



Renfrew County District School Board

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan

**15 June 2009
(Revised – 28 September 2009)**

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan

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Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan

Introduction

Public health officials from around the world warn that an influenza pandemic is overdue. These warnings have been underscored by the spread of the avian (bird flu) influenza in Southeast Asia, the outbreak of H1N1 (swine flu) and the resulting toll on human life. Increasingly, health officials are talking not about “if”, but “when” the next pandemic will occur. Pandemic Planning is therefore essential for all.

Work has occurred at the federal level that has resulted in the development of a contingency plan which reflects the role of the federal government in a pandemic influenza response. At the provincial level, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has developed the Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP) that is to guide health planning and response efforts at both the provincial and local levels across Ontario.

The Renfrew County & District Health Unit (RCDHU) has developed a comprehensive pandemic response plan that provides an integrated response framework for health and emergency services in Renfrew County.

Given the potential for an influenza pandemic occurrence and the impact it could have, it is important for every organization to prepare a response plan. The Renfrew County District School Board recognized the need and has created an Influenza Pandemic Plan.

Key Messages

1. The Renfrew County District School Board is prepared for a pandemic. Our plan is open to staff, parents, students and the community for their information and feedback
2. During a pandemic, the Renfrew County District School Board 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.
3. Our priority during a pandemic is the health and safety of students and staff and our intent is to keep schools open as long as it is safe to do so. Non-essential services will be halted to focus on providing the most necessary services to our community.

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Background

Influenza and Pandemic Influenza

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a group of viruses: influenza A, B, and C. Most seasonal influenza epidemics occur because the influenza virus A and B are able to change enough to cause infections within the general population despite varying levels of immunity from previous infections. Influenza can cause mild to severe illness and usually starts suddenly. Common symptoms include:

- Fever (usually high, lasting 3 – 4 days)
- Headache (often severe)
- Aches and pains (often severe)
- Fatigue and weakness (can last 3 – 4 weeks)
- Extreme exhaustion (very common at start)
- Stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, chest discomfort and cough, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The period of contagiousness is believed to be from 24 hours before and up to 3 to 5 days after symptoms develop. Children and some adults may be infectious for 7 or more days after the onset of symptoms.

The influenza virus (type A) is also capable of major genetic changes known as “antigenic shift”. An influenza pandemic will result when the genetic shift causes the sudden and unpredictable emergence of a new influenza virus to which the population has no immunity. The following conditions must occur for influenza to be categorized as an Influenza Pandemic:

- a) A novel influenza A virus emerges
- b) The new virus can spread efficiently from human to human
- c) The new virus causes serious illness and death
- d) The population has little or no immunity to the new virus.

Influenza pandemic is essentially an outbreak occurring over a large geographic area, often worldwide, affecting an exceptionally large proportion of the population with elevated mortality rates. Three pandemics occurred in the last century – the Spanish Flu (1918), the Asian Flu (1957) and the Hong Kong Flu (1968). Most notably, the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918, which lasted two years, resulted in more than 20 million deaths worldwide and some experts believe the number could be as high as 40 million. Mortality rates were reduced in both the Asian and Hong Kong pandemics due to improved health care. Health Canada estimates 2 to 5 million people will require outpatient care and 11,000 to 58,000 people could die during an influenza pandemic. Children are the most likely to become infected with the illness but the elderly are particularly at risk of serious complications and death.

In terms of preparing for the impact of a pandemic, it has been projected that up to 35% of the population may get the pandemic flu. Based on the population in Renfrew County of approximately 100,000 the result could be 35,000 cases.

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Background (Cont.)

Predictions from all levels of government indicate that:

- 40 – 60% of staff could be absent at some point during the course of the pandemic
- the potential death rate among staff and students who contact the virus could be 1 – 2%
- two distinct waves of illness, 3 – 9 months apart and each lasting 6 – 8 weeks, could occur.

Health experts (World Health Organization) are certain that another pandemic will occur; however, the timing and pattern is unpredictable. Clearly this identifies the importance to prepare plans to contain the spread of the disease and ensure continuity of essential services.

World Health Organization Pandemic Phases

Phase	Period/Stage	Description
Phase 1	Interpandemic Phase Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new influenza subtypes detected in humans • An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals
Phase 2	Interpandemic Phase Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new influenza subtypes detected in humans • A circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease
Phase 3	Pandemic Alert Period Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human to human spread or at most rare instances in close contact only
Phase 4	Pandemic Alert Period Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small cluster(s) with limited human to human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting the virus is not well adjusted to human hosts
Phase 5	Pandemic Alert Period Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large cluster(s) but human to human spread still localized, suggesting the virus is adapting to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible
Phase 6	Pandemic Period Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased and sustained transmission in general population
Phase 7	Post-Pandemic Period Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to interpandemic period (Phase 1)

Source: World Health Organization, 2005

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Legislation

A Medical Officer of Health {provincial or county} has the authority under section 22 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990* to issue an order to control communicable diseases if he/she is of the opinion upon reasonable and probable grounds that a communicable disease exists, may exist or that there is an immediate risk of an outbreak.

The Medical Officer of Health determines the actions needed to be taken to protect the population from a communicable disease. This could include an order requiring an individual to isolate himself or herself, to place himself or herself under the care and treatment of a physician or to submit to an examination by a physician.

The *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* regulates the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information. The Act also specifies that during certain circumstances consent to collect this information is not required. During a pandemic the Renfrew County District Health Unit will be requesting information that will assist in determining the extent of the illness. This may include student/staff absence details and contact information to assist in investigations. The investigation will include illness details to monitor disease spread, evaluate prevention and disease measures, and determine further actions.

The *Employment Standards Act, 2000* states that an employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay if the employee will not be performing duties of his or her position because of an emergency declared under section 7.0.1 of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and,

- a) because of an order that applies to him or her made under section 7.0.2 of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*,
- b) because of an order that applies to him or her made under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*,
- c) because he or she is needed to provide care to an individual referred to in subsection (8); or
- d) because of such other reasons as may be prescribed. 2006,c. 13, s. 3 (3).

Subsection (8) Clause (1) (c) applies with respect to the following individuals:

1. The employee's spouse.
2. A parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or employee's spouse.
3. A child, step-child or foster child of the employee or employee's spouse.
4. A grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild, step-grandchild of the employee or of the employee's spouse.
5. The spouse of a child of the employee.
6. The employee's brother or sister.
7. A relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance. 2006, c. 13, s. 3 (3).

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General Information

The health and safety of staff and students is of primary importance and will be closely monitored. If health or safety becomes a concern, the Board's senior staff committee will consider recommending the closure of specific sites. Special arrangements may be necessary for medically-at-risk students and staff as soon as the pandemic is declared in Ontario. It is also possible that the local Medical Officer of Health may make recommendations regarding the closure of individual schools or all schools. In terms of preparing for the impact of the pandemic, it has been projected that up to 40 – 60% of the workforce may be absent due to the effects of the virus on individuals and families; **it should be noted that while the schools are open during a declared pandemic, normal program expectations and service levels may not be met. Parents will be advised to keep students with influenza-like-illness at home until they no longer have a fever and are well.**

Operations

Organizational Structure

When the pandemic is declared in Ontario, the following organization will be implemented.

1. The Board's Executive Council will be responsible for directing the system on a day-to-day basis.
2. A special committee called the **Pandemic Management Committee** will be created by the Director of Education. The purpose of the Pandemic Management Committee is to act as a resource and make recommendations to the Board's senior staff.
3. The pandemic management committee shall consist of the following personnel:
 - Superintendent responsible for Health, Safety & Wellness
 - Manager of Health, Safety & Wellness
 - Health & Safety Officer
 - Manager of Plant
 - Manager of Human Resources
 - Manager of Finance
 - Elementary Principal Representative
 - Secondary Principal Representative
 - Department Secretary – Health, Safety & Wellness (Acting as recording secretary)

