



ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
Lighting the Way ~ Rejoicing in Our Journey

Pandemic Preparedness Plan

Introduction

A flu pandemic occurs when a novel virus which is virulent and easily transmitted infects humans. The world typically experiences three pandemics per century. The 20th century saw the Spanish flu (1918), the Asian Flu (1967) and the Hong Kong flu (1974); although, it should be noted that not all pandemic influenza outbreaks result in wide-spread serious illness. However, when serious illness occurs, the Board is advised by all levels of government to consider the following:

- the possibility that large numbers of students and staff may be absent at some point during the course of the pandemic
- there could be two distinct waves of illness 3-9 months apart

In the development of its pandemic plan, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board has:

- worked in partnership with the Lambton Kent District School Board and the Medical Officers of Health for Sarnia-Lambton and Chatham-Kent to coordinate interagency planning
- established a preparedness planning committee chaired by the Director of Education

Strategic considerations

- We are not doctors. We must rely on the advice and direction of provincial public health officials in the event of a pandemic. Decisions about closing schools **for health reasons** must be made by public health officials. Decisions regarding the closure of schools due to safety issues, such as insufficient staff, will be made by St. Clair Catholic.
- It is important to note that St. Clair Catholic spans two municipal jurisdictions: Sarnia-Lambton and Chatham-Kent, with separate, autonomous public health units. It will be especially important to co-ordinate with both Medical Officers of Health to ensure consistent messaging through both ends of the district.
- It is vital to recognize that nothing is more important to parents than the well-being of their children. Parents will not hesitate to keep their children home from school if they perceive a possible threat to their children's health.

Pandemic Operations Committee

In the event of a pandemic, **which results in wide-spread serious illness**, a special Pandemic Operations Committee will be formed. Membership of the Pandemic Operations Committee shall consist of:

- Director of Education
- Associate Director of Education
- Superintendents of Education
- Chief Information Officer
- Manager of Facility Services
- Manager of Transportation Services
- Coordinator of Human Resource Services
- Supervisor of Communications and Community Relations
- Representative(s) of CPCO

As ad hoc members

- Presidents/Designates of OECTA-Elementary, OECTA-Secondary, OECTA-Occasional, CUPE, APSSP

Role of the Pandemic Operations Committee

1. To act as an emergency resource and recommend courses of action to the Director of Education.
2. To monitor and make recommendations on the overall operation of the system on a daily basis.
3. To make a clear and complete assessment of situations that may arise in the district.
4. To make recommendations regarding communications, including news releases.

Operational Mode

1. The committee will meet at the call of the Director of Education to receive information updates, such as student and staff absenteeism, public information updates, Facility Services updates, local/national media updates.
2. The Committee will make assessments of situations and will develop a series of recommendations for the Director of Education.
3. In the event of an emergency situation, Principals will contact their Superintendent of Education, as usual. However, Superintendents must ensure they consult with the Director of Education before taking any significant action.

Emergency Procedures:

In the event of a pandemic it is the intention of the St. Clair Catholic District School Board to keep schools open whenever and wherever possible. However, in the event of serious, widespread illness, disruptions in normal events and activities may occur. In certain cases, events/activities may be suspended. Following is a list of emergency procedures, which the Pandemic Operations Committee may consider.

