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Dear friends,

With less than a week to go before start of school on September 9th, staff, students, parents and caregivers are all getting ready for the start of a new school year. This is often a time of mixed emotions for many – feelings of excitement and nervousness are common September sentiments for all of us! Given the uncertainty around Covid-19, and the long periods of virtual learning last year, such feelings may be more pronounced this year. I also imagine those of you with ties to Afghanistan are facing even greater emotional challenges right now. Ward 11 has a strong tradition of opening our arms to those who need support, and I know there has already been an outpouring of eagerness to help Afghans through organizations such as TNO in Thorncliffe Park. Please know that TDSB staff are also here to help with any challenges families are facing. We have a variety of links to resources and information about mental health and well-being supports that can be found online through [this link](#). Families can also always reach out to their local principals and vice-principals should they need support, as these administrators are able to connect you to those who can assist. Our system is stronger when all are supported!

With the start of school around the corner, there is a lot of information below along with some announcements, a recap of recent advocacy work, and some updates about return to school protocols, including extra-curriculars. So grab a beverage of choice, find a comfy spot and read on!

LOCAL VACCINATION OPPORTUNITY @ OWEN PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDCARE

As you know, Toronto Public Health (TPH) and the Ministry of Health are encouraging all eligible students and their family members to get vaccinated. This is important not only to protect those who are vaccinated, but also to protect those who are not yet eligible, or who cannot be vaccinated. With all students born after 2009 not yet eligible, this includes a significant number of our youngest learners, making it crucial to ensure high levels of vaccination among the rest of the population.

In addition, students who are vaccinated and exposed as a close contact to someone who is covid positive are not required to quarantine. However, those who are not vaccinated will be required to self-isolate for ten days even if they test negative. So in an effort to ensure students can stay in school as much as possible, it is important students get vaccinated if they are eligible.

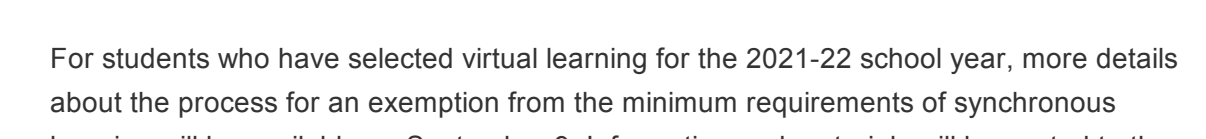
With all of these things in mind, TPH is working with the TDSB to provide easy vaccination opportunities for students and their families. There are many opportunities throughout the city and in Ward 11, but if you are located in the northern part of the ward, you may be interested in a clinic we are hoping to be able to run early next week at Owen Public School through the Owen Community Living Centre (OCLC). If you or someone you know has not yet been vaccinated and would like to grab a spot at this local clinic, please contact the Executive Director of OCLC, Cheryl Oliver-Linton, by [email](#) right away!

ADVOCACY WORK: Mandatory Vaccinations for Education Staff, Trustees and Visitors

As mentioned in my last newsletter, on August 17, 2021, the province announced that they would be bringing forward a vaccination policy for education staff that encouraged vaccination but allowed for regular testing for those choosing not to be vaccinated. During his press conference, Chief Medical Officer of Ontario, Dr. Moore, indicated that the government was setting a baseline for entities like school boards and hospitals, but acknowledged that risks of covid may be different in certain geographical areas or situations, and institutions may need to adjust their policies to reflect the populations they serve.

At our Board meeting on August 25th (just one week later), it was clear the TDSB needed stronger requirements than what was being put forth by the province. During the course of that week, the City of Toronto, TTC, Toronto Police Service, and several Toronto hospitals announced that they would be instituting **mandatory** vaccine policies. The details we had so far from the province regarding education staff vaccination requirements were clearly not in line with the policies being put into place in our municipality, and Toronto was seeing an incremental rise in covid cases. As Toronto has historically seen higher rates of Covid-19 than many other areas of the province throughout this pandemic, and given that educators are working with large numbers of students who are not yet eligible for vaccination, I brought forward a motion, seconded by Trustee James Li, asking staff to develop a **mandatory vaccination procedure for all TDSB education staff, trustees, and visitors**. This motion also had a second part that called on our chair to write a letter to the local and provincial medical officers of health, as well as to the Minister of Education, asking that they add the Covid-19 vaccine to the schedule of vaccines needed to attend school for all eligible students.

I am pleased to say this motion passed unanimously. As part of this process, all staff have already been asked to disclose their vaccination status and upload proof of vaccination to the TDSB by September 7th. Trustees will be updated on the development of this new procedure on Wednesday, Sept. 8th at the Governance and Policy Committee meeting. To read a copy of the resolution on mandatory vaccinations, please click [here](#) (news summary [here](#)).



We know families are receiving many emails from their local schools and the TDSB, but with the start of school around the corner, there really is a significant amount of information that is regularly updated and revised based on current advice from Toronto Public Health and we want to make sure everyone is in the know!

For the most up to date information on [health and safety measures](#), [mental health and well-being resources](#), transportation, as well as [frequently asked questions and answers](#), please refer to [www.tdsb.on.ca/school-year-2021-22](#). This webpage will continuously be updated with relevant information and resources to help support you and your family.

Below are some excerpts from the website outlining the most recent information to help families and students prepare for school.

Daily Health Screening

Before coming to school each day, all students must conduct an active [student health screening self-assessment](#). This is the most up-to-date screening tool from Toronto Public Health and has key changes from last year's tool, including:

- A shortened list of symptoms that are most commonly associated with COVID-19
- Consideration for immunization status
- Revised isolation period protocols
- Revised international travel protocols
- Consideration for rapid or home-based self-testing kits

If, based on the answers, you are clear to come to school, you must either complete the [TDSB Health Pass](#) (paper) or the TDSB Daily Health Screening app, to enter the school.

Mask Wearing and Daily Checklists

A reminder that all students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 must wear masks indoors. Students are not required to wear masks outdoors during recess, lunch or outdoor learning. Parents/guardians and visitors must wear masks when outdoors on TDSB property as per the [TDSB Mask Procedure](#).

To help remind families and students of health and safety measures in place and how to prepare for school each day, please review the [Daily Checklist for Elementary](#) and [Daily Checklist for High School](#).

Updates to Practices and Protocols

Staff continue to review the guidance from the Ministry of Education and Toronto Public Health to develop specific operational plans for TDSB schools. Overall, the TDSB is taking a cautious approach to reopening and we are constantly evaluating practices and processes with the hope that we can ease up on restrictions with support from Toronto Public Health.

Specific guidelines, practices and protocols for [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) are available on the [TDSB Return to School web section](#). A sample of recent updates include:

Extra-curricular Activities (elementary): Extra-curricular activities may gradually and responsibly return in the fall. Elementary students may participate in a maximum of virtual extra-curricular offerings, a maximum of one indoor extra-curricular activity with appropriate masking and physical distancing and outdoor activities with appropriate physical distancing. This number may increase when it is safe to do so and procedures are well established. There will be a phased approach to Community Use of Schools.

Extra-curricular Activities (secondary): Extra-curricular activities may gradually and responsibly return in the fall. Secondary students may participate in a maximum of two indoor-in-person activities in the fall, outdoor activities with appropriate physical distancing, and any number virtually. This number may increase when it is safe to do so and procedures are well established.

Music: Vocal music will be allowed indoors with masks and outdoors without masks. Physical distancing will be required and cohorts maintained. Wind/Brass instrument playing is to be paused for face-to-face instruction both inside and outside. Further information will be provided regarding a gradual approach to reintroducing wind/brass instruments, with health and safety guidance.

Exemptions from Synchronous Learning

For students who have selected virtual learning for the 2021-22 school year, more details about the process for an exemption from the minimum requirements of synchronous learning will be available on September 9. Information and materials will be posted to the website in the [2021-22 School Year section](#) under Virtual Learning.

Complete Your School Forms Online!

