



NIPISSING DISTRICT COVID-19 PROTOCOL FOR INTER-SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, SPORTS AND CLUBS

INTRODUCTION

The four local school boards in our region recognize the importance of extracurricular activities in supporting students' mental health, well-being, and academic development. After a long absence due to the precarious health situation, we are pleased to be able to offer a variety of extra curricular activities to our students once again. To ensure the safety of all, the four school boards, with the support of the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, have adopted this protocol which contains public health guidelines and measures that must be followed. It should be noted that extracurricular and co-curricular activities may be suspended or cancelled during the year to comply with any public health and Ontario government directive or at the discretion of the school boards.

All decisions of the school boards and local public health officials are based on the health and safety of students, staff, supervisors, and service providers.

This protocol details the public health guidelines and measures that must be followed for extracurricular activities, sports, performances, and competitions.

PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

The public health guidelines announced by the Government of Ontario and those announced by the Public Health Unit must be followed at all times, regardless of the activity.

Facial Coverings

Staff and students must wear masks throughout the duration of the exercise when indoors except in instances indicated in government guidelines. Masks must be worn during all activities except when it is unsafe to do so. Staff and students are not required to wear masks outdoors unless they cannot maintain physical distance.

Staff and other activity leaders must wear medical grade masks whenever a mask is required. In addition, when indoors, coaches, team officials, activity leaders will wear eye protection if they are within 2m of an unmasked participant. Masks and eye protection will be provided by the school.

When outdoors, coaches, team officials and activity leaders are obligated to wear a medical mask if they are within 2m of their student participants. Masks can easily be put on as they move in/out of a person's 2m bubble. *Note: While risk of transmission is lower outdoors, the risk is not eliminated and wearing a mask reduces chances of being a high-risk contact.*

Physical Distancing

It is important to always promote the greatest possible distancing between students, between students and staff, and between staff members. Indeed, a physical distancing of two meters (2m) must be maintained between students and staff inside and outside the school whenever possible. Physical distancing must be maintained indoors when students are required to remove their masks to complete the activity. For example, during a physical activity where wearing a mask is not safe or when delivering dialogue in a play.

When entering and exiting activity areas and while performing the activity:

- Physical distancing measures should be layered with other public health measures such as screening, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning, and mask wearing.
- Student travel times should be staggered, if possible, to limit student congregation (e.g., transition to the gym, transition between periods).

Students should be informed that they should not socialize or congregate before or after an interscholastic sports activity.

Hand shaking between teams at the end of a sports activity is not permitted at this time.

Hand Cleaning and Disinfection

Staff and students must wash or sanitize their hands at the beginning of the activity, before and after breaks, and at the end of the activity. This should also be done before using shared objects.

Implementation of safety measures for the safety of participants

The school should ensure that appropriate signage is posted in locker rooms and activity areas as a reminder to participants of the need to follow public health guidelines (mask wearing, hand hygiene, physical distancing...).

Practices should provide a higher level of protection for participants since wearing and maintaining the mask should be easier. Activity leaders should prioritize adherence to these protective measures as much as possible to minimize risk.

Adherence to a single public health measure will not prevent transmission in schools. Rather, a combination of structural and individual elements, with the collaboration and support of activity leaders, will help to enhance health security at activities and reduce the risk of infection among those on site. The implementation of preventive measures must be a priority.

Verification of self-screening

All participants and activity leaders, including Board personnel and community/parent volunteers must successfully complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and be symptom free prior to attending any try-outs, team or club meetings, workouts, practices, or competitions. Screening will be confirmed upon arrival and will be noted on the attendance log by the activity leader.

All game officials and student volunteers (score keepers, gatekeepers...) will successfully complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and be symptom free prior to attending any inter-school athletic events. Screening will be confirmed upon arrival and documented.

All student participants, team officials, club leaders, game officials and student volunteers must follow direction provided after completing the COVID-19 self-assessment.

Student participants and activity leaders will immediately notify the Head Coach or the lead teacher responsible for the activity/team/club if COVID-19 symptoms arise during an activity.

Any student participant who does not comply with current and updated guidelines will be subject to removal from the team or the club.

Any participant in athletics or clubs (e.g., student athletes or participants, team officials, student volunteers, game officials), must not participate in any team or club activities, including games, practices, or meetings, if they have any symptoms upon screening.

Protocol Review and Expectations

Activity leaders must review with the participants the health and safety measures to be followed when participating in the activity (practices, competitions, presentations...). We should review the new routines (COVID-19), how to move around before and after the activity (doors, corridors and areas that must be used) and the importance of helping each other respect public health measures.

It is important to reiterate some of the principles that should be followed:

- refrain from touching eyes, nose, mouth, and face during the activity.
- personal hand hygiene practices before, during and after training, practice, competition, and performance.
- respiratory etiquette during physical activity (e.g., sneezing or coughing into the crook of the elbow, not spitting, not clearing the nasal passages).
- eliminating the use of perfumes to reduce sneezing and coughing.

All current guidelines must be shared with all student participants, team officials, games officials and parents/guardians prior to the commencement of an activities season. Updates will be shared as needed.

COHORT MANAGEMENT

Mixing of cohorts in extracurricular activities, including athletics, is permitted. Schools must ensure the implementation of measures essential to the follow-up of contacts in the event of a positive case.

A record must be kept of all student participants, activity leaders, team officials, game officials and student volunteers who are in attendance at any try-outs, team or club meetings, workouts, practices, competitions or any other inter-school events. This record must be readily available to the school principal at all times and be available to local public health officials as needed. Records shall be kept for at least 30 days by the school principal for contact tracing purposes.

If staff and students use school transportation to travel to another location, a seating plan must be submitted to the school principal in case a positive case is reported. In the interest of risk management with the possibility of a positive case, the number of activities in which students may participate should be limited (e.g., one or two activities).

In a game between two schools, the head coach of each team must verify that the players have successfully completed their daily self-test. The players' certification shall be noted on the attendance log which shall be submitted to the principal of his/her school as soon as possible. The logbook must be available within 24 hours upon request by the Public Health Unit if a positive case is reported in the school.

COVID-19 immunization is strongly recommended. Unvaccinated students may experience longer periods out of school activities, including practices, games, and performances, if there is a case or outbreak.

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Definition of Activity Types:

- **High contact** activities/sports are defined as those activities/sports where physical contact and/or close proximity is required between individuals.
- **Low contact** activities/sports are those that involve intermittent proximity or limited, incidental physical contact between participants and allow for physical distancing most of the time.

Elementary (K-6): Since students are not yet immunized, only low-contact activities and those that allow for safe masking are allowed.

Secondary (7-12): All extracurricular activities and sports are permitted as long as the health and safety measures of the government, the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Health Unit can be met.

Here are some things to consider before determining whether a sport, activity or club will be allowed:

- Type of activity: Is the activity low or high contact?
- Location of the activity: Will the activity take place indoors or outdoors?
- Cohort: Will students participate within their cohort or between cohorts?

- Physical distance: Can the activity be conducted while maintaining physical distance?
- Masking: Will masking be required? Can masks be worn properly and changed as needed?

Please see the following OPHEA document for examples of how to apply these elements in an analysis: [Considerations when Selecting Interschool Athletic Activities](#).

In all cases, activities must be approved by the principal and superintendent in charge of the school prior to the start of the season or meetings.

EQUIPMENT

The use of common equipment is allowed. The risk associated with transmission through shared items is low. Regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be reinforced to reduce the risk of infection from shared equipment, especially when it is not possible to clean shared items regularly.

Equipment in use should be cleaned and disinfected after each game, practice and/or meet. If equipment is used all day, it should be cleaned at least twice during the day. Equipment used on or near the face (e.g., musical instruments, football or soccer helmets, microphones, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected before use by another person. Please refer to the provincial measures document and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

Each student is encouraged to bring their own labelled **water bottle**, keep it with them during the day and not share it.

FACILITIES

The following public health measures must be implemented to ensure safe use of the facility with the presence of different cohorts and guests from other schools.

In the case of athletic games, the host school must communicate to the coaches of the other teams the procedures for entry and exit of visiting students in order to manage traffic flow and minimize contact within the school. Coaches of these teams must ensure that their students follow the procedures established by the host school.

A designated space (e.g., isolation room or outdoor space) will be set-up to ensure any student or adult who develops symptoms during any team or club related activity is separated from all other attendees, so that they are isolated before they leave and seek testing.

Change rooms

When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masks should be worn and as much distance as possible maintained between cohorts.

Strategies that can be used include, but are not limited to :

- Where possible, having student participants arrive dressed and ready to start.
- Scheduling students to limit the number of people in the change room and shower at any one time.

- Ensuring physical distancing for those using the change room and/or shower.
- Ensuring all students wear a mask when using the change room.
- Blocking off areas in locker rooms, posting signs that remind participants to maintain distance.
- Ensuring there is time between games to allow for cleaning of high touch surfaces prior to another team utilizing the space.

It is important that change rooms that have been used are cleaned and disinfected, including high contact surfaces, after each use.

Gymnasium

When more than one game is being played in the same day at one site (e.g., Junior and Senior games back-to-back), each school site or facility (e.g., Turf Field) will develop entrance and exit plans for their facilities to minimize contact between the outgoing and incoming teams.

HIGH CONTACT SURFACES

High-touch surfaces are surfaces that are touched by many people throughout the day (e.g., benches, gym mats, light switches, etc.).

- Emphasis should be placed on regular hand hygiene to reduce the risk of infection from high touch surfaces.
- When high touch surfaces are used, it is suggested that they be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day, but more frequent cleaning may be necessary depending on the frequency of use and the extent of soiling.
- Where possible, special considerations (e.g., cleaning, distancing, limiting participation on equipment) should be made for rooms with fixed equipment (e.g., weight rooms, dance room...).

EXTERNAL COACHES, ACTIVITY LEADERS

Coaches, activity leaders, or guest instructors who are not school employees must follow the same guidelines as an essential visitor.

- Any visitor to the school (e.g., outside activity providers) is required to self-screen and wear a medical mask (e.g., surgical/procedural) while on school premises.
- A medical mask will be provided by the school if necessary.
- All visitors must sign the visitor's log and attest that they have completed their daily self-screening and that the result was negative.
- The visitor's movements must be limited to the areas required for the activity.

SUPERVISION

In addition to the levels of supervision normally required to manage various extracurricular and athletic activities, activity leaders must monitor and remind students, as needed, of the following:

- Maintain appropriate physical distance before and after practices, competitions, and performances (e.g., locker room, arrival/departure);
- Follow locker room and facility procedures (e.g., entry, exit);
- Sanitize hands before and after using equipment; and
- Refrain from group celebrations during activities/sports (e.g., handshakes, high fives, fist bumps).

Activity leaders also have the following responsibilities:

- Following board procedures for personal protective equipment (PPE) during practices, drills, and competitions.
- Communicate with students and minimize the need to shout/project. Instead of shouting/projecting, it is recommended that manually operated alternative whistles (electronic or mechanical) or portable microphones/voice amplifiers be used.
- Verify that all required certifications for activities/sports are current and have not expired (e.g., First Aid certification, NCCP or equivalent, Safe Contact Training for Football – Tackle, concussions training).
- Share school, school board, or athletic association policies and procedures related to COVID-19 safety for interscholastic athletic activities with the appropriate officials and referee associations.
- Review any additional COVID-19 safety requirements of the official/referee association.
- Ensure the cleaning and disinfection of equipment.

VACCINATION DISCLOSURE FOR OFFICIALS AND FREQUENT VOLUNTEERS

All regular game officials are subject to the pending vaccination disclosure policy. It is anticipated that officials and frequent volunteers will be required to:

- Provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19; or
- Provide a formal/official documented medical reason for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
- Participate in an educational program approved by the Ministry of Education; and
- Anyone who is not immunized, including anyone with medical reasons, will be required to complete regular COVID-19 testing as directed in provincial guidance.

SHARED TEAMS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS

Inter-school or inter-board teams are permitted provided that public health measures and particularly those outlined in this protocol are followed.

SPECTATORS/AUDIENCE

In order to ensure the continued focus on required health and safety protocols, mitigation of risks and supporting our students' participation, spectators or outside guests will not be permitted at this time to attend extracurricular activities, practices, or games.

MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS

Moving students to and from physical activity areas

Activity leaders, in consultation with the principal, should develop procedures for the arrival and departure of their participants that promote physical distancing whenever possible.

To get to and from the activity area (e.g., gym, weight room, outfield):

- Create designated routes for students to get to and from the activity/sport.
- Provide visual cues or physical guides, such as tape on the floor or sidewalks and signs/posters on the walls.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at school entrances and exits and in rooms used for activities (including gyms, weight rooms, auditorium, music room).

Students in grades 1-12 are required to wear non-medical masks or properly fitting cloth masks inside the school, including in the hallways (e.g., on the way to the activity area, inside the locker rooms) and on school buses or vehicles (e.g., to and from off-site facilities).

Students with sensory or respiratory difficulties may be exempted by the school principal in accordance with school board policies.

Kindergarten students are encouraged to wear non-medical or cloth masks in indoor spaces, but this is not required.

Student Transportation

For some activities, participants in an extracurricular activity may need to travel to another location. In this case, school transportation should be used as the preferred mode of transportation. Masks must be worn, and students should maintain physical distancing whenever possible by dividing into different seats on the bus. The use of cars or vans should be limited to the transportation of a very small number of participants. The same public health measures should be applied.