1. Access to Schools – Protocols will be developed to limit and control access to school buildings, as needed.
2. After Hours School Permits – Existing/new permits for school facility use will be cancelled/not issued.
3. Assemblies – All special events, including school Masses and student assemblies, will be cancelled.
4. Board Meetings – Board meetings be held as scheduled and more frequently if necessary. Meetings may be held electronically.
5. Cafeterias – Cafeterias in secondary schools will be closed. Displaced staff of contractors may be reassigned to provide alternate services, such as custodial or security.
6. Centrally Assigned Teaching Staff – All centrally assigned teaching staff, including principals, coordinators, consultants and itinerants, may be deployed to schools in the event a pandemic is declared.
7. Closure – Facility Services will develop procedures for the orderly closure and reopening of schools and ancillary buildings. Building security measures will be considered.
8. Community Use of Schools – After hours activity/access to schools will be cancelled.
9. Courier – The courier will operate, with the possibility of enhanced procedures to restrict the spread of flu virus.
10. Compassionate Care Team – The Compassionate Care Team will not be deployed in the usual manner; however, alternate protocols will be developed.
11. Critical Services – The pandemic plan will identify critical/essential business functions. Staff members who are essential to maintain business services will be provided with the technology to work remotely, wherever possible. A back-up plan to ensure on-going service delivery will be considered.
12. Curriculum Resources – Curriculum resources, other than resources which are currently available for the delivery of curriculum through the Board's website, will only be developed as circumstances dictate, after the declaration of an outbreak.
13. Custodial – A contingency plan will be developed which may include cleaning of facilities outside school hours. Cross training of other job classifications to provide custodial services may be required.

14. Daycares – Daycare centres will continue to operate, as long as the school building remains open.
15. Essential Maintenance Services – Facilities Services will develop and implement contingency plans to ensure adequate resources to maintain schools in the event of a pandemic.
16. Extracurricular Activities – All extracurricular activities will be cancelled.
17. Field Trips/Excursions – There will be a moratorium on field trips/excursions.
18. Food Programs – Pizza days and other school based food programs will be cancelled. Cafeterias in secondary schools will be closed.
19. Garbage Collection – The normal process for garbage collection will be maintained.
20. Home Instruction – Home instruction will be cancelled.
21. Information Services – Information Services will develop and implement contingency plans to ensure adequate resources for communication in the event of a pandemic.
22. Instruction/Evaluation/Reporting – Where possible, the regular instructional program and those activities related to instruction, evaluation and reporting will continue.
23. Maintenance – The normal procedure shall continue, i.e. emergency calls will be directed to Maintenance Services with a follow-up to the Facilities Manager as soon as possible. Maintenance items, which are not of an emergency nature, should be submitted by work order through Megamations in the normal manner. Board staff and outside contractors will be used for all types of emergency maintenance. Routine maintenance may be suspended.
24. Meetings – Whenever possible, meetings that take administrators or staff out of school will be either cancelled or held by teleconference.
25. Occasional Teachers – The Board will develop a protocol in co-operation with the Lambton Kent District School Board to limit the exposure of occasional teachers.
26. Physical Activity – Within schools, all activities which could potentially spread infection will cease, including sports, dance, drama, band, etc.
27. Professional Development Activities – All professional development activities and conferences will be cancelled.
28. School Councils – Principals will have a plan for on-going communication with the Chair of their School Council. School council meetings at schools and Board Advisory Council meetings at the Catholic Education Centre will be cancelled.
29. Screening – Teachers will screen students for possible exposure to flu. Site supervisors will screen staff for exposure. Students and staff who exhibit symptoms of flu will not be permitted to attend school, as directed by the Medical Officer of Health.
30. Security of Facilities – While schools are open, security of facilities will continue in accordance with current procedures. In the event that schools are closed, additional security patrols will be scheduled for all affected buildings.

31. Student Transportation –Subject to daily review. Where possible, buses will maintain regular schedules while schools remain open.
32. Supplies Orders –The normal process for order and delivery of supplies will be maintained.
33. Unions and Associations – The Board will solicit the input and cooperation of its union and association groups, and will offer the presidents of each group ad-hoc positions on the Pandemic Operations Committee.
34. Volunteers – During a pandemic, volunteers will not be permitted in the school.
35. Working from Home – Wherever feasible, central office staff will be directed to work from home.

Communications

It is recognized that communications to all stakeholders and among all health partners will play a vital role in the event of a pandemic. The objective of a communications plan will be to ensure that stakeholders are informed and confident that the St. Clair Catholic District School Board is well-prepared for pandemic illness and is responding accordingly.

