May 26th, 2021

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

We are sitting on the cusp of June and at this point it is not 100% clear if we are headed back to face-to-face learning in this school year. We will certainly be in touch should any development arise in this regard. We know that this has been a challenging time for many students, their families and for staff to learn remotely online, but we are grateful to all for the many efforts you have made to make it work. With that said – we are also very much planning ahead to next year at this time. In that spirit, this letter contains a number of updates about the end of this year and the planning for next year. I encourage every parent or guardian to read each of the updates very carefully.

Vaccination:
All students ages 12 to 17 years of age are now eligible for vaccination. This is excellent and welcome news as we know that it will bring our students, their families and our schools an added measure of protection and safety. Students who are 12 to 17 years of age (and any family member who is not vaccinated as yet) may register for and attend the vaccination clinics that will be available the weeks of June 14th and June 21st. Some clinics will also be available the week of June 7th. During those weeks – 12 to 17 years olds (and their families) will be the highest priority for vaccination. Second booster shot vaccines will be available in August so that students can return to school fully vaccinated. Further details will be shared in the coming days as they become available, but all 12-17-year-olds are now eligible for vaccine pre-registration. WR Vaccination Pre-Registration. Please stay tuned for further details on this important initiative.

Transition Survey for 2021-22 School Year:
As mentioned in March and even more so now, our planning for the 2021-2022 school year is now underway. We are working on staffing and budget, and we must make decisions for next year at this time. For this reason, we are now asking ALL families to confirm if they have a desire for online learning for their child(ren). Even if you completed the survey in March, you are asked to complete the survey again to confirm your choice. If you do not complete the survey – we will assume your child is returning to face-to-face learning. Next week – May 31st through June 3rd – we will have a survey on our Board website for any parent/family that wishes to choose virtual learning again for next year. That said – it will be a one-time choice. That is, there will not be transition periods during the year. A choice for virtual will be a choice for September through June. If you register for St Isidore, our virtual school, you will no longer be affiliated with your current home school, (for the 2021-2022 school year). You will have the option to re-register for the following school year (2022-2023).

A few things to note about your choice for online learning:
- This is a single choice for the full year (September through June)
- Vaccinations are expected for students 12 – 17; pediatric vaccine for those 5-11 are in development but cannot be confirmed at this time
- All staff that wish to be vaccinated will be vaccinated by September
- If you were a French Immersion student and you were online this year, if you choose a second year of online learning you will forfeit your spot in French Immersion
- In secondary we expect to begin the year in a quadmester model with students attending two classes per day. If things progress well, we hope to see a semester model (carrying 4 courses over the course of half the year) by the second half of the year. There is also the hope that extra-curriculars may return at some point next year.
- There will not be the opportunity for inter-scholastic or varsity sports if you attend school virtually.
- If there are not sufficient numbers for a dedicated online secondary school, a hybrid model will be considered. This involves students connecting remotely to the face-to-face class using video conferencing, (as opposed to a dedicated virtual class).
- Certain secondary subjects may not be possible or may be significantly compromised in their delivery through our online offering – for example, technology courses, some SHSM red seal specialities, senior level sciences and some performing arts.

We know that some students have found virtual to be a good way to learn. We do, in the main, feel that for a variety of reasons not only connected to academics, but to a young person’s social emotional well-being, that attending school in person is likely the preferred option for most students, when all things are equal. Please give this decision careful consideration. The transition survey will be available directly from our Board homepage or can be accessed directly here: Transition Survey 2021-22

Graduation:
After further discussion with school and senior administrators about the best way to support and honour our 2021 graduates, it has been decided that the release of all WCDSB secondary school virtual graduations for this year will be postponed until October 2021. This will allow time to properly gather data for all awards and designations and allow for schools to complete graduation preparations that were not yet completed due to COVID restrictions.

We will continue to plan for alternative ways to celebrate our graduates in June based on Ministry of Education and Public Health announcements and guidelines. Any additional information will be posted to our Grade 12 Google classroom. Similarly local elementary schools will share the details of graduations with parents. While not the graduation celebrations we might have hoped for, we will do our best to honour this significant milestone in our students’ lives.

Once again, we suggest checking out the WCDSB website https://www.wcdsb.ca/living-learning-looking-forward/ and Region of Waterloo Public Health website

Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education | wcdsb.ca
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.

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, we have almost made it through this most exceptional of years and we are now looking forward to the promise of a new school year. Thank you for your patience, your partnership and your support as we have journeyed through this year. 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,

[Signature]

Loretta Notten
Director of Education