Role of the Board's Executive Council

1. To direct the overall operation of the system
2. To receive updates and reports from the Pandemic Management Committee
3. To make decisions regarding the District/Regional operation of the Board
4. To review information items and news releases prepared by the Pandemic Management Committee and to authorize the sending of media releases
5. To report to the Board on the operation of the system
6. To determine the closing of any school(s) due to excessive absenteeism

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Role of the Pandemic Management Committee

1. To monitor and make recommendations on the overall operation of the system on a daily basis
2. To make clear and complete assessment of situations that may arise
3. To act as a resource to the Board's senior staff committee
4. To recommend courses of action to the Board's senior staff committee
5. To develop the substance of all news releases
6. To act as an emergency resource for Superintendents of Education, Principals and other Board personnel

Operational Strategies

1. By 10:00 am each day, the Director's Office shall receive update reports about all schools and departments including absenteeism reports.
2. From 11:00 – 12:30 pm each day, the Pandemic Management Committee will review the data that has been received. The Committee will develop recommendations for the Board's Executive Council and will draft any required news releases. Some members of the Committee should be available at all times to respond to an emergency situation.
3. In the event of an emergency situation arising, the Pandemic Management Committee will assess the situation, make decisions regarding requests for assistance and recommend a course of action to the Board's Executive Council.
4. A Superintendent of Education or designate must always be available to respond to an emergency situation.
5. At approximately 1:30 pm each day, the Pandemic Management Committee will connect with the Executive Council.
6. All requests by the media will be referred to and received by the Director of Education. Schools will be closed to all media.
7. All communication regarding the pandemic and the Board's response will be provided by the Director of Education.
8. A secretary/scribe should be designated for the Pandemic Management Committee and all decisions should be logged.
9. All Superintendents of Education and Managers or their designate must consult with the lead contact for the Pandemic Management committee before making any decisions or taking any significant action. This will ensure appropriate consultation and issues will be handled in a consistent manner in the system.
10. Attendance of staff and students will be monitored and reported to the Public Health Unit, as directed by public health officials. These statistics will also be communicated to the Board at regular intervals.

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Operational Modifications

It is the Board's intent to conduct affairs in accord with existing policies and operating procedures; however, once a pandemic is declared in Ontario there will be some operational modifications:

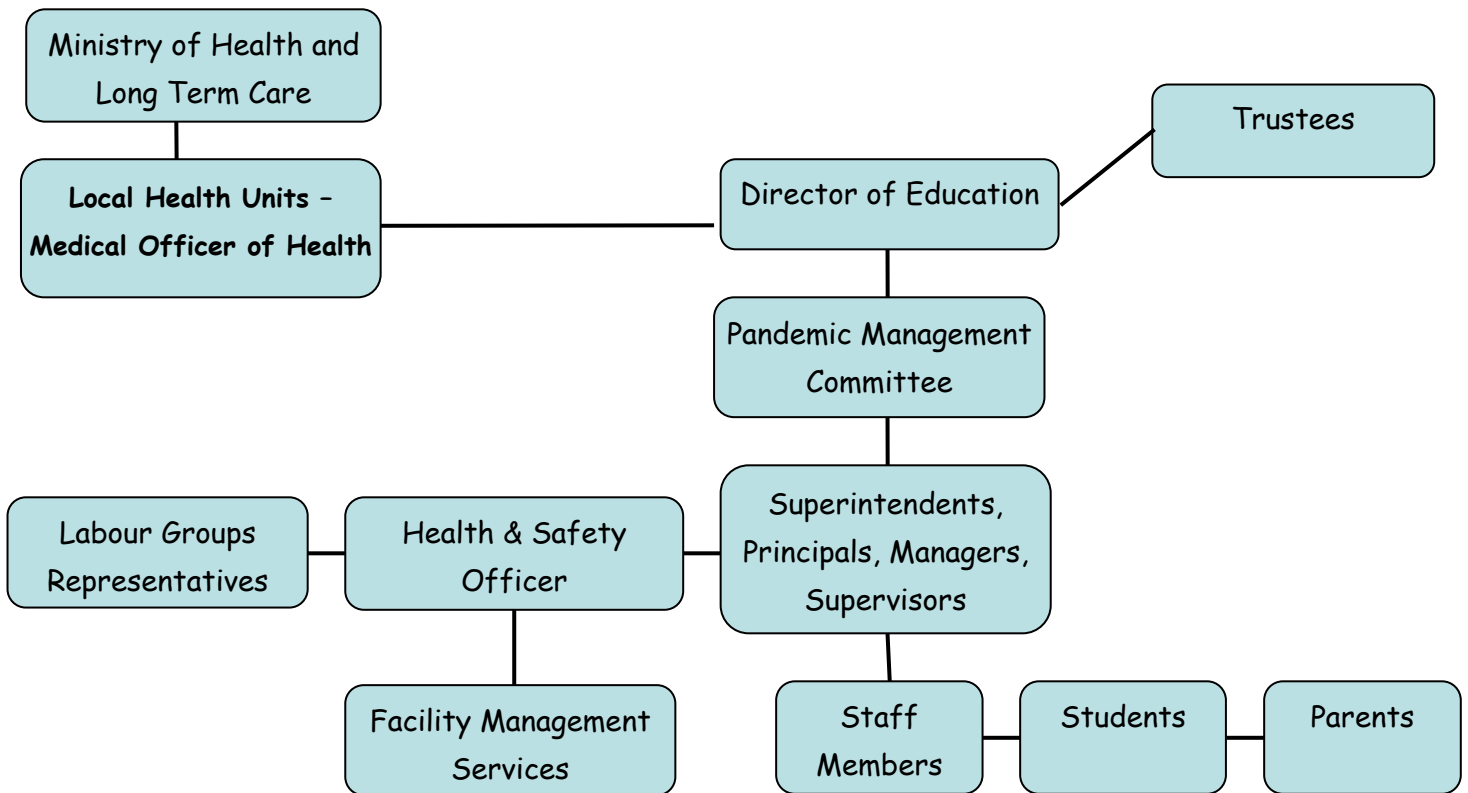
1. After Hours School Permits – existing/new permits for school facility use will be postponed/not issued
2. Board Meetings – Board meetings will be held as required and may be held electronically. (see Addendum to this plan, for further details)
3. Co-op Placements – co-op placements will be monitored on a regular basis
4. Computer Support – computer support will continue to operate provided sufficient staff is available. Items related to pandemic communications will be given the highest priority
5. Continuing Education – night school and summer school programs will be postponed
6. Courier – will attempt to operate as usual
7. Custodial Services – frequency of services may be altered due to staffing levels and to focus on infection control
8. Extracurricular Activities – extracurricular activities will be postponed
9. Field Trips/Excursions – there will be a moratorium on field trips/excursions
10. Food Programs – pizza days and other school based food programs will be postponed
11. Garbage Collection – the normal process of garbage collection will be maintained
12. Home Instruction – home instruction will be postponed
13. Instruction/Evaluation/Reporting – where possible, the regular instructional program and those activities related to instruction, evaluation and reporting will continue
14. Maintenance – the normal procedure will continue with concentration on emergency calls
15. Meetings – meetings that take administrators or staff out of school will either be postponed or held by teleconference
16. Occasional Teachers – the normal procedure will continue
17. Professional Development Activities – all professional development and attendance at conferences will be postponed
18. School Councils – School Council meetings at the school or county/district level will be postponed. Principals will have a plan for on-going communication with the Chair of the School Council
19. Security of Facilities – while schools are open, security will continue in accordance with current procedures
20. Student Transportation – subject to daily review, buses will maintain regular schedules while schools are open. Absenteeism of bus drivers may jeopardize the operators ability to provide adequate level of service
21. Supply Orders – the normal process for ordering supplies will be maintained
22. Volunteers – the practice of having volunteers in schools will be suspended
23. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers - will be provided in appropriate locations
24. Contingency Plans - will be developed to address Board and operational requirements (see Addendum A)
25. Shared Facilities – sites sharing facilities with other community organizations or groups (e.g. daycare centres) will consult with their community partners to ensure a consistent response for pandemic related matters

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Pandemic Response Flow Chart: Communication Protocol



All external communications are issued by the Renfrew County Medical Officer of Health. All internal communications and directives will be through the Director's Office.

