14-day period starting from the date of return to Algoma, or from the last point of contact with an out-of-district visitor.
4. In schools across Algoma, continue to maintain rigorous preventive measures in all in-person settings, including:
 - a) Remaining home if ill, even with mild symptoms, and seeking COVID-19 testing as appropriate;
 - b) Daily symptom screening;
 - c) Student masking, including strong recommendation of masking in kindergarten to grade 3 where tolerated;
 - d) Strict staff adherence to PPE, including the use of medical masks and eye protection at all times;
 - e) Strict staff adherence to physical distancing and masking/PPE during breaks, if other coworkers are present.

APH is committed to supporting students, families, and the school community engage in learning, while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 spread.

We look forward to continuing to work with our school partners. Thank you for your ongoing work during the pandemic response.

Jennifer Loo
Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO

