



July 31st, 2020

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

We hope that you are well and finding ways to enjoy the summer, albeit a very different one. At Waterloo Catholic we have missed seeing our staff and students in our schools – and we think that you would agree. We also know however, that all of us feel very strongly that if we are to return to our schools, we have to do so in a very safe and thoughtful manner. In the attached package, you will find a high-level introduction to all of the factors that we have been considering as we plan for the return of students. We know that we all want good learning to happen, but we are equally motivated to ensure that all our staff and students are feeling both safe and healthy, in mind, body and spirit.

There are some discussions that are ongoing and which may cause minor adjustments to our models or plans, but in the main, the attached document should give you a solid start in understanding our plans for the fall. Our new collective reality under COVID has tested all of us, and we know that things are evolving daily and understanding about best practices and the disease itself also continues to grow. Our commitment is to be informed by new knowledge and learning as it is presented.

In June we outlined that there were three possible scenarios under which a return to school might happen, and yesterday the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Education declared that all students of the province would be returning to schools for face to face learning. The provincial decision has been informed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, as well as the leading medical and health experts in the province. At Waterloo Catholic we have been preparing for this announcement and have engaged in thoughtful planning to ensure that health and safety of our staff and students remains a top priority. We are also prepared to “pivot” to any of the three scenarios, if we have to and remain confident that learning continuity will be possible.

We know that for elementary aged students the provincial announcement signaled a “**conventional return**”, which means attending school 5 days a week, full time. To the extent possible, “cohorting” will be observed, which means that every effort will be made to limit the number of contacts any one staff person or student comes into contact with, in the course of their day. Similarly – masks will be worn by students in grades 4 to 8, and remain an option for students in JK to grade 3, and to the extent possible physical distancing of 1 meter will be observed.

For secondary aged students, the province has indicated that all Waterloo Region schools will open under an “**adapted return**”, which means that students will attend face to face classes 50% of the time. Waterloo Catholic has committed to a “quadmester model” which means carrying only 2 courses at a time (it is a 4 term model instead of a 2 semester model). We have devised a model where students only see one cohort of students face to face on a given day, and access their second class remotely – from home. We have built this model to ensure both 300 minutes of instruction per week, while still giving maximum consideration to the health and safety of our staff and students. The attached document will provide you with more information. <https://www.wcdsb.ca/plan-for-re-opening-schools/>



It is currently the end of July and we are all heading into a long weekend. We still have five full weeks until the start of school and our planning will continue – at the board level and at the school level. We want to offer our assurances that we will be prioritizing health and safety, learning continuity and equity of access for all our students. Nonetheless, for some of our families, you may choose to have your child learn from home. That is an option for you. Please read the attached document carefully and then complete the survey that follows. We need EVERY family to complete the survey for EACH child, as that is how we will prepare properly for the fall. [Please complete this SURVEY](#)

Finally – as we have said before, we do encourage you to closely follow any and all directives from our governments and Waterloo Region Public Health. This has been a year and a summer unlike any other – and one we will all remember for some time to come. Continue to enjoy a restful and rejuvenating summer, but let's stay safe and healthy. May our faith that grounds us as people of love and people of hope give you strength in these times. We remain grateful for your trust in us to provide quality, faith-based, inclusive education.

Please reach out to us if you need help or guidance, and remain confident that we are here to support you, as we walk together as a hope-filled community. *#WCDSBTogether*.

Sincerely,

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