Key messages

- The St. Clair Catholic District School Board is well prepared for a pandemic. Our plan is completely open to staff, parents, students and the community for their information and feedback.
- During a pandemic, St. Clair Catholic will follow the advice and guidance of provincial and local public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation.
- Our priority during a pandemic is to keep schools open whenever and wherever it is safe to do so. However, non-essential services, functions and events may be cancelled to limit the spread of the virus and to focus on providing the most necessary services to our community.

This will be accomplished through:

Communicating with staff

- Provide principals with regular updates released by the local health units.
- Provide all staff associations with updates released by the local health units.
- Post updates to the website.

Communicating with parents

- Communicate with parents by informing them of information from the local health units.

- When necessary, remind parents of essential services that will continue in schools and those that will be cancelled.
- Emphasize that, if they are well, students are expected to come to school unless public health authorities or the board close schools.
- Emphasize key message that students who are ill should remain at home.
- When necessary, direct parents to check website or listen to local radio stations to learn information about any bus cancellations.
- When necessary, explain that field trips, excursions, pizza days and other food programs may be cancelled and let them know they will receive specific information from their school about refunds/rescheduling, etc.
- Use website as main information source for parents and the community about the status of schools.
- When necessary, provide schools with standard signage—"School is open" or "School is closed" to be posted on the school exterior each day to help communicate with parents.
- When necessary, provide schools with voicemail scripts to use on their school answering machine to provide parents and staff with the information about the status of their school.

Communicating with community organizations and media

- In the event of cancellations, post information on the website.
- Prepare updates for media as required. Schools will be closed to media, except where special permission is given by the Director of Education or the Supervisor of Communications and Community Relations.
- Hold media briefings or news conferences, if/as needed, to share significant news.
- Ensure that information is shared with childcare providers, through the school principals.

Communicating with trustees

- Trustees will receive daily email updates.
- Regular board meetings may be conducted by telephone while the board is in contingency, as determined by the Director of Education.

APPENDIX

FACTS ABOUT INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

1. What is an Influenza Pandemic?

An influenza pandemic is a flu outbreak distinguished from seasonal influenza by its scope. It is not seasonal influenza, SARS or Avian Influenza. Again, it is important to note that not all influenza pandemics result in serious illness.

Influenza becomes a worldwide epidemic, or *pandemic*, when a disease spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and regions of the world and affects a large percentage of the population where it spreads. Talk of an influenza pandemic has occupied the media of late. During the 20th century, the world faced three flu pandemics. The most deadly, the "Spanish Flu" in 1918 and 1919 killed over 20 million people. However, the "Swine Flu," or H1N1 influenza of 2009, although rampant throughout the world, was generally considered to be less severe than normal seasonal influenza.

Public health experts say flu pandemic can happen anytime. They also tell us that if we are prepared, we can reduce the number of people who become infected. And since pandemic flu spreads the same way as seasonal flu – through droplets contained in sneezes and coughs and by hand contact, basic precautions can greatly reduce its spread.

2. Phases of a Pandemic (World Health Organization)

Period	Phase	Description
Interpandemic Period	Phase 1	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection is considered to be low.
	Phase 2	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.
Pandemic Alert Period	Phase 3	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.
	Phase 4	Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.
	Phase 5	Larger cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).
Pandemic Period	Phase 6	Increased and sustained transmission in general population.
Postpandemic Period		Return to interpandemic period

Personal Preparedness

The following are some considerations and some responsibilities for individuals in preparation for and in the event of a pandemic:

- Be informed
 - Self-screening and *staying home when ill*
- Stay healthy:
 - Hand washing
 - Cough/sneeze etiquette: cover mouth and nose; dispose of tissues; wash hands
 - Avoid overcrowding when possible
 - Avoid touching face/eyes
 - Annual flu vaccine will contribute to health
- Identify contingency plans:
 - Daycare unavailable
 - Food shortages
 - Limited fuel
 - Caring for the ill at home
- Reach out:
 - Support of neighbours, friends and family who may have difficulty managing in a pandemic