



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

October 9, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Last week, we shared with you the province's revised [COVID-19 Screening Guidance for Students in School and Child Care](#) as well as a new [COVID-19 school screening tool](#) to assist you in screening your child(ren) each day before attending school. As a further support, Hamilton Public Health Services (HPHS) has updated their "Decision Guides for Symptomatic Children" to assist parents and guardians in understanding the appropriate actions when children become ill at home or at school.

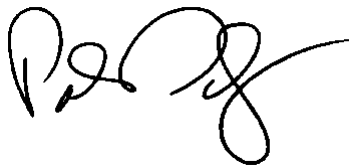
The attached guides, which can also be accessed on the [City of Hamilton website](#), align with changes to the province's screening guidance and COVID-19 symptoms list. Like the provincial guidance, the screening focuses on the type and number of symptoms. This information informs next steps, including self-isolation requirements and conditions for returning to school. In consultation with HPHS, the HWCDSB has also developed an attestation form for students who have been away from school. Families whose child was absent from school due to a failed Ontario COVID-19 school screening or illness will be required to complete the form declaring that it is safe for your child to return to child care or school (elementary and secondary).

These protocols are important to keep our students, staff and schools safe as our community prepares for a second wave of COVID-19. Completing the daily school screening before going to school and keeping your child(ren) home when they are sick are just some of the ways we can reduce virus spread. Physical distancing, frequent hand washing and wearing masks are additional measures we can take to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and keep each other safe. While we understand that for medical reasons it may not be possible for some individuals to wear a non-medical mask at school, masks are mandatory for all others. Face shields, however, are optional and are available to students at the discretion of parents. Please be aware that if students, staff and visitors are able to wear masks but choose not to, they do not qualify for a mask exemption and in-person attendance at school or the workplace without a mask will not be allowed. We greatly appreciate the support we have received from our students and parents for our mask mandate which, beyond the obvious health and safety benefits, demonstrates a wonderful Christian concern for the well-being of others.

As we head into flu season, our continued public health practices are hoped to not only prevent COVID-19 transmission, but reduce the spread of flu. In the coming days, Public Health will be setting up flu clinics throughout the city. The Public Agency of Canada recommends that all people 6 months and older get a yearly flu vaccine. During this current pandemic, it is more important than ever to reduce the spread of flu to protect the health of children but also to keep our hospitals and healthcare facilities from becoming overwhelmed. To find out more about flu and flu shot options, please visit www.hamilton.ca/flu.

In closing, we wish you and your family a blessed Thanksgiving weekend. Despite the challenges of our present times, we are grateful for our staff, students and parents who serve as true symbols of hope in our world, and give thanks for the gift of publicly funded Catholic Education. In the words of the late St. John Paul II, "Remember the past with gratitude. Live the present with Enthusiasm. Look forward to the future with confidence."

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Hope, we continue to pray for the well-being of our students, staff and families and for publicly funded Catholic Education.



Patrick J. Daly
Chairperson of the Board



David Hansen
Director of Education