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Communication

Planning for timely, proactive and sufficient communication with staff, students, parents, trustees and administrators is a vital component of our pandemic planning initiative. The Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) recognize that *nothing is more important to parents than the wellbeing of their children*. Our goal is to serve Renfrew County families to the best of our ability, in environments that are supportive of their health and wellbeing.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide our decision-making:

- Decisions about closing schools for health reasons will be made by Medical Officers of Health as outlined in provincial legislation.
- Decisions about closing schools due to safety concerns (e.g. an inability to provide adequate supervision due to staff absence) will be made by the Director of Education in consultation with the school principal.
- We make all our decisions based on available information and with the best interests of students in mind. We recognize that public opinion on our actions will vary; however, our primary communication goal is to ensure our stakeholders are informed about our plan and contingency actions.

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Key Messages

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Stage	Characteristic	Key Actions & Response	Communication Response
1. Inter-Pandemic Phase	No new influenza subtypes detected in humans	Preparedness -Refine Pandemic Response Plan - Train Staff	-Ensure stakeholders are aware of potential pandemic and that planning is underway to mitigate impact.
2. Pandemic declared in another Country	Sustained human-to-human transmission outside Canada	Preparedness -Ensure staff are aware of roles And responsibilities -Ensure physical resources are available (sanitizers, sufficient cleaning supplies)	-Inform stakeholders that RCDSB is prepared should pandemic spread to Canada/ Ontario/Renfrew County. -Internal stakeholders are aware that a plan exists and understand their respective roles.
3. Pandemic declared in Canada	Sustained human-to-human transmission in Canada	Preparedness -Consult with local Health Officials -Implement recommendations -Prepare and post updates to website	-Reinforce message to stakeholders that we have a plan and are working with our local Health Officials. -Stakeholders are aware of where more information can be found.
4. Pandemic Declared in Ontario	Sustained human-to-human transmission in Canada	Preparedness -Consult with local Health Officials -Adjust service levels as Recommended by local Heal Officials -Post updates to website regarding program and service changes	-Inform stakeholders that the RCDSB is well prepared to respond to the pandemic. -Board Officials are taking direction from local Health Officials.
5. Pandemic Declared in Renfrew County	Sustained human-to-human transmission in Canada	Response -Consult regularly with local Health Officials and implement recommendations -Adjust service levels to maintain safe and supportive environment -Regular updates regarding services and programs are posted to website	-Ensure stakeholders know RCDSB is working with local Health Officials and will adjust service levels as deemed necessary. -Ensure stakeholders are aware of where to find up-to-date information.
6. Post-Pandemic	Return to Inter-Pandemic Phase	Recovery -Restore pre-pandemic service levels -Receive feedback about Pandemic Response Plan -Prepare and implement recommendations to improve service delivery -Update website	-Ensure stakeholders are aware of restoration of service levels.

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Pandemic Resources

Government of Canada	www.influenza.gc.ca
Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Planning	www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic
Renfrew County and District Health Unit	www.rcdhu.com
Renfrew County and District Health Unit – Pandemic Influenza Planning	http://www.rcdhu.com/Pandemic%20Flu%20Plan/Index.htm
H1N1 Information	www.fightflu.ca/
World Health Organization	www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/
WHO Current Phase of Pandemic Alert	www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html
Government of the USA	www.pandemicflu.gov/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	www.cdc.gov/flu
Vancouver Coastal Health	www.vch.ca
Vancouver Coastal Health – Self Care during an Influenza Pandemic	www.vch.ca/pandemic/docs/ch05_self_care.pdf

Business Continuity Resources

Government of Canada	www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/em/gds/bcp-en.asp
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters	www.cme-mec.ca/pdf/CME_Pandemic_Guide.pdf
Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan – A Planning Guide for Businesses	www.toronto.ca/health/pandemicflu/pdf/business.pdf
New Zealand Influenza Business Continuity Planning Guide	www.med.govt.nz/upload/27552/planning-guide.pdf



Addendum to Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan

Contingencies for Meetings and Activities of the Board of Trustees



Addendum to Renfrew County District School Board's Influenza Pandemic and Preparedness and Response Plan

1.0 OVERVIEW

School boards are responsible for operating publicly-funded schools within their jurisdiction. The *Education Act* defines the specific obligations of boards as well as the range of School Boards' responsibilities. School Board policies provide further clarity about these responsibilities, and provide details surround School Board processes for identifying and engaging the different areas of accountability.

Given this range of obligations and responsibilities, contingency planning is important to the Board of Trustees of the Renfrew County District School Board. The purpose of this addendum is to outline contingencies that can enable the Board to continue to function during an influenza pandemic.

Any of the contingencies cited within this addendum is placed in the context of the *Education Act* and the Renfrew County District School Board's Policy Manual.

2.0 CONTINGENCIES FOR MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES

The Renfrew County District School Board's Policy 2 outlines the different areas that serve as a focus for the work of the Board. The essential activities of the Board is its committee system and monthly Board meetings – the two key methods that the Board uses to address its responsibilities. Examples include:

- Meetings relating to statutory responsibilities (e.g SALEP or SEAC meetings);
- Use of a committee system to discuss topics that fall within a broad area of responsibility (e.g Property and Transportation Committee, Program Committee, etc); and
- Regular monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees.

2.1 CONTINGENCIES RELATING TO COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A community health issue such as an influenza pandemic has the potential to impact Trustee participation in essential activities of the Board. The *Education Act* and Board Policy provide contingencies to assist the Board in engaging these essential activities. Such contingencies may allow meetings to maintain a quorum of Trustees. Beyond making accommodations for quorum, some policies allow for deferring discussions to another time. The range of options are summarized in the following table:

Name of Committee	Leadership Requirements	Meeting or Quorum Requirements	Possible Contingencies When Quorum Has Not Been Met
<p>SEAC</p> <p>Reference: Ontario Regulation 464/97; RCDSB Policy 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair and Vice-Chair is appointed Vice-Chair will preside in the absence of the Chair Should Chair and Vice-Chair be absent, Regulation permits members to select a Chair for the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No quorum requirements; decisions are made based on a vote on a majority of members present SEAC must meet 10 times per school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEAC members may participate through the use of electronic attendance options (e.g. telephone / conference call)
<p>Discipline Committee – Suspension Appeals / Expulsion Appeals</p> <p>Reference: Ontario Regulation 472/07; RCDSB Policy 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee selects a Chairperson Director of Education or designate to serve as Secretary to the committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee consists of three elected members of the Board Committee must meet within 15 days of the suspension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the quorum requirements, the Board may designate “alternates” Trustees to serve on this committee The committee may conduct the appeal electronically, in accordance with Policy 13 In consultation with the Director of Education and the area Superintendent, and depending on the nature of the matter, the suspension or expulsion could be withdrawn and a different response could be introduced (e.g. restorative justice / mediation)
<p>SALEP</p> <p>Reference: Ontario Regulation 308; RCDSB Policy 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Supervisory Officer would Chair the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial regulation requires that one member of the Board, a Supervisory Officer, and a person who is not an employee of the Board serve as the committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine if an alternative Trustee is available should the local Trustee be unable to attend To engage other meeting options in place of the SALEP (e.g. IPRC, case conference, Student Success intervention) to address student program concerns Consider home instruction options as a temporary program measure until a SALEP can be established.
<p>Standing Committees</p> <p>Reference: RCDSB Policy 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a committee Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy 10 defines a quorum as a majority of the number of members of the committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy 10 outlines options that are to be followed when there is a lack of quorum. Urgent matters may be addressed “by enlisting the support, by telephone, of sufficient Trustees to constitute a quorum of the committee”. Should this occur, Policy 10 states that the Board must ratify any motion passed in this manner

2.2 CONTINGENCIES RELATING TO BOARD MEETINGS

The Renfrew County District School Board’s Policy 9 and the provincial *Education Act* permits Trustees to participate in Board meetings through the use of electronic means (e.g. teleconference). This alternative allows the RCDSB to meet its requirement for quorum as outlined under Policy 9.