

Schools set to reopen in September: Ministry

Elementary and high school students can expect to be back in the classrooms this fall, according to the Ministry of Education.

On Thursday, Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Education Minister Stephen Lecce outlined their plan for the safe re-opening of schools for in-class instruction come September.

This fall, elementary schools will re-open across Ontario with in-class instruction five days a week.

Secondary schools with lower risk will reopen with a normal daily schedule, five days a week, while most secondary schools will start the school year in an adapted model of part-time attendance with class cohorts of up to 15 students alternating between attending in-person and online. Students from Grade 4-12 and school staff will be required to wear masks.

"It's been hard on families to balance work and child care, while kids have been separated from friends and other kids their own age. We want to get our kids back to school, but it has to be done safely," said Premier Ford. "That's why we've worked with our public health experts, Ontario Health and the medical experts at SickKids to develop a plan that ensures students can return to the classroom five days a week in a way that protects the health and safety of our children, teachers, and school staff."

Parents, they said, will still have the option to enrol their kids in remote education programs which respects their fundamental role in making the final determination of whether they feel safe with their children returning to school.

To make this happen, the Province outlined \$60 million to be spent on medical and cloth masks for students and staff, with school boards directed to provide masks for students who can't afford face coverings. A further \$30 million will be spent on teachers and staffing to support supervision and up to \$50 million will be spent to hire 500 more school-focused nurses in public health units to provide rapid response support to schools and school boards to facilitate health and preventative measures including screening, testing, and mitigation strategies.

By Brock Weir