

October 5, 2021

## **New Rapid Testing Program (COVID-19)**

Students and Families,

Given the current situation of the pandemic, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has collaborated with Public Health on the development of a new rapid testing program for schools to minimize disruption to learning due to outbreaks of COVID-19.

Starting October 12, unvaccinated students identified as close contacts with a confirmed case will receive rapid test boxes and instructions. Test boxes will be distributed to parents directly by the school or district.

Students will be required to self-isolate for a period of at least 24 hours, during which time they are to take the first two tests. Unless otherwise advised by Public Health, students will be able to return to school as soon as they have two negative tests with no symptoms.

Students who do not participate in the program will be required to self-isolate and follow Public Health guidelines. Also, they will not take part in blended or online learning, but will be provided with homework or other projects.

Students and school staff, regardless of their vaccination status, who are identified as close contacts and who receive a positive result of COVID-19 or who present with **ONE** symptom, must stay at home and contact Public Health to receive a PCR test.

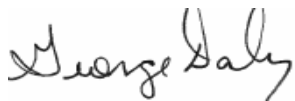
It was also announced today that additional measures will be implemented for communities in zones 1, 4 and the northern portion of zone 3. All schools in these regions will remain open. However, additional measures will be in place. Sports and extracurricular activities will be paused for children under the age of 12 who cannot be vaccinated. For students aged 12 and over, extracurricular activities may continue for those who are vaccinated, but no spectators will be allowed during sports or school activities (indoors or outdoors) in these areas. In accordance with public health travel guidelines, there will be no travel between these areas.

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Since the beginning of the pandemic, partners across government have worked together to modify and adapt plans based on new research, experiences and evolving circumstances and will continue to do so throughout the 2021-22 school year.

Families need to be prepared for the fact that outbreak management decisions will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis. This means that students will likely have to continue distance learning at certain times in the coming year, in accordance with public health guidelines or for operational reasons.

We are aware of the upheavals that these new measures can cause. We must continue to work together to enable our students to continue learning in healthy and safe schools.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Daley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "G".

George Daley  
Deputy Minister