

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021**

Public Session: 5:30 p.m. (Virtual Meeting)

## **AGENDA**

### **A. CALL TO ORDER**

### **B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

### **C. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### **D. NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Vaccination for Staff**  
[L. Courtois](#)
- 2. De-Streaming Update**  
[H. McGregor](#)
- 3. Student Masks**  
[L. Smith/K. Pisek](#)
- 4. Outdoor Education**  
[S. Hancox](#)

### **E. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **F. ADJOURNMENT**

**G. NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.**

October 19, 2021

## **VACCINATION DISCLOSURE PROTOCOL REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

Human Resources has fully implemented the instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ministry of Education's Immunization Disclosure Policy for the Education Sector. The deadline for implementation was Monday, September 27, 2021. Due to privacy legislation, the Superintendent of Human Resources and three Human Resources Managers are administering and ensuring compliance of the policy. One additional confidential staff member has been hired, on a temporary basis, to assist with tracking and compliance.

Last Spring, the DSBN was first in the province to provide vaccines to staff, through Niagara Region Public Health. This has contributed to a significantly high number of fully vaccinated staff in the DSBN. The following statistics illustrate fully vaccinated staff.

- 93% of all Staff
- 95% of Teachers
- 91% of Educational Workers

These are among the highest rates across the province.

### **SUMMARY**

We have successfully implemented all components of the Ministry of Education's Immunization Disclosure Policy which includes the following:

- 5158 DSBN staff have attested their vaccination status online, through a secure link on the DSBN Staff Portal.
  - Individuals who have not attested are either on a leave of absence or are replacement staff not currently working in our schools.
  - All non-DSBN staff in our buildings are fully vaccinated, this includes coaches, student teachers and third-party service providers.
- All DSBN staff who are not fully vaccinated are completing the required antigen testing twice a week. This also includes any casual staff such as supply teachers in our schools.

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- Human Resources ensures compliance of rapid antigen testing each Monday and Thursday. Staff are required to submit their negative or positive result through a link in the DSBN Staff Portal. Anyone who is non-compliant is transitioned to an unpaid leave of absence.
- Due to privacy, administrators and supervisors do not know the vaccination status of their staff. Therefore, the distribution of the Rapid Antigen tests was completed by Facilities and testing kits were placed in a secure and private location in each school and building. Kits will be refreshed throughout the year.
- Almost all staff who are not fully vaccinated have completed the mandatory educational program which consists of a Ministry video that is available on the DSBN Staff Portal.
- DSBN regularly reports aggregated vaccination statistics to the Ministry and posts them on the DSBN external website under Vaccination Disclosure.

### PLANNING

Although the Ministry did not release the Policy until a week before school started, the Senior Team began preparing for this policy in early August. DSBN Staff were informed of the policy on Tuesday, August 24<sup>th</sup> and the attestation link went live a week later on August 31, with a deadline of Tuesday, September 7.

The Ministry did not deliver any rapid antigen test kits to the Board until Thursday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, after school had already started. However, the DSBN secured their own test kits and delivered them on the Friday before school started for all staff to test before September 7<sup>th</sup>.

A second testing option was provided to staff and they were able to test through local pharmacies on the long weekend and be reimbursed for the cost. The Ministry extended that opportunity for the month of September.

### VACCINATION STATUS

The Board received an inquiry regarding the possibility of reorganizing staff to different grades based on their vaccination status. The Board is not able to reorganize teaching assignments for the following reasons.

1. The Board follows all Terms and Conditions of Collective Agreements and reorganization is not consistent with the Terms and Conditions of ETFO and CUPE Collective Agreements.
2. Teachers are qualified by grade division and therefore may not be qualified to teach in a different division.
3. The Board is required to protect the privacy of unvaccinated staff and an assignment move could breach that privacy.

# PROGRAM AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

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## RECOMMENDATION

“That the DSBN Vaccination Disclosure Protocol be received.”