Many TDSB school forms can be completed online beginning September 9. It is easy, simple and secure, will help streamline the process of a number of standard forms, and will save paper and resources.

Watch for an email from TDSB Online Form (noreply@tdsb.on.ca), which will arrive after your child's first day of school. You can then visit the secure site to complete and submit your child's school forms (e.g. medical information, media release form, etc.). [Learn more](#).

Some reminders about general back-to-school procedures:

Secure Access Systems

A reminder to parents/guardians that TDSB has secure access systems installed at all of our main entries. This means that the outside doors of our schools remain locked and the buzzer system must be used to gain entrance. This system is one of many tools we use to ensure our schools provide a safe and welcoming environment for all. Establishing a single point of entry also aligns with the new health and safety processes we have in place as part of the safe reopening of schools.

Safe Arrival Program

Student well-being and safety are top priorities at our schools. One important measure we take are our Safe Arrival Program, which helps to ensure students have arrived at school safely and when expected.

If your child is going to be late or absent for any reason, it is important that you contact the office immediately and report the reason for the absence.

At the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) we have an automated call-out system. If your child is late or absent, without informing the school ahead of time, the call-out system will attempt to contact you.

The system call-out will work as follows:

Parents/guardians identified in TDSB's Student Information Systems, who have access to student records, and emergency contact with priority 1 or 2 will receive a call.

When you receive the call, you are required to listen to the entire message and follow the prompts accordingly. You will be asked if you are aware or unaware of your child's absence.

If unaware, you will be asked to call the school immediately.

If you are aware of the absence, you will be asked to enter the reason for your child's absence. The following options will be provided for you:

- Illness
- Doctor Appointment
- Dentist Appointment
- Family Matter
- Weather
- Other

At the end of the message, you will have to press 2 to confirm you received the message. If you do not confirm receipt, you will receive a call on your mobile phone.

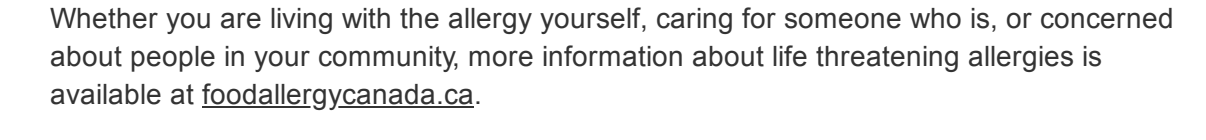
If there is no response from a Priority 1 contact, this same process will be followed for Priority 2 contacts. If there is no contact with either Priority 1 or Priority 2, this entire process will be repeated 3 times in 10 minute intervals.

In the evening, all parents/guardians of students who were late that day will receive a call informing them of their child's tardiness.

With this in mind, it is important that your contact information on file at the office is current and up-to-date. Please let the office know immediately if your contact information changes at any time throughout the school year.

We recognize that regular attendance is essential to the safety, academic success, and well-being of all students. Thank you for your continued cooperation to keep your child safe and accounted for.

For more information please visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Caring-Safe-Schools/Safe-Arrival-Program](#).



Back to School Supporting Transitions and Re-Engagement

The start of a new school year is always filled with anticipation, but with this return, TDSB recognizes especially the anxiety, fear and uncertainty that comes with returning to learning. On Wednesday, September 1, Board staff organized a *Let's Connect session* about some areas we can help support students with coming back to school, including routines, separation anxiety, and the social and emotional challenges of this new school year.

If you missed the session, you can watch the recording online (or watch it again!) [here](#).



Ways To Get Vaccinated

Red & white or no health card? Register using telephone #

City clinics <https://covid-19.toronto.ca/book-vaccine/>
1-888-999-6488
Or call: 1-888-999-6488
(TTY: 1-866-787-0007)

Hospital clinics www.vaccineto.ca
Or call: 1-888-385-1910

Visit <https://covid-19.toronto.ca/book-vaccine/> to find a pharmacy
Or call your local pharmacy / website

Mobile & pop-up clinics
Host organizations will promote clinics directly to the target community



Interactive map available online: toronto.ca/covid19/vaccineto

GET YOUR SHOT!

Vaccines provide the best protection against COVID-19 and variants. The sooner you get both of your shots, the better for all.

Toronto's data is updated twice per week on Tuesdays and Fridays by 9:30am, except on statutory holidays. As of August 30:

- 83.2% of 12+ with at least one shot (which is 73.7% of all Torontonians);
- 77.0% off 12+ fully vaccinated (68.0% of all Torontonians)

Among youth 12-17 years old:

- 82% with at least one shot.
- 72% fully vaccinated

More recent details are available on the City's [Vaccine Data web page](#). With the Delta variant circulating widely, epidemiologists are indicating we need to see a higher percentage of vaccinations in order to avoid huge spikes in cases in the fourth wave, so let's go Toronto, this is "our shot"!

Vaccine Hunters Canada now has vaccine finding information by region / PHU, including DAILY POP-UPS, WALK-INS and APPOINTMENT options - and the information is updated nightly - please click [vaccinehunters.ca/dly](#).

If the clinic early next week at Owen Public School (mentioned above) is not convenient for you, please check out the many options available in the coming days:

East Toronto Clinics: from September 3 to 12 (and beyond), there will be several pop-up vaccine clinics in East Toronto. Open to anyone age 12 and older in any "M" postal code for both 1st & 2nd doses. Walk-ins often welcome.

Click for [Mobile and Pop-Up Vaccination Clinics in East Toronto](#), as listed by Michael Garron Hospital/East Toronto Health Network.

Thorncliffe Park Community Hub (45 Overlea Blvd) don has clinics, but there are also dates at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute and Don Mills Collegiate Institute.

TDSB: The TDSB COVID-19 Vaccines page also has information about daily pop-up clinics in TDSB schools and links to Vaccine Hunters and other resources. Please visit the [TDSB Covid-19 Vaccines page](#).

In addition, click for [other clinics sponsored by Toronto Public Health](#).

Michael Garron Hospital / TEHN COVID-19 Test Centre for children & Families

Exciting news!

We know a lot of families have been asking for greater access to family-friendly Covid-testing and medical care for Covid-19. The staff at Michael Garron Hospital / Toronto East Health Network are now accepting appointments for their newly opened Paediatric ED COVID-19 Assessment Zone!

This new centre offers a family-friendly space for #COVID19 testing and expedited paediatric ED assessments for symptomatic children and families. Learn more: at tehn.ca/covid19/covid-19-assessment-centre.

Road Safety

It's back to school time and we would like to remind drivers to slow down in school zones.

In recent years, TDSB staff has been working closely with the City of Toronto's Transportation Services, Toronto Public Health and other community partners to improve road safety for children and youth. In 2017, the TDSB launched its Traffic Safety Program (TSP) which helps schools identify travel issues and develop workable solutions. The TSP program aligns with the City of Toronto's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan, which seeks to reduce the number of traffic-related deaths and serious injuries on Toronto's roads.

Together, we can keep school zones safe! To learn more about road safety, please visit: [www.tdsb.on.ca/Road-Safety](#).

Pedestrian Safety Tips

Children under ten should be accompanied by adults or older children when crossing the street. At this age, their judgment and perceptual skills are still immature, yet they often eagerly try to cross streets on their own in order to demonstrate some independence. Learn more here: bit.ly/2ETZM0S.

Teach your children the rules of the road - start when they're young. Think of it as gradually training your children about safety until all the connections are in place. By the time your child reaches age ten, and can act independently, the road safety rules will be second nature.

Teach children to look left and right across the street. Teach them to stop (before stepping onto the road), look left, right and left again, and listen for traffic before stepping into the street. Teach children to wait until the street is clear and to keep looking until they have crossed the street. They should also look the driver in the eye before crossing.

Teach children to recognize pedestrian crossing signals but not rely on them. Before crossing, children should also be sure the traffic has stopped. Remind them to continue across if the light changes to "Don't Walk" while they are in the crosswalk.

Teach children to be extra alert when crossing at a corner with no traffic lights.

