



January 21st, 2021

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

We hope this letter finds you and your family well, and that you and your families are managing to stay positive during this most unique of years.

I must begin as I did at the beginning of the month by sincerely thanking all our staff for their exceptional efforts since our return from the break. It has been a learning curve for so many and we know that learning remotely as a full system, requires a great effort from everyone involved. In that spirit I also want to applaud our students and parents for their flexibility, as we have all adjusted to a new way of learning. We all continue to adapt throughout this year but at every turn, our students continue to learn and make strides forward. But more than that – they are hopefully understanding that there is a foundation of care, where their well-being is our highest priority.

The main purpose of this letter is to inform you that the government and Ministry of Education specifically, have communicated that Waterloo Region will continue learning remotely at this time. While a number of regions across the province have now returned to face-to-face learning, each region is being assessed based on the COVID positivity rates within that region. This approach will ensure that when our staff and students do return to the classroom, we will be doing so safely.

We know our schools are safe and there is a desire to ensure they remain safe. Closing the schools to in person learning for the remainder January and early February will help us contain the cases that come into schools and ensure that when we return to our buildings, we are doing so in the safest manner possible. It is our understanding that the next window for return will occur on February 11th. We would expect to hear approximately a week before then as to which regions will be permitted to return to face to face learning.

The continuing exception to this direction is our students with special education high needs in elementary, and our community active living and ELD students in secondary. Families who are affected by this option for learning have already been contacted directly. We offer our sincerest thanks to the staff who have been going into our buildings and serving those students.

The one other relevant update you may be wondering about is the elementary school transition survey. There was to be one final opportunity for parents to indicate if they wanted their children to learn remotely for the remainder of the year. This survey was to take place January 27th to 29th. Given that we are all remote at this time and that we will not be well served by any transitions at this time, **we will defer the survey until our return date and circumstances are clear.** We will be sure to clearly communicate the survey dates to you when we are ready to administer the survey.



Once again, we encourage you to visit [Ontario.ca/covidresponse](https://www.ontario.ca/covidresponse) to learn what public health measures are in place in our community – but also please be aware that these could change depending on the most current public health advice. We also suggest checking out the WCDSB website <https://www.wcdsb.ca/living-learning-looking-forward/> and Region of Waterloo Public Health website <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx> as they contain helpful resources and supports. If you have any questions about what your particular school is doing, please reach out to your local school principal.

I will also take this opportunity to remind that mental health resources are available to students and families through Kids Help Phone, which offers 24/7 counselling and referral services across the province. To use this free resource, children can call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868.

If there are any further updates we will certainly share them as soon as possible. Please know that we continue to be in this together and day by day we will make it through. Let's continue to remain people of hope, informed by our Faith and a desire to do the best for the students in our care. 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. *#InThisTogether*

Sincerely,

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