## RESOURCES

Instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health

<https://www.ehlaw.ca/chief-medical-officer-of-health-issues-covid-19-vaccination-policy-instructions-for-select-sectors/>

Ministry of Educations’ Immunization Disclosure Policy for the Education Sector: School Board  
Implementation Resource Guide

<https://mfidsab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/School-Board-Implementation-Resource-Updated-September-1-202117279.pdf>

Submitted by Lora Courtois, Superintendent of Human Resources



# **DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA (DSBN)**

## **VACCINATION DISCLOSURE PROTOCOL**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to outline DSBN's expectations regarding COVID-19 vaccination disclosure of staff, volunteers, third-party contractors, student practitioners, frequent visitors and other professionals who provide in-person services in our schools and who have direct contact with staff or students.

All eligible individuals are strongly encouraged to receive a COVID-19 vaccine unless there is a medical reason to not receive a vaccine.

### **BACKGROUND**

DSBN recognizes the importance of vaccination as a key element to help keep school settings safe. This COVID-19 vaccination disclosure protocol aims to protect the school board's population.

COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It may be characterized by fever, cough, shortness of breath, and several other symptoms. Asymptomatic infection is also possible. The risk of severe disease increases with age but is not limited to the elderly and is elevated in those with underlying medical conditions.

### **APPLICATION OF THE PROTOCOL**

This vaccination disclosure protocol applies to the following groups:

- All DSBN employees, including daily and long-term occasional teachers and casual education workers;
- School Board Trustees
- Student Transportation Drivers; and

The following individuals if attending the school premises frequently and have direct contact with staff or students:

- Students on educational placement, including professional services students on a placement or work-integrated learning visit (e.g. teacher candidate practicums, nurse, psychologist, behavioural therapist, speech-language pathologist, etc.).
- Volunteers;
- Those who provide professional services to children at school; and
- Visitors, including third-party contractors.

## **VACCINATION ATTESTATION**

All DSBN employees are required to complete a Vaccination Attestation through the DSBN Staff Portal. Individuals must indicate their vaccination status as either fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, or not vaccinated. There is also an opportunity to submit medical and religious accommodations requests.

## **TESTING REQUIREMENTS**

DSBN staff who are not fully vaccinated, including those with approved medical or religious reasons, will be required to complete regular COVID-19 rapid antigen testing twice a week and demonstrate a negative or positive result through a link in the DSBN Staff Portal. Testing kits are supplied to all staff.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

Any individual who is not fully vaccinated, without a documented medical reason, must also complete a Ministry approved educational program video through the DSBN Staff Portal. The video encompasses the following learning components:

- How COVID-19 vaccines work;
- Vaccine safety related to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines;
- Benefits of vaccination against COVID-19; and
- Possible side effects of COVID-19 vaccination.

## **SUPPORT FOR VACCINATION**

Staff that are non-compliant with DSBN's protocol are held out of service without pay. This is in accordance with DSBN directives and collective agreements, as well as the Ministry of Education's Immunization Disclosure Policy for the Education Sector.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

DSBN is required, pursuant to the Chief Medical Officer of Health's direction, to report statistical information to the Ministry of Education. All statistical information will be provided in depersonalized aggregate form on a monthly basis. It is also shared on the DSBN website under Vaccination Disclosure.

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## **DE-STREAMING REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

Earlier this year, DSBN trustees supported the decision that DSBN would de-stream all grade 9 compulsory credits starting in September 2021. This means that students in grade 9 across DSBN are taking academic programming in English, French, Geography and Science in addition to de-streamed Math.

Ontario is the last province in Canada to implement de-streaming. This equity and anti-racism-based decision will keep all post-secondary education choices and options open by providing students equal opportunities as research shows that streaming disproportionately affects students who are racialized or marginalized. Implementing this change across DSBN will help remove post-secondary barriers and provide more time for students to experience secondary school before making decisions about their future. Transition to secondary school is an important step in a student's education, and we want to set them up for success as they move from Grade 8 to Grade 9.

### **SUMMARY**

#### **DSBN Implementation**

##### **Spring 2021**

Professional development was provided to all secondary staff (administrators, teachers, program leaders, SERTs, guidance, student success, consultants, instructional coaches and ESL team members) about the rationale behind de-streaming.

