



## Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

*Believing. Achieving. Serving*

January 13, 2021

Dear Parents & Guardians,

A [second state of emergency and stay-at-home order](#), announced by Ontario Premier Doug Ford on January 12, 2021, has extended the remote learning period for elementary and secondary students until February 10, 2021. The stay-at-home order is part of decisive actions taken by the province to address the COVID-19 crisis.

While the extension prolongs the return to in-person learning, it does not change the instructional day for HWCDSB students who will continue to learn remotely as they have for the past two weeks. Pending further extensions, students will return to in-person learning on February 10, 2021.

### **Special Education**

Schools will continue to accommodate in-person instruction and transportation services for pre-qualified students with complex special education needs, per Ministry of Education direction.

### **Child care**

Under the provincial emergency order, child care centres will remain open during the extended period of remote learning. These services will be available to pre-school children only. Before and after school programs will reopen with the return to in-person learning on February 10, 2021.

### **New Health and Safety Measures**

To keep students, staff and communities safe, the Government will be introducing new health and safety measures for in-person learning, including outdoor masking requirements, enhanced screening protocols and targeted testing. Currently, indoor masking is mandatory for all HWCDSB students, JK to Grade 12. The new measures will now require that masks be worn for specified outdoor activities where physical distancing is not possible. In the coming weeks, information will also be shared with regard to expanded voluntary targeted testing for students, staff and their households to help with early identification of COVID-19 cases, particularly in schools with high case counts and outbreaks. In other prevention measures, school boards are being asked to discourage students from congregating in groups before and after school.

### **Elementary Reorganization**

In previous communications, we indicated that parents and guardians of elementary school children would be given an opportunity to change their child's model of learning (from face-to-face learning to virtual learning or virtual learning to face-to-face learning) at certain points during the school year. Due to the uncertainty around the return to in-person learning, the next change period originally scheduled for this week will be delayed. The new date will be shared with you at a later time.

**Change to Secondary Model of Learning**

To better support learning during these uncertain times, the HWCDSB will be moving to a hybrid model of instruction at the start of the second semester (February 4, 2021). The secondary hybrid model will allow teachers to deliver daily instruction in person to face-to-face learners and virtually to remote learners. More details on this new model of instruction will be provided by your child's secondary school. Please note, the **P.A. Day** previously scheduled for January 29, 2021 has been moved to **Wednesday, February 3, 2021** to allow teachers to prepare for the transition to the new hybrid learning model.

**Recognition of Challenges**

We know that the past ten months have been challenging and caused hardships for many students, families and our staff. In addition to our [in-house student mental health supports](#), School Mental Health Ontario has launched a [Student Mental Health Action Kit](#), which provides a number of student-friendly tools that can help students prepare for learning related to mental health.

In the coming weeks, the Action Kit will also be populated with resources and lesson plans that educators may use, as appropriate, to support student mental health literacy and to encourage help-seeking during this challenging time. We encourage you to visit the site for suggestions and supports to keep you and your children mentally healthy and well during this pandemic period.

**Importance of Prayer**

We know that the inability to attend mass or visit churches has been extremely difficult. Although mass has been put on pause for the duration of the shutdown, we encourage you to tune into CH TV on Sundays at 2 pm for televised masses from the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King. Other streaming services are available on parish websites.

**Message of Hope**

In his [New Year Message](#), His Excellency Bishop Crosby reminded us of the light that shines in the darkness. "Amidst all the strife, what we have witnessed time and time again this year is this deadly virus met head-on by the light of goodness. Illness and suffering have been faced down by the light of healthcare workers, by medical researchers, by families and caregivers," he wrote. "Poverty, isolation, and loneliness have been met with generosity, solidarity, and prayer."

Here, in our HWCDSB schools, we have seen that light shine in our students and staff who continue to be sources of real hope and goodness in our world. As our bishop urges, in the upcoming days and months, "let us see His light in others; let us be His light for others."



Patrick J. Daly  
Chairperson of the Board



David Hansen  
Director of Education