



**Northwestern  
Health Unit**

[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)

**August 31, 2020**

Dear Parents,

On Thursday, July 30, 2020, the provincial government announced the September reopening of Ontario schools. Return to school is the subject of much discussion and Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) is working closely with our partners in education so that students and school staff stay healthy.

The decision for children to attend in-school or online is difficult and personal, and there is no one correct answer. Northwestern Health Unit will continue to provide up-to-date public health information and analysis to help guide you in your decisions. If there are indicators of increased COVID-19 circulating in the local community or in Ontario, there will be provincial and/or local discussions to change course as needed. Local school boards and NWHU will do our best to keep you informed as these changes are considered.

Keeping community transmission low is key to keeping schools open and safe for everyone. All community members must continue practising prevention measures – washing our hands, keeping 2-metres distance from people not in our social circle, wearing a mask or face covering when in enclosed public spaces, and staying home when ill and seeking testing. It will make all the difference for our schools' safety and our children's health.

Measures in place to protect children and educators in school will include:

- screening to ensure children and staff showing signs of illness do not attend
- prompt isolation of ill children and staff
- physical distancing as much as possible
- enhanced cleaning
- cohorting (keeping groups together) to the extent possible
- use of face coverings for most students (grades 4 and up) and staff

If a case of COVID-19 is identified in your school, NWHU will work with the school to ensure that appropriate measures are taken as quickly as possible and close contacts will receive follow up calls directly from the health unit. [We have a Q&A that explains more about this process](#). If a case is identified in your school, we appreciate your commitment to the protection of individual privacy and ask that you not share any information that has potential to identify the individual or school name and location.

For more information and resources about returning to school, visit our website at [www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19](http://www.nwhu.on.ca/covid19). If you can't find the information you are looking for on our website, you can email [healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca).

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and celebrate parents, guardians, educators, school staff, and the broader community who have diligently practised prevention measures over the course of the pandemic. Back-to-school matters so much because we care so much. I strongly urge us all to be kind, patient, and respectful of one another as we navigate these next steps.

Together, we will learn, together we will adapt, and together we will be proud of our collective efforts for a safe and successful return to school.

Thank you,



Dr. Kit Young-Hoon

Medical Officer of Health  
Northwestern Health Unit  
210 First Street North  
Kenora, ON P9N 2K4  
(807) 468-3147  
[www.nwhu.on.ca](http://www.nwhu.on.ca)