



August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

The start of school is now just around the corner and it is our most sincere hope that while you may have some questions or apprehension about the return, that there is also an equal measure of joy and celebration to be returning just a little bit closer to life and learning as we previously knew it. Throughout the summer planning has been taking place and as we have said before, at the forefront of all our thinking has been a concern for Health and Safety. As you may know, frequent announcements and clarifications continued to be received by WCDSB senior staff and as a result, our plans did continue to be refined and did evolve. We have done our very best to not deviate too greatly from those plans upon which you based your decisions back in early August regarding your learning preference for your child as we return to school.

There is a fair bit of information contained within this letter, but I know you will agree that it is important to communicate what we know and to ensure you understand the plan. With that said, I would like to offer a few very important updates.

#### **The Parent Survey:**

We thank you for responding to our survey – we have heard from the greater majority of all families, but we must account for every student, so if you have not completed the survey – you **MUST** do so through your local school. We would ask that if you have completed the survey that you do **NOT** revisit the survey. The survey has been removed from our Board website. We can no longer allow parents to change their mind without compromising the safety of our students. We are planning based on survey responses and the information that informed your choice has not substantively changed since we launched the survey. We appreciate your understanding in this regard. We have approximately 13% of families who have selected to begin the year in our virtual school, now called St Isidore (the patron saint of the internet).

#### **Virtual School versus Home School:**

If your family/child has selected to begin the year learning virtually, then the student becomes shared between their home school and St Isidore. For full clarity – the student is no longer assigned to their home school teacher, but to their teacher in the virtual school, and all communication during that time will be with the virtual school teacher and administration. Should the decision be made to return to face to face learning – the student returns to their home school and is placed in a class with space.

#### **Secondary Model:**

As you know, our secondary model begins with 150 minutes of face to face instruction in the morning, by cohort. The afternoon features a synchronous (live learning with a teacher) period everyday for every student, followed by a 75 min asynchronous (not live) period everyday for every student. The



model remains similar to what we previously published, but the addition of the 75 minute asynchronous learning period, which will follow their every afternoon synchronous class of 75 minutes, is new. This will mean that each student experiences a full 300-minute learning day. This 75-minutes of asynchronous learning will flow from the previous synchronous lesson.

#### Transition Dates:

We previously published that changes could be made from virtual learning to face to face learning (or vice versa) at 4 week intervals. The deeper we have gone into the planning and with the number of students to schedule in our virtual school, we have had to make an adjustment. To that end:

**In Elementary:** families/students may transition after the first 4 weeks of instruction (Thanksgiving – accounting for the staggered start), but after that it will be only at Progress Reports in November and first Report Card in January.

**In Secondary:** families/students will be confined to transferring between learning modalities at the end of the term (November and thereafter end of January)

#### Staggered Start:

We know that there will be many new routines for our students to learn. And we are continuing to work hard to prepare our schools and to prepare our staff to welcome our students. We feel it is prudent and critical to a successful start to stagger the start of school for our students. We are also challenged to fully schedule and staff our virtual school(s). To that end, the following is the start up schedule for September:

#### Kindergarten

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Year 1 visits	All Year 2 students attend and continue to attend everyday	All Year 2 students attend school and half of the Year 1 students attend	All Year 2 students attend school and the other half of the Year 1 students attend

Grades 1 and 2	Sept 8th
Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4	Sept 9th
Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6	Sept 10th
Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8	Sept 11th
Secondary Cohort A	Sept 17th
Secondary Cohort B	Sept 14th
Elementary Virtual School	Sept 14th
Secondary Virtual School	Sept 17th



**Accessing my cohort and schedule:**

All information relevant to cohorts and student schedules will be available as of Wednesday Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>. We apologize that this is a little late, but in addition to all the challenges that come with preparing for this unique new reality, as a board we are also transitioning to a new Student Information System – a decision made long before COVID has become a reality.

Therefore – all students may log into their WCDSB student email cloud account, where you will find 2 emails with cohort and schedule information which will be available to you.

**Bussing:**

Students need to be reminded that seats on the bus are assigned and they are not to sit anywhere other than their assigned seat. Masks are required by all students to ride the bus. There will be masks on the bus available for a child who may have forgotten their mask. Secondary students should only report to buses on the day that their cohort is experiencing face to face learning.

**Health and Safety/Masking:**

As we all know, life for each of us has evolved. Masks are now part of our daily reality. Masks are a way of both containing the virus and protecting us from the virus. Per provincial direction and the public health authorities, masking will be mandatory for all students in grades 4-12. If a child needs to be exempted from wearing a mask, an exemption form must be completed and approved by the principal. The policy on masking will be found on our website shortly and the exemption form will be linked. Masks are also required by our students in grades K-3, but no form is required for an exemption if a child cannot wear a mask.

Students are encouraged to have their own refillable water bottle, to be encouraged to wash hands frequently and parents are asked to ensure that a self-assessment is completed everyday before coming to school. <https://covid19checkup.ca/>

Those students attending our Extended Day program must login to complete the digital (self) assessment form each morning before arriving at the program.

**Operational Guidelines:**

WCDSB has now published on its website our Operational Guidelines. They make clear the expectations for all members of our WCDSB community, as well as giving insights into the protocols required in our various program areas. While lengthy, I encourage you to review them, and in particular any area that is relevant to your child and their learning.

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/operational-guidelines/>



### Outbreak Protocol:

On Tuesday August 26<sup>th</sup>, the province outlined its Outbreak Protocol. It will be available on our WCDSB website in our Operational Guidelines, and the Minister has also referenced it in his letter to you. Rest-assured that there will be a prompt and transparent response anytime we are dealing with a staff or student member who has tested positive for COVID. We will coordinate that response with Waterloo Region Public Health. We do ask all students and parents to ensure a self-assessment has been done each and every day before coming to school. We also ask students to stay home if you are not feeling well.

A reminder that our plan for re-opening schools is available on our website and that we continue to update both the **FAQ section** and any other material as need be. Reviewing the plan and the Operational Guidelines when you have any questions is a great place to find answers.

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/plan-for-re-opening-schools/>

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/plan-for-re-opening-schools/#faq>

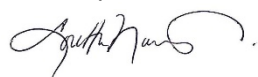
### Student Kits:

Every year we think about preparing a student's backpack. This year we have many more considerations as we prepare our students for their return. We want to ensure that we get off to a strong start and so we are currently preparing a personal learning kit for each and every student in our system. It will have all the basic learning materials a student needs for their learning and will ensure there is not sharing of those everyday items. And as outlined in our Operational Guidelines, we will have protocols to ensure we are not sharing/breaching safety when dealing with other items within our classrooms. The Learning Kits will not leave the classroom, for those students learning face to face. Contents of the kit can be seen within our Operational Guidelines.

So as I said – lots to process – and certainly a great deal more on our website, but the most important message is this: *we cannot wait to welcome our students back!* We have missed you and there is going to be great joy in being reunited, in hearing chatter and laughter in our classrooms and playgrounds once again. We are rooted in a faith that reminds us at every turn that we are people of hope. We know that we are a community that is strengthened by Christ and He teaches us to love unconditionally. We may stumble at times on our path, but if we pick each other up, if we walk side by side, if we show mercy and grace while seeing the face of Jesus in all whom we encounter, we will have a great year of learning. We are ready to welcome you back!

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

