

KFL&A Public Health Media Release

For immediate release

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Statement of Support from KFL&A Public Health's Medical Officer of Health Regarding the Return to School

KFL&A Counties—The Medical Officer of Health from Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Public Health has released a statement regarding the return to learning when COVID-19 public health measures are lifted across the province.

To all students, school families, education, and school transportation staff:

As of March 21, 2022, the provincial government is lifting the remaining public health and workplace safety measures. **This means that masks are no longer universally required for students and staff in schools, or on student transportation.** There will still be instances where staff and students are required to wear masks for a limited amount of time during the school day including:

- Upon return from [international travel](#)
- When exposed to a case of COVID-19 in the community or their household
 - Wear a mask, avoid activities where mask removal is necessary (such as dining out, high contact sports)
- When taking public transportation (i.e., a city bus) to and from school
- When attending school-based immunization clinics

We are now in a different place in the pandemic, thanks to high rates of COVID-19 immunization in the region. We have high levels of vaccination in students aged 12 to 18 years, along with increased uptake of third dose boosters, and rising levels of vaccination in students aged 5 to 11 years of age. Over the past 2 years, younger age groups have continued to be at lower risk for severe disease and clinical symptoms of COVID-19.

We will continue to monitor the trends for COVID-19 in our community. At present we note that despite evidence to suggest ongoing transmission in the community, we are seeing significant decrease in disease severity at the population level. This is what enables us as the community to move forward safely and remain aligned with the provincial measures.

We remain committed to working with local school communities to help students stay in the classroom and to do so as safely as possible. Please remember that there will be students and staff that may choose to continue to wear masks at times, or consistently, for the remainder of the school year, based on their own personal risk assessment. We encourage and remind everyone to remain kind, considerate, and respectful toward everyone who wears a mask and everyone who does not.

Our common goal is to keep students in class for in person learning and to promote overall mental, social, and physical health. The months ahead will require continued vigilance, to reduce unnecessary disruptions to families' everyday lives. We must all work together to keep the risk as low as possible and continue to follow the public health measures in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 in schools, including:

- Getting vaccinated, and boosted, if eligible
- Screening for symptoms before attending school and staying home with when sick or with new or worsening symptoms of illness
- Self monitoring and isolating with symptoms of COVID-19
- Using Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT)
- Continuing with frequent hand hygiene
- Reporting your students or staff illness related absence to your school administrator
- Wearing a mask if or when required to do so

An important reminder if you have travelled over the March Break, or plan to travel in the near future.

Under [current federal travel requirements](#), upon return from international travel, individuals must:

- wear a mask at all times when in public spaces, including schools,
- maintain a list of all close contacts for your first 14 days in Canada, and
- monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Together with our school community partners, we look forward to welcoming students back from March break. We know that there may be questions and concerns in response to changes by the province in managing COVID-19, and you can be reassured that we will continue to work with school partners to support a safe and healthy return to school.

Sincerely,

Dr. Piotr Oglaza
Medical Officer of Health
KFL&A Public Health

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For more information contact: