



The Ministry Education, Human
Resource Planning, Vocational
Training and National Excellence

GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS FOR THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Effective September 2020



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1. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the education system in Dominica. There has been a significant disruption of the regular functioning of educational institutions as well as the learning of students and the ability of teachers and schools to deliver effective teaching.

To a large extent this pandemic has destabilized and disrupted the regular protocols and guidelines of the education system and has had a profound effect on all aspects of the country's economy, the mental and physical health of the population and our students, teachers and education officials.

As a result, a plan utilizing appropriate guidelines and protocols for the reopening of schools and other learning institutions within the ambit of the Ministry of Education will serve as a tool for the efficient reopening of schools, facilitation of learning and mitigating the risk of the transmission of COVID-19 once the all clear has been given to resume school.

As much as possible these guidelines have been formulated based on the advice and protocols from the following organizations:

1. Framework for the reopening of schools- UNICEF, WFO, UNESCO, TWB
2. Framework for reopening of schools in the Caribbean, including schools for learners with special education needs. - UNESCO, I IPL, CARICOM, CDB - (Referral Document)
3. Considerations for the school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19 - WHO
4. CARPHA - Preventing disease, promoting and protecting health - CARPHA.
5. CDC - Interim guidelines for the education sector.
6. Wash in Schools Programme - Clean the World Foundation
7. Presentation and recommendations from the Ministry of Health, Wellness and New Health Investments and Dr Ruby Blanc
8. Contributions from the Dominica Association of Principals of Secondary Schools.
9. Responses and suggestions form Primary School Principals
10. Recommendations from the Education Officers responsible for Special Needs, Early Childhood Education, Learning Support, and Guidance Counselling.
11. Proposals from the Assistant Chief education Officer, Dr. Jeffrey Blaize





2. CONTEXT

LOCAL CONTEXT

On March 21, 2020, Dominica recorded its first case of COVID-19.

In light of the above, Dominica, similar to other countries, instituted several containment measures against COVID-19, which included the initial travel bans and the closure of its borders.

Other significant measures included the issuance of stay at home orders for workers in nonessential services including mass gatherings in public spaces; the closure of schools; gatherings at houses of worship; closure of bars, and the subsequent cessation of operation of all services at restaurants and fast-food outlets and limitation of operating hours for commercial retail and wholesale outlets.

As at July 10th, 2020, Dominica had recorded 18 positive cases with over 1000 tests conducted. It remains important that there is a reinforcement of critical public health and social precautionary measures such as wearing of masks in all public spaces; physical distancing and personal protective measures (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette).

These guidelines are aimed at promoting public health and social measures while managing the risk of a resurgence of cases in schools and other businesses, facilities and institutions.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDELINES

To provide schools and other educational institutions (public, private assisted and private), in Dominica with recommended protocols aimed at preventing and controlling COVID-19.

4. KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND USERS OF THE GUIDELINES

These guidelines directly apply to all schools and educational institutions (public, private assisted and private), across the Commonwealth of Dominica including but not limited to preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, special learning institutes, the Dominica State College and to also serve as a reference guide for education officers, principals, teachers, students, parents, visitors, ancillary workers and security personnel.

5. KEY PRE-REQUISITES AND ASSUMPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

i. Recognition that the guidelines cited below are specific to the education system, setting out the protocols and procedures and other administrative and managerial parameters to be considered once school resumes.

ii. The basic measures of physical distancing, hand washing, wearing face masks, and staying at home if one has symptoms of acute respiratory infections, and the inherent individual responsibilities, remain the cornerstone of any measures.

iii. To provide for a heterogeneous and harmonized system for managing COVID 19 at schools. Within this context, these plans have been developed so that all stakeholders can be informed by these guidelines, and also ensure that the conduct of business within schools is done in a responsible and accountable manner.

iv. Given the above, and with recognition of the fundamental role of individual responsibility, as a parent, principal, student, officer of the Ministry of Education, visitor, other government agency, or any other category of stakeholder, the success of these guidelines is dependent on a robust communication and implementation strategy.

v. The Ministry of Education, supported by these protocols and others approved by the Ministry of Health, Wellness and New Health Investments, utilizes these recommendations as far as possible and inform the wider public before the reopening of schools.



6. IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES

Schools and other educational institutions/establishments are advised to utilize these guidelines inclusive of other protocols for re-opening of schools.

All stakeholders are expected to support the implementation of these guidelines within their schools, and under the terms of the existing management and supervisory frameworks of the Ministry of Education, working in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and other relevant authorities with continuous assessment and reporting on the adherence to these guidelines.



7. CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Health and Safety Guidelines for the Reopening of Schools

Health and safety protocols are to be considered in four (4) categories;

1. Protocols to be observed before the reopening
2. Protocols to be observed during school hours
3. Protocols to be observed after school hours
4. Individual Protocols

The protocols are to be categorized based on the school public which includes

1. Students
2. Teaching staff and principal
3. Auxiliary Staff to include cleaners, caretakers, security personnel
4. Parents and guardians
5. Visitors to the institutions

PROTOCOLS BEFORE THE REOPENING OF SCHOOL

Before the reopening of school, the Ministry of Education will;

1. Develop clear and easy-to-understand protocols on physical distancing measures, including prohibiting activities that require large gatherings.
2. Develop detailed protocols on hygiene measures, including handwashing, respiratory etiquette, use of protective equipment, cleaning procedures for facilities and safe food preparation practices.
3. Construct additional troughs for handwashing stations
4. Provide schools with cleaning supplies, sanitation wardens and cleaners
5. Train administrative staff and teachers on implementing physical distancing and school hygiene practices and increase staff at schools as needed. Cleaning staff will also be trained on disinfection and cleaning practices and be equipped with personal protection equipment to the extent possible.
6. Develop protocols to guide school leaders to address cases where students are unwell. Guidance should include monitoring of student and staff health, maintaining regular contact with local health authorities, and updating emergency plans and contact lists.
7. Hold workshops with all stakeholders including auxiliary staff and parents on COVID-19 prevention. This includes appropriate and frequent hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, mask use, new rules and protocols to be implemented.
8. Create a schedule for frequent hand hygiene, especially for young children, and provide sufficient alcohol-based rub or soap and clean water at the schools.
9. Put in place respiratory, hand hygiene and physical distancing measures in transportation such as school buses, and tips for students on safe commute to and from school, including those using public transport.
10. Develop a school policy on wearing a mask or a face covering, hand sanitizing, hand washing, visits to the school compound and sanitization.
11. Develop policies to guide support of high-risk students and teachers to ensure they are monitored during contact hours.

The following protocols should be observed before the reopening of school buildings in order to ensure that the school plant is safe for the housing of students and teachers:

1. Conduct cleaning and sanitization exercises prior to reopening. Thorough cleaning of the building with bleach and other cleaning solutions deemed appropriate to include:
 - a. Cleaning of all desks, chairs, door knobs, windows with bleach, soap and water
 - b. Cleaning and hosing of all school yards
 - c. Cleaning of all teaching aids in the classroom with special focus on those for lower school and early childhood
2. Encourage the use of hand washing and use of masks among teachers and students
3. Training of teachers re: the protocols in handling of documents in the classroom namely posters, test papers, and students' exercise and text books.
4. Training of lead teachers at school by the Ministry of Health in the basic use of PPEs and to address any situation which may merit a student exhibiting various symptoms as underlined by the Ministry of Health
5. Sanitization session with parents to educate them on:
 - a. Proper hand washing
 - b. Sanitizing of school books and school bags after school

PROTOCOLS DURING SCHOOL HOURS

1	On entering the school gate hygiene wardens will assist students
2	At school morning assembly, principals will inform students and teachers of the behaviour change to increase both the intensity and frequency of cleaning and disinfection activities and improve waste management practices at the school.
3	All schools must encourage the frequent use of hand washing
4	Teaching aids should be sanitized before and after handling in the classroom
5	Schools need to encourage physical distancing in classrooms and in play areas.
6	Information on hygiene should be clearly visible throughout the school compound as a reminder to students of the importance of washing hands, physical distancing and hand sanitizing.
7	Schools should schedule regular cleaning of the school environment daily, including toilets, with water and soap/detergent and disinfectant.
8	Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, desks, toys, supplies, light switches, doorframes, play equipment, teaching aids used by children, and covers of books.
9	Toilets should be sanitized at the beginning and end of the school day.
10	Pipes of drinking troughs should be sanitized frequently.
11	Student desks, chairs, door knobs, chalk and white boards should be sanitized before commencement of classes.
12	Ensure that classrooms are well ventilated. Keep all doors and windows open during contact time.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CLASSROOM



1. As far as possible the use of single desk should be utilized
2. Students are encouraged to wear masks, especially when out of the classroom.
3. Teachers should use laminated posters as much as possible to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing.

Teachers should sanitize their hands frequently while handling students work.

The following should be made available in each classroom

1. Hand sanitizer and spray bottles with rubbing alcohol on each teacher's desk
2. Sanitized bin for the placing of student books and projects to be corrected by the teacher
3. Posters indicating cough etiquette, mask etiquette, and other sensitization rules as constant reminders to students.



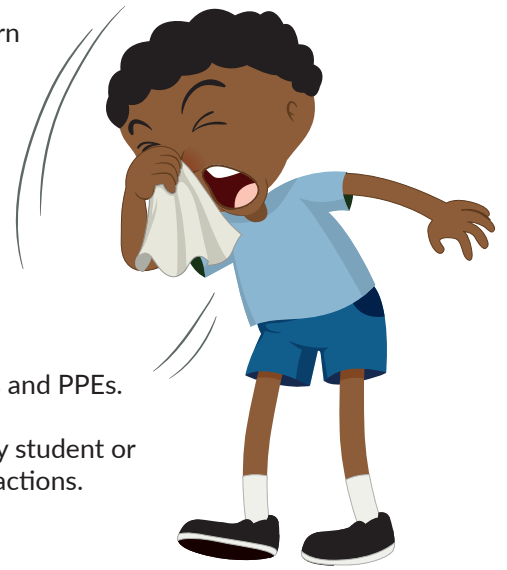
GUIDELINES FOR SNACKS AND SNACK TIME



1. Physical distancing practices to be observed at water troughs, toilets and on the playground
2. Sharing of snack to be discouraged unless between siblings
3. Students should keep all snacks in snack bag before break time; no water bottles should be exposed

GUIDELINES FOR SICK STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

1. Any student, teacher or parent displaying flu like symptoms will be asked to return home.
2. Any student who falls sick at school will be placed in a holding sick room and parents will be immediately called to pick up student. Parents are to respond immediately and students should be picked up by parent or guardian.
3. All teachers who fall ill at school should immediately inform the principal and leave the compound. The classroom of that teacher must then be sanitized and all students will be required to sanitize their hands as necessary.
4. Every sick person at the school should be dealt with care using protective gloves and PPEs.
5. The health center or assigned district nurse must be immediately informed of any student or teacher who exhibits flu-like symptoms for follow up, testing and the necessary actions.



INDIVIDUAL PROTOCOLS

Hand Sanitizing

The following should be observed for hand sanitizing

- Spray bottles should be used with alcohol 80% and more
- Hand sanitizers should be alcohol based
- Soiled hands should be washed with soap and water
- Hands must be sanitized before and after eating of snack and lunch
- Hands must be washed for at least twenty seconds with soap and water after snack time and before re-entering the classroom



Temperature checks

- Hand held thermometers should be used to take temperatures



Cleaning of surfaces

- Surfaces must be wiped as necessary
- Each classroom should have a cleaning rag or disposable wipes. Use of rags in multiple classrooms should be avoided
- Rags used to wipe door knobs and desks should not be used to wipe toilet seats



Respiratory Hygiene

- Students must cough and sneeze in elbows or tissue which must be disposed of in a bin



7.2 Psychosocial Support:

Schools are encouraged to think very carefully about how they lay the foundation for a supportive and caring climate as students are reintegrated into face to face schooling. The following are suggested;

The first few classroom sessions should be devoted to debriefing and discussion of experiences during quarantine. This will enable students to identify and relate to each other's experiences. This will also enable school personnel to identify emotionally vulnerable students.

Teachers and other school personnel should receive training on how to talk to and support children before, during, and after a pandemic and in principles of psychological first aid in order to identify and provide support to students in need.

Principals should consult with teachers as students return, to identify classroom interventions for individual students as appropriate.

Recognize the significance of socializing and play for children in a safe environment. This may mean that close play is only permitted in pairs or small groups or within social bubbles that allow repeated mixing with a small number of contacts.

School counsellors should consult with teachers and school administration on school-wide behavioral needs of students and work with them to provide support.

School leaders should collaborate with guidance counsellors to provide lessons for students regarding managing change and managing anxiety.

School counsellors should co-lead classroom lessons on social and emotional learning strategies.

Consult with guidance counsellors on plans to address the possibility of another outbreak and how to emotionally prepare students and staff.

Provide supportive counselling and consultation for teachers who are struggling with issues related to the virus and confinement.

Provide threat assessments as needed to students who appear as a danger to themselves or others. Meet with parents to discuss student needs and provide information to parents on how to talk to their children.

Follow up with emotionally vulnerable students as they return to school to assess their level of functioning.

Meet with parents to discuss student needs and obtain permission for assessments.

Guidance counsellors should consult with teachers, school counselors and parents to deliver services to students who display outward signs of trauma.

Schools are encouraged to contact students who do not return to school, as they may be experiencing school avoidance due to anxiety related to the pandemic.

Schools should be attuned to the broader social and family stressors that may affect a student's ability to attend school or be ready to learn.

Schools need to incorporate into planning considerations, academic accommodation and support for students who may still be having difficulty concentrating or learning new information due to stress associated with the pandemic.

MENTAL HEALTH:

Mental and emotional health professionals are critical in shaping messages to principals, teachers, students and families about school re-entry including addressing anxiety, social acclimation and depression.



- Students requiring more mental health support, including those who are exhibiting suicidal ideation, should be referred for additional psychiatric services.
- Provide support services for loss of any staff, students or family.
- Mobilize crisis recovery team (headed by the Chief Psychiatrist) to provide emotional and psychological support when necessary.
- If school community has experienced a loss of life, establish 'safe rooms' as needed within each facility for counselling services.

7.3 Teaching and Learning

BEFORE REOPENING	DURING REOPENING	AFTER REOPENING
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train students on hand hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing 2. Prioritize the core subjects in the curriculum 3. Assess the number of students who may not have received adequate instruction during the online learning period 4. Assess content not covered per class or subject level 5. Provide a scheme of work identifying the time required to bring students to the appropriate level 6. Continue with a blended methodology 7. Continue to provide learning opportunities/devices/internet access for students who lack the IT capability and access 8. Continue to improve the use of technology in the classroom 9. Check student readiness for assessments (National Assessment, CXC/CCSLC/CAPE). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to train students on hand hygiene, cough etiquette and physical distancing 2. Continue to use the blended instructional approach 4. Seek instructional opportunities to provide adequate coverage of content missed 5. Monitor the scheme of work to be guided by content to be covered 6. Provide opportunities for students to make up content needed to continue their learning 7. Schedule training opportunities for students and teachers with IT difficulties based on need 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to monitor and provide data on each aspect of teaching and learning 2. Obtain feedback from teachers, students and parents on educational processes 3. Continue to monitor numbers of students who are still at risk 4. Apply instructional mitigation practices/referrals to reduce the number of students at risk 5. Increase after school programs

7.4 Consideration and Guidelines for Special Needs Students

Guidelines for Re-opening of Special Schools

Students with Disabilities:

The impact of loss of instructional time and related services, including counselling during the period of school closures is significant among this population. Students with disabilities may also have more difficulty with the social and emotional aspects of transitioning out of and back into the school setting. Therefore, school personnel should:

Develop a plan to ensure a review of each child who has been assessed and provide individualized reports with recommendations for intervention based on the child's need. This is to determine the needs for compensatory education to adjust for lost instructional time as well as other related services.

Consider whether or not a student has experienced a regression of skills and/or lack of progress. If regression and/or a lack of progress is observed, identify opportunities for recovery, including additional services and accommodations.



Before Re-opening



- Train all staff on sanitizing and disinfecting of the school
- Train staff on physical distancing and safe hygiene practices
- Hold parenting sessions on procedures and guidelines established for the school
- Prepare posters and videos on handwashing and respiratory hygiene
- Implement psychosocial training for teachers to support students
- Review the needs for each individual child for effective planning to make up for lost instructional time
- Ensure sufficient supply of cleaning supplies, masks, sanitizers and disinfectants
- Set up a sick bay if none exist to provide for isolation of a student with symptoms of respiratory illness while awaiting parents or health officials.
- Consider students' health conditions if wearing of masks is requested.
- Provide transparent masks for the deaf, dependent on availability

After Re-opening

- Hands and bags should be sanitized upon entry to school
- Classrooms should be arranged that deaf student can see all students in the class
- Schools to implement strategies to maintain physical distancing by blind and deaf students
- Use of white canes for those legally blind to inform others that they are blind
- Ensure use of glasses by students with low vision to assist them in seeing visual markers
- Designated guide to inform them if they are getting too close (maintaining physical distancing)
- Sanitizing of handle and tip of white cane after use
- Each desk sanitized before entry of children to the classroom
- Schools should also ensure that bars on wheelchairs are sanitized if student needs assistance in pushing the wheelchair around. Both the student and the one assisting should wear masks
- Separate storage areas for each child's bag or lunch box
- Masks should be worn if physical distancing is not possible due to size of classroom
- Staggering of break time to ensure outdoor physical distancing if outdoor space is small
- Students eat at their desks before going outside
- Engage students in drill/education sessions on handwashing and physical distancing
- Increased supervision of outdoor spaces and handwashing procedures
- All toys washed twice daily and those that cannot be washed should not be used.
- Sanitize playground equipment twice daily
- Limit use of computer and tablets by groups of students and these should be cleaned after each use
- Hands should be washed before handling books that are shared
- Restrict access of family or visitors on school premises during school hours.
- Children with respiratory illness to remain at home

For additional guidance and information regarding the above, please refer to *Framework for Reopening of Schools in the Caribbean, including schools for learners with special education needs*. UNESCO, IIPL, CARICOM, CDB- (Referral Document)



7.5 Guidelines and Protocols for Early Childhood Education

GUIDELINES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTERS

Introduction

The following guidelines relate to the operation of early childhood centres. It is important to note that specific accommodations/adaptations should be made as are deemed necessary for specific centres.

Prior to the opening of the centres, training sessions will be conducted for proprietors/lead teachers of the preschools and if possible, all members of staff. It is expected that the proprietors/lead teachers further train members of staff before the centres are opened.



GENERAL GUIDELINES

A. For preschools housed at primary schools

To facilitate proper hand hygiene, while keeping with the Standards of Early Childhood, it is recommended that where necessary, washroom facilities are built to adjoin preschools



It is expected that all preschools will conform to all protocols that are in place for the respective primary schools and to all other specific guidelines that will be given following training.

B. For the Private Preschools

Prior to opening, all staff of the preschools will be trained and all centres will be inspected.



For the Facilities

Cleaning

Management must ensure that:

1. the indoor and outdoor spaces are cleaned thoroughly before admitting children.
2. there is an adequate supply of cleaning equipment for both indoors and outdoors, for example, brooms, mops, waste bins, etc.
3. effective garbage disposal methods are practiced.



Sanitizing

Management is responsible for ensuring that:

1. centres have adequate supply of sanitizing agents, that are child-friendly (to be determined during training).
2. all surfaces are sanitized before admitting children to the centres and as deemed necessary throughout the day.
3. all toys are sanitized.



For The Caregivers/Staff

Management is responsible for ensuring that all caregivers:

1. are healthy enough to be at the centre (adults can be asymptomatic). Caregivers who are unwell should not report to work without a medical review and those who become sick while at work should be quarantined until dismissed.
2. have a valid food handler's certificate to prepare food for children.
3. have adequate supply of the recommended equipment
4. practice effective hand hygiene, use sanitizer in the absence of soap and water, wash hands with soap and water after three uses of sanitizers
5. practice effective respiratory etiquette

For the Children

Management is responsible for ensuring that all children:

1. are healthy enough to be admitted to the centre (children can be asymptomatic).
2. have received the appropriate vaccines for their age.
3. with underlying conditions that may pre-dispose them to being at high risk have adequate scheduling arrangements.
4. have their personal products which must be adequate and properly labeled.
5. have adequate space for storing their personal items.
6. who may become sick while at the centre can be quarantined until picked up by their parents/guardians.
7. who are ill cannot return to the centre without a medical review



For the Parents and Guardians

Management is responsible for ensuring that all parents/guardians

1. have information about the safety guidelines of the centre (specific to centre and developed after the training sessions and inspection of the facility)
2. remain outside of the centre when dropping off and picking up children.
3. sanitize their hands before signing the signing in/out register.
4. are informed immediately if their children become ill at the centre.



8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Ministry Education, Human resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence will provide continuous supervision, monitoring and assessment. Implementation of these guidelines will be ascertained through continuous site visits and inspection of premises to ensure strict adherence to the guidelines before during and upon the reopening of schools, and other educational facilities as it is a critical intervention in the mitigating the risk of the of COVID-19.

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GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS FOR THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

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