Teach your children to stop at driveways, alleys and areas without curbs and to never run out onto the street.

Teach children about the dangers of crossing the street between parked cars or when not at a corner. Children should cross only at corners and pedestrian crosswalks, not diagonally or between parked cars.

Teach children to respect the role of the crossing guard and to understand his/her signals.

Teach children that whenever possible they should walk on the sidewalk. In areas without sidewalks, teach children to walk as far away from the road as possible, facing approaching traffic (when there is no choice but to walk on the road).

Teach children that playing games at railway crossings or around trains can be deadly. Teach children that the only way to cross railway tracks is to use designated railway crossings.

Follow the same rules that you want your child to follow. You may want to cut across the street in the middle of the block, but you want your child to learn to cross at the intersection. Be a good role model.

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Anaphylaxis - Taking the Necessary Precautions

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that can be life threatening. This medical condition can cause a severe reaction to specific foods or other materials, and can result in death within minutes. Although foods such as peanuts, milk, eggs, and sesame seeds are the most common cause of anaphylaxis, insect stings, medicine, or latex can also cause a reaction. In recent years, anaphylaxis has increased dramatically among students. The TDSB, in partnership with Toronto Public Health, is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and staff.

As required by Sabrina's Law, the TDSB has established policies and procedures to prevent and manage anaphylactic reactions and to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents in classrooms and common school areas.

Although this may or may not affect your child's class directly, we want to raise awareness about this life-threatening condition. Students who have severe allergies to such food substances are exposed to a severe health risk when such products are consumed in their environment or shared with them. As prevention is the best approach, we ask that you speak with your child about not sharing their snacks or lunches with other students and please do not send any snacks or lunches with your child that contain peanuts.

If your child has health problems of any kind, please inform your child's teacher or office staff immediately so that the necessary health protection steps may be taken and to ensure everyone's co-operation for a safe learning environment.

Whether you are living with the allergy yourself, caring for someone who is, or concerned about people in your community, more information about life threatening allergies is available at foodallergy.ca.

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

The first day of classes for students is THURSDAY, September 9th.

The last day of class for elementary students is June 30, 2022.

The last day of class for secondary students is June 29, 2022.

Days of Significance Calendar

There are no classes for students on the dates listed below:

PA Days 2021-2022

PA Days	September	November	January	February	June
Elementary	2,3,8	19	14	18	3
Secondary	2,3,8	19		2,18	30
CUPE and Pssp school-based staff	3,7,8		Professional Development days during this period are the same as other employee groups.		

2021-2022 School Year Calendar
First day of school

September 9

There are no classes for students on the dates listed below:

PA Days & Holidays	Date
Board-wide PA Day	September 2, 2021 *CUPE and Pssp school-based staff replace September 2 with September 7 Professional Development Day
Board-wide PA Day	September 3, 2021
Board-wide PA Day	September 8, 2021
Labour Day	September 6, 2021
Thanksgiving	October 11, 2021
Board-wide PA Day	November 19, 2021
Winter Break	December 20, 2021 – December 31, 2021
Elementary PA Day	January 14, 2022
Secondary PA Day	February 2, 2022
Board-wide PA Day	February 18, 2022
Family Day	February 21, 2022
March Break	March 14 - 18, 2022
Good Friday	April 15, 2022
Easter Monday	April 18, 2022
Victoria Day	May 23, 2022
Elementary School PA Day	June 3, 2022
Secondary School PA Day	June 30, 2022

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions, comments or concerns. And as we enter the final days of summer break, I want to wish everyone a happy and healthy start to the 2020-2021 school year, whether it be in person or virtual! To those celebrating Rosh Hashanah next week, may I also extend my best wishes for a happy, healthy and sweet New Year!

Warm regards,
Rachel

Rachel Chernos Lin, Ward 11 TDSB Trustee, Don Valley West
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Over the summer, or at any time, if you notice anything at a school that concerns you, please call the TDSB Security Call Centre (416) 395-4620 and the Toronto Police - non-emergencies can be reported by calling 416-808-2222.

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