



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Believing, Achieving, Serving

August 5, 2021

Dear Students and Learners of St. Charles:

On August 3, 2021, the Provincial Government released the [COVID-19 Health Safety and Operational Guidance for Schools \(2021-2022\)](#). Like you, we are encouraged by the new, updated guidance and are eager to see schools return to a more normal routine with extracurriculars, school and faith celebrations, and other activities that are such an intrinsic part of Catholic school life. Based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the new measured approach to reopening continues to focus on the health and safety of students and staff, recognizing that a return to activities such as music, sports, faith formation activities, clubs and field trips is an essential part of our students' mental, spiritual and physical well-being.

Beginning this September, schools will open for in-person learning under conditions that are as "normal" as safely possible. As part of this "near normal" return:

- Elementary and secondary students will return to in-person learning daily for the full school day (5 instructional hours). Elementary students will remain in one cohort for the duration of the day. In a quadmester learning model, secondary students will receive timetables with no more than two courses at a time. The full breadth of programming for students, including special education services, will be offered.
- All students and staff will be required to wear masks while indoors and students, on the school bus. Staff and students will be required to self-screen daily and continue to follow public health measures such as hand hygiene, cohorting, and physical distancing.
- Extracurricular and inter-school sports will be permitted with certain modifications.

For more information on protective strategies, student transportation, ventilation, mental health and student supports, academic programs, extra-curricular activities and community use of schools, and management of COVID-19 in schools, please see [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#).

COVID-19 youth vaccines

We know that vaccination is an important tool to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and allow students, families and staff to safely resume normal activities. Parents can support their children to be vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the start of the school year as an important step in the fight against this disease. There are many locations in Hamilton for youth 12-17 to get their first and second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, such as large-scale clinics, primary care-led clinics, mobile pop-up clinics and local pharmacies. Vaccines can be accessed both on a walk-in basis at many of these locations or by booking an appointment. Information regarding walk-in options, booking an appointment and COVID-19 vaccines is available at hamilton.ca/GetYourVaccine. The HWCDSB is also partnering with Hamilton Public Health Services to offer school-based vaccine clinics to provide students with easy access to the COVID-19 vaccine. More details will follow.

Rebuild, Restore, Renew Together

With school now less than a month away, we want to assure you of our absolute commitment to the health, safety and well-being of our students and staff. Our focus is not only on a safe and more normal school opening but, through our collective efforts, a year in which we keep schools open. Over the past several weeks, our plant operations staff have been inspecting school ventilation systems, replacing air filters and installing HEPA filters and other ventilation devices to improve ventilation and optimize air quality in schools. We are also developing a Board centric reopening plan for September which will provide more detailed information on learning models, extracurriculars, outdoor education, field trips, transportation, health & safety measures, mental health resources and supports, COVID-19 case management and contact tracing, and more. It all speaks to the great hope suggested in this year's Catholic Education Week theme, "Rebuild, Restore, Renew Together." Recognizing that a building is only as strong as its foundation, we would like to acknowledge and express deep appreciation to our system and school leaders, teachers and support staff for their steadfastness and dedication during the darkest days of the pandemic. We also want to recognize our amazing students and thank you, their parents, for your understanding and support throughout these challenging and complex times.

We look forward to a new school year and its promise of light, hope and stability and pray that through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother, you and your families have a safe and enjoyable remainder of the summer.



Patrick J. Daly
Chairperson of the Board



David Hansen
Director of Education