



October 29th, 2021

Dear WCDSB Community,

We hope that you continue to be well and that you are enjoying some of the beauty that the fall season affords us. We are pleased that, for the moment, cases seem to be slowing provincially and in the region, and in general, currently we are seeing fewer cases in our schools.

This letter brings a few important updates of which we would like you to be aware as they are important to your understanding as to how things are unfolding and precautions we wish to continue to enforce, so that we may continue on a safe, healthy and positive path as a community.

Screening

As we have shared before, please know that one of the most important things you do each and every day is to complete the screening tool before you as a staff member or student (or parent of a student) arrive at school. Any individual who fails the screener or who is symptomatic in any way should not be reporting to school. That is part of our collective responsibility to one another.

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>

Vaccination

We have started our conversations with Waterloo Region Public Health about vaccination for our 5-11 year olds but at this point, things are still in the planning and approval stage. As updates become available and we have specifics to share, we will be in touch as promptly as possible.

Testing

On October 28th, the government did share additional updates in relation to program with PCR testing and rapid antigen testing (“Test to Stay”). In both cases these programs feed from pilot programs in the province, and will be utilized when deemed necessary. Both are in relation to when there are positive cases being experienced in a given school community. There are specific criteria tied to their use and are not general surveillance/screening tools.

Sports / Athletics

As reported in my last letter, we have been pleased to see the return of athletics and sport to our schools and for inter-scholastic play to have returned for those age 12 and older. The criteria to play is full vaccination and/or proof of a negative test. This strategy is being used in a very targeted way for students who are not able to use our other usual strategies to ensure their safety – that is – they are unable to ensure masking and social distancing. We have been heartened by how well received the return to athletics has gone, and remain enormously grateful to our (coaching) staff for



supporting this “return to play/competition”. The tests we were able to provide, through the support of a local partner, are no longer available to us. At a provincial level, informed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, they have indicated we are no longer able to access or provide the tests. We are disappointed by this decision as we did feel it was a safe and equitable way to deliver sports. Our policy that a player /athlete must be fully vaccinated or provide evidence of a negative test has not changed. Families will now have to source the tests. Below we provide some links where those purchases may be made. Of course, vaccination remains an option.

<https://rapidtestcanada.ca/product/covid-19-rapid-test-maple/>

<https://rapidtestandtrace.ca/>

Inclement Weather Protocol

Every year at this time we like to share some reminders about protocols for snow days. As you know – there are sometimes days in the winter when we have to cancel bussing due to the weather and unsafe driving conditions for our buses. In the past, if roads were still passable, we would leave schools open. On those days however, we often pooled classes based on the number of staff who fully attended and the number of students. This year, as was the case last year, that is not possible due to our covid cohort- related restrictions. In consultation with the public board, with whom we share bussing, when we cancel buses, we will close schools and have a remote learning day. Your teacher will communicate with you in advance so you know where to look for school work for the day and protocols on such days, but in broad terms, the teachers will post work in the morning, no later than 9:30 a.m. and students will work on their own timing in their home. It will allow all students to access some learning and we will be continuing to keep one and all safe. We realize it may not be a perfect solution and learning day, but bus snow days rarely were. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience and hope that we are not in this situation too often.

Potential Travel

A reminder that students under 12, travelling with vaccinated parents do not have to quarantine per se, but they are not allowed to return to school until 14 days from return have passed. This guidance is found on our webpage. This is federal policy we are sharing.

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/covid-19-student-screening-and-testing/>

Please review our full [Operational Guidelines](#) to ensure you understand how we are continuing to ensure a safe and happy school experience for all.

We are grateful for your support and partnership as we navigate this unique year.

Sincerely

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

