



August 26th, 2021

Dear WCDSB Community,

The last days of summer are winding down and we know that everyone's thoughts have turned to the return to school. We cannot wait to welcome all our staff and students back! We hope you have had a safe, restful and enjoyable summer. This letter brings a few important updates about our return and provides a link to a much more detailed overview of our Operational Guidelines.

### **Return to In Person Learning**

All schools will be open this September and St Isidore (our virtual school, for those who enrolled last June) will operate dedicated classes at the elementary level. We will use a hybrid model in secondary for those students who have selected online learning for this year. For our elementary students, their classroom is their main cohort, but students will be able to access specialized supports where needed. In secondary – it will be a 2 period day. Each class will be 150 minutes, with a 40 minute lunch in between.

### **Vaccination**

On August 17<sup>th</sup> the Government of Ontario announced that they (and we by extension) will implement an immunization disclosure policy for all publicly funded school board employees and licensed child cares. For those staff who cannot attest that they are fully vaccinated, they will be completing regular testing before reporting to their school or workplace. The Chief Medical Officer of Health and Waterloo Region Public Health also strongly endorse all students ages 12 and older to access vaccination.

### **Masking**

Students from K to 12 will continue to wear masks. An exemption form is required for any student in grades 1 to 12 who is unable to wear a mask. We will be strongly supporting this precaution, as Public Health and provincial guidance suggests that outside of vaccination, it is our best strategy to promote a healthy and safe environment for all. We ask you to work with us to support students in understanding why we wear a mask and how to do so safely. Those requesting an accommodation under the Human Rights Code should submit their exemption request to their school Principal.

### **Hand Hygiene and Distancing**

We are pleased to share that there will be more access to resources and learning materials. We will take a cautious approach but students will be sharing more objects within their classroom and have



access to our learning commons spaces (libraries), so hand hygiene and distancing will remain important practices. School staff will work with students to reinforce the strong habits that ensure a robust and safe learning environment for all.

### **Daily Screening**

All staff and students are still required to complete daily screening, using the Ontario School Screener. The tool is being updated to reflect the new protocols and we will share it and post it in our Operational Guidelines as soon as it is available. This request is extremely important. Any individual who is symptomatic should not come to school, even if they believe it is not COVID-19.

### **Lockers, Lunches and Recess**

- The use of lockers and cubbies will be permitted this year. Once again hand hygiene will be critical, students must be masked at all times in these areas and there is a 5 minute time limit at a locker and students should avoid congregating.
- In secondary there will be some limited use of the cafeteria for selected classes; other students will have the option to eat in their classroom or leave the school building for the lunch period. There will be no food service in the secondary cafeterias.
- Students in K-8 benefit from their breaks, activity and social time at recess. Masks do not have to be worn outside for recess, but it is always an option to do so.

### **Learning Kits for next year**

Finally, just a short word to say that as shared last spring, we will be providing students and families from grades JK – 12 with WCDSB Learning Kits. It is a small way to ensure health and safety, while saying to you that you matter to us! We value your faith in WCDSB and we cannot wait to welcome you back!

**Please review** our full [Operational Guidelines](#) to ensure you understand how we are ensuring a safe and happy return to school.

We are truly looking forward to a year that allows us to embrace a renewed love of learning, within our faith-based communities. We remain every grateful for your continued support and remain ready and willing to assist you as we transition back to what will undoubtedly be a #WCDSBAwesome year!

Sincerely

Loretta Notten  
Director of Education

