



SCCS UPDATE

Return-to-School Plan and Details

Dear SCCS parents and community;

We hope that you and your families have been enjoying the summer break. We know, however, that many of you are anxious to know about plans for your children for the upcoming school year. Since the last update July 3, we have had a Task Force working hard to develop our return-to-school plan. These efforts have been complicated by the reality that our COVID 19 conditions, and health and government guidance, are constantly changing. Nevertheless, we now have a plan in place that is supported by both the Minister of Education and the Middlesex-London Health Unit, and will always place the health and safety of your children at the forefront, every day.

Stated briefly: **our plan is to provide a full-time return to in-person schooling on September 8, with students grouped into cohorts by grade, with safety measures in place.** Of course, we will need to remain flexible and ready to adapt if conditions or government regulations change. For the present, however, we are excited to be able to welcome our students back to in-person schooling.

The remainder of this update provides further details about our plan.

General Context

Our Task Force has considered the three general scenarios put forward by the Ontario government (See “Ontario Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year” at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year>) as possibilities for schooling that public schools were asked to prepare for:

- Return to “normal” school
- Remote learning with school closed
- A hybrid or “cohort” model.

Although we all would love to return to fully “normal” schooling, current uncertainties caused by Covid-19 requires that we be prepared for each of these possibilities. The task force has considered each option and are prepared to adjust quickly based on recommendations from the government and public health. We have focused our planning efforts on the third option, and more specifically on a “cohort” model instead of the hybrid. We have done so for these main reasons:

- We believe that we can readily pivot back to “normal” school or to remote learning models depending on conditions, but the cohort model requires more extensive planning.
- Most medical experts advise that younger (elementary-age) children are at relatively low risk of contracting or getting seriously ill from Covid-19, and that children are best served by a return to in-person schooling with appropriate precautions. See, for example, recommendations from Sick Kids Hospital pediatricians at: [cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sickkids-experts-recommendations-1.5667023](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/sickkids-experts-recommendations-1.5667023) . You can find the full updated report here: [sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-School-Reopening-SickKids.pdf](https://www.sickkids.ca/PDFs/About-SickKids/81407-COVID19-Recommendations-for-School-Reopening-SickKids.pdf)
- We believe that we can successfully and safely implement a cohort model, within Ontario government and Public Health guidance, and with a modest additional cost.
- We believe that in-person teaching/learning is more effective and is preferred by most of our students, families, and teachers.

Guiding Principles

At the outset of our Task Force work, we adopted the following guidelines for our planning:

- Put safety of students and staff first, including following regulations and guidance of the Ontario government and Public Health officers.
- Provide continuity of learning in core subject areas for each student to realize SCCS's mission.
- Provide highly interpersonal education that addresses the needs of each student as whole persons, to the best of our ability.
- If regulations require that we limit in-school attendance, we will prioritize students with special needs, students of essential workers, etc.
- We will be collaborative, creative, and innovative in developing solutions to meet the needs of our students. (E.g. staff working in teams, pbl, outdoor ed, etc.)
- We will be “economical” in the broadest sense. i.e. we will do our utmost to work within our staff capability and our financial/material resources to meet the learning needs of our students.

Plan Outline

We will provide in-person learning at school 5 days per week, with each student placed in cohorts by grade.

In the “cohort” model, the objective is to have the cohort “stick together” with minimal contact with those who are NOT in one’s cohort. This means:

- Within the cohort, we do not need to enforce social distancing, etc.
- Masks (non-medical) will be required for students in Grades 4-8, as well as for staff, when indoors or on the bus.
- The Ministry allows for some rotational teaching. Each teacher will be responsible for the majority of instruction of all subjects for their class.
- Some rotation will occur as necessary for teacher prep times and to accommodate their working schedule. Proper handwashing and mask protocols will be followed as teachers move in and out of the spaces.
- We will not be able to offer Band or Choir, although rhythm and percussion instruments can still be used.
- To eliminate large gatherings, all-school events like chapels and assemblies will be shifted to video.

Safety Measures

We will have a variety of safety measures in place that we will need to enforce strictly. Without detailing all of those measures, some of them include:

- Active pre-screening to be done at home:
 - Parents will be provided with a health checklist to apply daily to ensure that they do not send children to school if they are ill or showing Covid-related symptoms. Staff will be required to follow the same protocol.
 - Immediate isolation of students or staff if they show symptoms of Covid. Our Bridge room will function as our isolation space if needed. Parents will be contacted immediately to pick their child up from school.
 - If a student or staff member exhibits any Covid-related symptoms, they must be tested. They may return to the school once they receive a negative test result and their symptoms have cleared.

- Policies and procedures for positive covid cases will be developed in consultation with the public health authority and shared with families at a later date.
- At school:
 - Staggered entry and exit of students (e.g. buses arrive in 2-minute intervals), with cohorts socially distanced as much as possible. Recesses also will be staggered by cohort (grade).
 - **Elementary students in Grades 4-8 are required to wear a mask, provided by the family.** Cloth masks are recommended, as they are washable and reusable. Disposable masks will be on hand for children who forgot theirs. Face shields will also be available to staff who wish to use one.
 - Signs and floor labels throughout the school to remind students of social distancing and traffic flow.
 - Regular hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer (each classroom will have a supply) for each cohort.
 - Regular disinfecting of high-touch areas of the school throughout the day by custodial staff.
 - Teachers and bus drivers will be provided with a check-list and with equipment to do a disinfecting wipe-down of their bus or classroom at the end of every day.
 - Minimize shared items within the classroom. Each student should have their “kit” of school supplies (we will be providing parents with an extended school supply list, and the school will provide a “kit container” for students).
 - Minimize sharing of toys to items that can be wiped down with sanitizer regularly. Cloth items like stuffies, etc., should be removed from use and/or kept home.

Bussing

We will offer our regular bussing services, with safety precautions in place as much as possible:

- Bus schedules will be slightly adapted (by 2 minutes) to accommodate staggered arrivals and departures.
- Loading and unloading of buses at school to be supervised by staff to ensure distancing of cohorts.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided on each bus.

- Students in Grades 4-8 must wear a mask on the bus.
- Students will be assigned seats with siblings, or will be assigned to their own seat if they have no siblings on the bus. If there are not enough seats, students will be placed with members of their classroom cohort to minimize the number of contacts.
- Bus drivers will be provided with a check-list and with equipment to do a disinfecting wipe-down of their bus at the end of every ride.

Urgent Survey and Upcoming Virtual Town Hall Meeting

To help us in our planning of class cohorts and busing, we need to hear from you regarding how comfortable you are with sending your children to SCCS as we enter the new school year and how we can best support you and your family. We will be sending a link for a brief survey to each family on our list. Please complete the survey ASAP, and no later than August 8, 2020, to allow us to complete our planning. Thank-you!

On the evening of August 13, 2020, Kyle Sandford, the new principal, will host a virtual town hall meeting for general questions around this return-to-school plan for those who wish to participate. More details will follow at a later date.

We pray, and trust, that these measures will allow us to return to regular schooling safely for the benefit of our students and their families. Please be assured that we will be carefully following government and Public Health office guidance throughout the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, and will be ready to adapt quickly as needed. Also, please keep in mind that our cohort plan is a contingent plan that we will implement if it is determined, by mid-August, that we cannot go back to “normal” schooling and if we are not required to stay closed completely.

Blessings;

Hubert and Kyle