##### **Summer 2021**

Writing teams were formed for English, French, Geography and Science. These teams developed materials for their colleagues that included lessons, activities, and assessments that are framed around the guiding principles of equity, inclusion and accessibility for all students.

##### **Fall 2021**

On the September Professional Development day, teachers attended virtual sessions where equity, inclusion and creating caring conditions were the basis to roll out the de-streaming curriculum resources developed over the summer. Throughout the fall the consultants and instructional coaches have been providing support in classrooms. We will also be providing additional support including school-based learning teams and more teacher-led sessions at the November PD day.

Submitted by Helen McGregor, Superintendent of Curriculum and Student Achievement (9-12)

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## **DSBN STUDENT MASK EXEMPTION PROCESS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

The guidance to school reopening document released by the Ministry of Education states that “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”.

This year, there are approximately 38,000 students attending in-person learning within the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN). Of those, approximately 200 students with special education needs are unable to wear a mask. An additional 200 students have a modified plan with accommodations, not a full mask exemption. For these students, frequent masking breaks are provided, and goals are set to increase masking tolerance. There are also a small number of exemption requests that administrators are revisiting to better understand the medical reason the request has been made.

### **GUIDANCE ON MASK EXEMPTIONS**

The Ministry of Education requires students in Grades 1 – 12 to wear a mask. Within this requirement, the Ministry of Education allows for reasonable exemptions. An example of a reasonable exemption would be a student with sensory or breathing difficulties.

The Ministry of Education does not state in any of their guidance that medical documentation is required to request or grant an exemption.

This aligns with the Niagara Region’s Face Covering By-law that states:

- “Not everyone can wear a mask and many disabilities are invisible. People don't have to prove their condition or disability.”
- “Be kind and respectful to people who can't wear a mask. We're in this together and this is one more way we can help to protect each other.”

### **DSBN MASK EXEMPTION PROCESS**

The Ministry of Education Return to School Guidance document states that *“if your child has a medical condition that limits their ability to wear a mask regularly throughout the day, please contact your school principal to collaborate on a modified plan.”* This document is posted on the DSBN webpage and shared with families by school administrators.

In all mask exemption requests, administrators speak with families and review the importance of mask wearing. They also reiterate that wearing masks is mandated by the Ministry for both staff and students. Through these conversations, families have shared either medical information, medical plans of care or specifics outlined in the student’s IEP. All are acceptable reasons to grant a mask exemption. In most instances, the administrator and parents agree on a modified plan with accommodations.

When parents attest that the request for a mask exemption is for medical reasons, it is taken to be honest and truthful. If necessary, an administrator, in consultation with their Superintendent may ask [dsbn.org](https://dsbn.org)



parents to provide further evidence to support their request for an exemption. It is the intention of school administrators to work collaboratively with families to understand any medical or negative impacts that wearing a mask may have on learning and psychosocial development and to find ways to keep students safe while at school.

This is an evolving process which has seen an increase in students moving toward accommodated masking while reducing full exemptions. The intent is to remove barriers and have as many students as possible access in person learning. This approach has been successful in keeping students in our schools.

## **ENHANCED HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES**

In situations where there are unmasked students in a classroom, safety measures are enhanced. These enhanced measures include additional physical distancing, additional PPE worn by staff, and differentiated instructional strategies are explained to parents.

Parents who have concerns about their child being in a classroom with an unmasked student(s) should contact the school administrator and collaborate on a solution.

Finally, when Niagara Region Public Health determines that there has been an exposure in a classroom, mask use is not a consideration in their investigation when determining high risk contacts. Vaccination status is the only variable that allows high risk contacts to attend school and are not required to self isolate.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

“That the DSBN Student Mask Exemption Process be received.”

Submitted by,  
Leanne Smith, Superintendent of Education, Secondary  
Kelly Pisek, Superintendent of Education, Elementary

## **ADDENDUM**

Mask Exemption Request form



## STUDENT EXEMPTION OF NON-MEDICAL OR CLOTH MASKS

This form is to be used whenever a student has a medical condition that precludes them from following the requirement to wear a mask indoors, on transportation and when not able to maintain distance outside.

### Steps for Requesting a Mask Exemption for Medical Purposes:

- Parent or guardian to complete Student Exemption of Non-Medical or Cloth Masks form and return to the school Administrator or designate.
- The Administrator or designate will confirm with the parent or guardian if the request was granted or denied. An Administrator may ask parents/guardians to provide further evidence to support their request for the exemption.

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_

My child has medical needs that prohibit the:

☐ Continuous use of a non-medical or cloth mask.

My child has medical needs that requires:

☐ Accommodations and periodic removal of a non-medical or cloth mask when medical conditions worsen.

Parent/Guardian Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Administrators Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Approved

☐ Denied

Comment:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **OUTDOOR EDUCATION REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

The DSBN is proud to provide outdoor education programs for kindergarten through grade 12 students at the two outdoor education campuses: The DSBN Living Campus and the DSBN Adventure Campus. Last year, after working with Niagara Region Public Health and modifying the outdoor education programs, the campuses were able to welcome over 3500 students throughout the school year. This year the campus staff are looking forward to offering increased outdoor education programming to even more students.

In addition to the outdoor education programs provided at the Campuses, schools are being provided with resources that give staff and students the opportunity to learn within their own outdoor environments. The following summary highlights some of the outdoor education programs offered this fall at the Outdoor Campuses as well as outdoor learning resources provided to schools.

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Outdoor Learning at the Campuses**

Regular programming for K – 12 students at the Living and Adventure Campus include: Hiking, Shelter Building, Predator Prey, Geocaching, Outdoor Fitness, Team Building and Leadership. Below are some enhanced programs that have been offered this fall.

**Specialist High Skills Major Programming** - The school year started with SHSM Team Building and Leadership certification for secondary students at both Campuses. SHSM DIG IT students are currently working at the Living Campus in the native and pollinator gardens and are beginning to create a willow tunnel and hut for the WildZone. As well, SHSM Regional Construction students began the year at the Adventure Campus, learning new skills in construction techniques as they prepare for their upcoming home build. This September they completed the final section of the boardwalk at the Adventure Campus and have now transitioned to the Living Campus to construct a shed and boardwalk.

**Co-op Student Placements** - Once again both Outdoor Campuses provide opportunities for Co-op placements for DSBN students and currently have students completing work terms at each campus.

**TrailBlazer Team Building** - Throughout the month of October, the TrailBlazer Team Building program is running for grade 7 & 8 students at both Campuses. The intent of this program is to develop leadership skills for the intermediate students which can be brought back to enhance school culture.

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**Animation in Nature** – For the 7<sup>th</sup> year, The Ontario Arts Council has approved a grant between the DSBN and artist Mike Cope which provides funding and support for the Animation in Nature program.

The day begins in a natural outdoor learning environment, where students observe the movement of the world around them. Whether it be a crawling insect, forest animals and/or the leaves and pedals of the plants and trees, the students capture their observations. Under Mike's professional cartoonist guidance, students then bring their drawings to life.

## **Outdoor Learning at Schools**

All Elementary schools received an Outdoor Learning Starter Kit and DSBN Guide to Outdoor Learning in September to inspire and support DSBN educators to take learning outdoors as often as possible.

The sample programs in the Guide provide hands-on activities and easy entry points for those getting started on bringing their learning outdoors.

Programs selected for this guide teach student's to be present and observant in nature. They encourage students to connect with the natural world by emphasizing local species, their habitats, and a sense of place for students.

## **Outdoor Learning Professional Development Opportunities**

In order to provide continued support for educators, three on-line PD workshops are being offered with outdoor learning expert Megan Zeni. Using the Outdoor Education Grant, we are offering these workshops free of charge and accessible to all DSBN K – 8 staff who are looking for inspiration and practical ideas for taking their student's learning outside.

Workshops include Transition to Teaching Outdoors, Playful Cross-Curricular Inquiry Outdoors, and Outdoor Play with Loose Parts. The first workshop took place on October 8<sup>th</sup> with 107 DSBN educators enrolled.

As outdoor learning continues to be encouraged for all students from K – 12, the Outdoor Education webpage will include secondary learning resources as well as additional outdoor learning programs and resources.

Submitted by Simon Hancox, Superintendent of Education