



February 4th, 2021

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

We have made it through what felt like a long January. We sincerely hope that this letter finds you and your family well, and that you and your families are finding ways to stay positive during this challenging time. Today's letter brings another update – one that has been eagerly awaited by many of our staff and students.

On Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> the Minister of Education, informed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, declared that schools in Waterloo Region could return to in person learning. As I said, I know that our staff have been amazing in delivering learning remotely for the past several weeks, but we also know that the majority of staff and students are keen to return to their schools and in person learning. Thank you to our staff and to all our students and families who have been so wonderful during this time. We know it was not always easy.

The numbers for COVID-19 positive cases in the region have come down dramatically and this is a very good thing. As I have said in previous communications, working remotely for a few weeks now ensures that as our staff and students return to the classroom, we will be doing so safely. With that said – there are a few updates and reminders of which to be aware:

**Masking:** Students in Grades K -12 require masks, and students from grades 1-12 will require a formal approved exemption form if they are unable to wear a mask. (The requirement for a formal exemption form in grades 1-3 if a child is unable to wear a mask is a new addition) Students in Grades 1 – 8 should bring a second mask daily that they can use for outdoor activities, such as recess. Washing masks on a daily basis so that they remain clean and effective, is recommended.

**Screening:** Staff and students continue to be required to Self Screen before arriving at school (or immediately upon arrival). Staff and secondary students will now have to provide confirmation of having completed their self screening on a daily basis. Secondary classroom teachers will complete that confirmation upon the student's arrival in class. The student self-screener is found here: [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#)

**Elementary Transition Survey:** I would also like to provide an update on the elementary school transition survey. There was to be one final opportunity for parents to indicate if they wanted their children to return back to in person learning or if they wished to switch to remote learning for the remainder of the year. This survey was originally to take place January 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>. We will now administer the **survey on February 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>**, immediately after Family Day Weekend. The official transition date for any student who chooses to change their learning method will be **Monday March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**



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 continue to remind all community members 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. Thank you for all that you have done to walk with us through this time. Let's continue to remain people of hope, informed by our Faith. 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