In the case of a school bus:

- School vehicles may operate at full capacity - vehicles for elementary school students should reduce capacity where possible.
- The seat directly behind the driver is empty to maintain a physical distance between the driver and students.
- When school vehicles are not operating at full capacity, students shall be seated in a manner that maximizes physical distance.
- Windows should be opened whenever possible to increase ventilation.

- Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to facilitate contact tracing in the event a student or driver contracts COVID-19. If a car or van is used, it is important to document who traveled in each car.
- Students who live in the same household or are in the same class cohort should be seated together when possible.

In the case of regional or provincial travel, a minimum 15-minute break must be provided for every two hours of travel to allow students, staff and driver to leave the bus to remove their masks while ensuring a physical distance of 2m. All passengers must disinfect their hands as they board the bus after the break.

FIELD TRIPS OUTSIDE OF THE REGION

Day trips and overnight stays are permitted. However, they must follow Board guidelines for field trips, including the need to obtain approval from the principal and/or superintendent, as appropriate, prior to planning the field trip or trip. The mandatory vaccination rules must also be applied to all adult participants as stated in the provincial regulations.

All day trips and overnight stays will also be subject to current provincial and local health guidelines. In consultation with school administration, the lead activity leader or Head Coach will review current restrictions and guidelines in each public health unit and the school boards, when appropriate, prior to final approval for travel. If the requirements are less strict in that area, the measures used in our district must apply.

The plans for the field trip must include specific measures on how to treat a participant who has developed COVID-19 symptoms. This plan must include the designation of a space to isolate the student away from all other participants, and the method they will be sent home.

For day trips and overnight stays, everyone on the trip must be screened before boarding the bus. During an overnight stay, anyone participating in the trip must be screened every morning before beginning the day's activities.

Student arrival and departure must take place in a designated area where screening must be completed prior to entering the activity site or on the bus, as appropriate.

All participants must follow school board policies regarding student cohort, spectators, transportation, and supervision, as applicable.

To assist with contact tracing, accurate records must be maintained of all student participants and activity leaders in attendance at any games, competitions, practices or any other event (e.g., off-site meals, visits...) and must be kept on file for one month readily available to the Principal and available to health units upon request.

Staggered arrival and departure times are recommended to support cohort and physical distancing measures.

ATHLETIC, SPORT ACTIVITIES

Indoor and outdoor activities

High contact and low contact activities are allowed indoors and outdoors as follows:

Outdoor:

- Masks are not required to be worn for outdoor high and low contact activities/sports.

Indoors:

- Masks are encouraged for indoor (low or high contact) activities/sports when they can be worn safely depending on the activity.
- Consider the following when determining if a mask can be "worn safely based on the activity":
 - Potential physical hazards (e.g., getting caught in equipment, becoming a choking hazard, impairing vision, causing breathing difficulties).
 - Mask effectiveness (e.g., change masks if they are wet or saturated with sweat).

The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE)

The implementation and practice of sport activities must be done in strict accordance with OPHEA's Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education and recommendations. Please refer to the following documents for the most recent guidelines and recommendations:

- [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#) - MOE
- [Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education \(OPASSE\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Physical Activity](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Curricular Activities \(Health and Physical Education\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Intramural Activities](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Interschool Athletic Activities](#)

ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES

Music

Music programs are permitted in areas that are well ventilated. Singing and the use of wind instruments will be permitted:

- The use of wind instruments is permitted indoors, within a cohort, if a minimum distance of at least two meters can be maintained. Maintaining as great a distance as possible should be encouraged and the use of large, well-ventilated rooms is preferred.
- The use of wind instruments is permitted outdoors in mixed cohorts, encouraging the maintenance of physical distance.

- Singing is permitted indoors. Masks are encouraged but are not required for indoor singing if a minimum distance of two meters can be maintained between cohorts and as much distance as possible can be maintained within the cohort.

If shared, wind instruments should be thoroughly disinfected between uses.

Artists should not share a microphone. The microphone must be disinfected before another artist can use it.

Theater

Theater programs are permitted. Participants must wear their masks and maintain a physical distance of 2M between them. When performers are on stage and delivering dialog, they can remove their mask, unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.

MANAGEMENT OF POSITIVE CASES

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit will manage the reporting of a positive case in a school in accordance with the protocol established between the Public Health Unit and the school board and in accordance with the Ontario Government's guidelines.

It goes without saying that a student who is unable to attend school as a result of an order or directive from the Public Health Unit is not permitted to participate in any school activity.