

(SAMPLE REPORT) Workplace Safety Assessment

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Introduction

Ontario, Canada, and the world are facing an unprecedented pandemic. Since March 2020 we have been required to adapt, both individually and as a society. In this time of instant access to information we have scarcely found ourselves dealing with a new and novel disease without any prior knowledge and with such a singular and far-reaching impact.



Methodology

To evaluate **Ontario's** pandemic protocols, a multi-pronged review was employed:

- Relevant local, provincial, national, and international guidelines pertaining to **Ontario's** re-openings were reviewed.
- **Ontario's** Policy and Procedures Manual and **Ontario's** Handbook were reviewed.





Guiding principles

Several principles intrinsic to both infection control and health and safety were reviewed and explored throughout the audit:

Precautionary principle


In the absence of scientific certainty, **Decision** should err on the side of caution on matters of health and safety and with consideration for risk (where it is known). Children have less severe COVID-19 symptoms than adults, but they are not immune.





Layer defenses

No one control strategy can limit the transmission of disease. Schools should approach health and safety with a layered defense strategy, where many small interventions and strategies are combined, simultaneously. For example, working to prevent COVID-19 positive cases from entering the school can reduce the risk of people contracting the illness in the school.




Share responsibilities

Just as there is no single control strategy that is effective in isolation, there is no single entity that is solely responsible for keeping everyone safe. Successful school reopening will require continual collaboration between administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents. Everyone has a critical role to play, and success will require a great deal of social trust.

Limit transmission chains

Even with the best control strategies in place, positive cases can and will reach into schools. To limit classroom outbreaks from becoming school-wide shutdowns, schools should take steps to limit transmission chains as much as possible.



Be flexible

The scientific community's understanding of this virus is changing rapidly. Disease spread and timing are not fully predictable. Schools should recognize that the dynamic nature of knowledge during a global pandemic requires a flexible and adaptive approach.



Ensure equity

School closures and limited reopening have disproportionately impacted children of lower socioeconomic status, children with disabilities, and children in other marginalized groups. The reopening of schools must be done with equity in mind.

Hierarchy of Controls



The concept of a hierarchy of controls advises that not all 'controls' or preventive strategies are of equal value. The most effective types of controls eliminate a hazard, while PPE is considered the least ideal, by acknowledging that the hazard surrounds the individual. However, all are often needed for effective infection control.

Findings

Subject Category: Classrooms

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Wear Masks		<p>s. 2,4,9,11,13,14,15</p> <p>As summarized in S. 15, masks are required for cleaning, licensed areas, going outside one's cohort and other tasks indirect to teaching in a cohort.</p>	<p>It was noted that most students and teachers</p>	
Wash hands frequently		<p>This was prescribed at entry/exit points to activities and before/after meals and bathroom use.</p>	<p>This was observed extensively. It was noted that the hand sanitizer</p>	

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Maximize physical distancing to protect individuals		<p>S. 5 reviews sixteen distancing measures</p>	<p>It was noted that the majority of these measures were in place to support this distancing. However, in practice this was observed to be intermittently disrupted both in and out of classrooms from child activity, such as free play outside, collaborative writing/drawing at tables while</p>	

			moving chairs and lining up to go outdoors.	
Maintain cohorting		Extensively outlined in policy.	Extensively employed in the school, including bathrooms and teacher designations.	
Disinfect objects between users		S. 10-11 in policy.	It was observed that students generally used their own belongings such as water bottles and pencil crayons.	
Minimize possible bathroom-based spread			Student populations were not observed to use bathrooms greater than one at a time. Students were observed to follow excellent bathroom hand washing.	

Subject Category: Healthy Buildings

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Increase outdoor (natural) ventilation			With outdoor temperatures dropping, it was observed that most windows were closed.	
Filter indoor air			Ventilation has already been maximized. It was stated that the school does not operate an HVAC system with recirculated air.	

Supplement with portable air cleaners			These are not presently in use.	
Verify ventilation and filtration performance.			This has reportedly been done.	
Consider advanced air quality techniques			These strategies were not observed or discussed at <i>Cherokee</i> .	
Use plexiglass as a physical barrier		S.2-screening	A plexiglass structure was employed at the reception but was not used for screening.	
Install no-contact infrastructure			There were no such spaces noted.	
Keep surfaces clean		This is prescribed in policy. Additionally, <i>Cherokee</i> described that they are 'fogging' twice weekly with a chemical product.	It was observed that staff are cleaning with bottles of diluted bleach and paper towels (as per guidelines) on the prescribed surfaces.	

Subject Category: Healthy Policies

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Establish and reinforce a culture of health, safety, and shared responsibility		Outlined in both Handbook and Policy/ Procedures manual	Stakeholders were observed to be active participants in the review process. Feedback from teachers (both as workers and educators) as well as parents reflected their active consultation and consideration in the review process.	
Form a COVID-19 response team and plan			Various experts consulted; worker safety committee activity noted.	
Prioritize staying home when sick		S.2,3	System confirmed via email communications	
Promote viral testing and antibody testing		s.2: testing language included in screening and other illness protocols	Student test cases were not scrutinized	
Establish plans for when there is a case		s. 3,12,13,14,15,16,17	It was noted that remote attendance tracking was employed, and parents described it as highly effective. Exclusion protocols required that sick students attend an exclusion room for the duration of their stay and a cot was noted to be available for this.	

Support remote learning options		Not included in policy	A remote learning program was described as available.	
De-densify buildings			While the building was generally seen to be uncluttered, there were a few classes that employed tactile learning devices discussed in another section of this report.	
Protect high-risk students and staff			It was described that plans are indeed in place to both assess and provide education for this scenario.	

Subject Category: Healthy Schedules

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Manage transition times and locations		Strict requirements were noted in policy that govern drop off and other scheduling times	were observed in sequestered outdoor play spaces and observed staggered entrances and exits.	
Make lunchtime safer		People are in strict cohorts.	People were observed to have lunch within their spaces and to exercise social distancing in those spaces.	

Subject Category: Healthy Activities

Guidance Subject	Report Recommendations	Policy notes	Observations/Interview points	Gaps/Recommendations
Provide recess		This is pre-existing	This was noted to be in practice.	
Modify physical education			This was described by the Phys. Ed instructor to be in practice, for example running and other 'drill' or practice type activities.	
Add structure to free time			It was noted that in recess activities, even while outdoors, children are inevitably in close contact at times in sport and other play scenarios	

Discussion

Reflecting on the guiding principles described, several of these were shown to be confidently woven into the prose of the policies, in the design of the buildings and its meticulously designed spaces and well-executed furniture layouts and cleaning strategies. Speaking with parental representatives and observing daily emails from the school back to parents, demonstrated an engagement and investment in open dialog, roles, and shared responsibilities.



Masks

Research shows universal mask wearing, even of homemade masks, significantly reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Face coverings can serve both to stop people from dispersing COVID-19 and to protect others.



Conclusions

Our review noted that [REDACTED] did not take the “easy route” by blindly adopting every guideline or policy, but chose to invest and spend a significant amount of resources in creating a product that balanced their primary mandate of delivering a quality workplace while at the same time keeping everyone safe.



Disclaimers

This audit and recommendations are based on the available and identified evidence at the time of writing this document. However, in view of the speed at which new relevant scientific data are being produced, this document and its recommendations is subject to change, and should be reviewed as new evidence emerges, and primarily at the direction of governing public health bodies.



References:

