



## Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

*Believing, Achieving, Serving*

August 5, 2020

Dear Students/Adult Learners,

On Thursday, July 30, 2020 the Ministry of Education unveiled school reopening plans for September which will see elementary students return to regular in-class instruction and, in designated school boards, secondary students to a hybrid delivery model.

In the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, preparations for the safe reopening of schools are well underway. On July 28<sup>th</sup>, the Board approved a restart plan that provides three return to learning scenarios as requested by the Ministry. The plan was built on seven guiding principles:

- The health and safety of students and staff;
- Excellence, faith formation, academics and co-curricular/extra-curricular opportunities;
- Equity in education opportunities;
- Student and staff wellness;
- Flexibility and adaptability to support individual schools in making decisions that best meet the needs and circumstances of their communities;
- Ongoing and regular communications with students, families, staff, parishes and community members; and
- Regular and effective consultation with employee group/union representatives.

The return to school direction from the Ministry – made in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the COVID-19 Command Table and pediatric experts – allows elementary students to return to school for face-to-face instruction, five days a week, with significantly enhanced public health protocols.

Secondary students will return to school in an adaptive model which will see each class split into two cohorts. Cohort 1 will attend school on Mon/Wed/alternate Fridays and Cohort 2 will attend on Tuesday/Thursday/alternate Fridays. When not face-to-face in school, students will engage in online remote learning. Students will be participating in a “quadmester” model in which they study two subjects at a time for 45 days.

The elementary and secondary models will use timetabling and student cohorting to limit the number of direct and indirect contacts. As a further safeguard, the Ministry has mandated that all students in Grades 4-12 will be required to wear non-medical masks. While masks for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are not mandatory, we strongly encourage parents to have their children wear masks when at school. Teachers will be supporting students to understand hand washing, mask care, etc.

Other health & safety protocols include self-assessments, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, physical distancing, hand washing and sanitization, designated entrances and exits, health and safety training, and contact tracing.

Under the two Ministry mandated return to learning models, school attendance will be voluntary, based on parent choice.

**A pre-registration process will be open for one week from August 10-17 for parents/guardians to indicate whether their child/children will be attending school in September or learning at home. Parents whose children are eligible for school transportation will receive a separate survey during the same period. The surveys will be sent to you via SchoolMessenger. It is essential that we hear from all parents/guardians in these surveys. We thank you in advance for completing them.**

A more detailed guidance document on back to school provisions will be shared in the coming days. This guidance will provide more clarity on screening, physical distancing, hand hygiene, suspected cases of COVID-19 and positive test results, PPE, cleaning and disinfecting of schools and buses, transportation, lockers, recess and playgrounds, visitors, lunch protocols, teaching and learning (including timetabling and cohorting, synchronous and asynchronous learning), mental health supports, Special Education and other specialized programs, extracurricular activities and field trips.

We understand that you have many questions around the return to school and hope to continue to provide answers and assurances in the coming weeks. Please watch our Board website for updates as they become available.

Reflecting on the global pandemic, Pope Francis called the present moment a “propitious time” to be open to the Spirit who can “inspire us with a new imagination of what is possible.” As the last four months of the 2019-2020 school year have shown, with hope everything is possible.

We wish you a happy and healthy summer and look forward to seeing you again in September as we welcome your child/children back to school.



Patrick J. Daly  
Chairperson of the Board



David Hansen  
Director of Education