



Balaclava Elementary School

PROUD SCHOOL OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

280 10th Concession E
Freelton, Ontario L8B 1H6
Phone: 905.659.3396
Fax: 905.659.0901

EMAIL: balaclava@hwdsb.on.ca
PRINCIPAL: Anna Ricci
aricci@hwdsb.on.ca
www.hwdsb.on.ca/balaclava

August 27, 2025

Welcome Back Balaclava Bobcats, I am so excited to become a part of the Balaclava community this year as Principal! I've heard such wonderful things about the students, staff, and families that make up this vibrant school community, and I'm really looking forward to getting to know each of you and becoming part of the Balaclava team.

As the 2025-26 school year quickly approaches, we are excited to welcome our Grade 1 to 8 students on Tuesday, September 2, 2025 and our Kindergarten students Wednesday, September 3, 2025.

Beginning the new school year can be a time of excitement, nervousness and energy for students, staff and families alike. But the start of the school year at Balaclava is also a time of new beginnings filled with opportunities for all students to experience a sense of belonging, engage in dynamic learning and reach their full potential. To help Balaclava families prepare for their child(ren)'s return to the classroom, we would like to share the following information:

We also invite families to keep up with communications from HWDSB by [subscribing to email updates](#) or [following HWDSB on social media](#)

For information about HWDSB's Code of Conduct and Reducing Distractions in classrooms, please click here: [Reducing Distractions in Classrooms and Schools | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

To see the 2025-2026 school year calendar, please visit [School Year Calendar | Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#)

Please find 2025-2026 Transportation information here: [Hamilton Wentworth Student Transportation Services](#)

Food Days

Balaclava's amazing Home and School Association will again be offering food beginning in October. Please watch the school website and Home and School communication

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regarding more information. Please note the new website for our Home and School Association: [Balaclava Home and School Association](#)

Transportation

Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) provides students with safe and secure transportation for eligible students by HWSTS. For more information about your child's bus number, stop or times, visit HWDSB's [Transportation webpage](#). Please remember to re-check information prior to sending your child(ren) to their assigned pickup location on Tuesday, September 2, 2025, as changes can occur. We encourage all families using Transportation this year to sign up for the Parent Transportation Portal. This will ensure you are sent updates directly when your child's bus may be late. For families choosing to drop off/pick up their child at Balaclava, please note that our parking lot entrance is now at the far east end of the lot (previously this was the exit). Please move slowly and safely through the lot, particularly in those busy times. If you want to provide your child(ren) with permission to walk home or ride a bike home, please send an email to balaclava@hwdsb.on.ca. Without such communication, we need to put students on their assigned buses at the end of the day. Students will continue to only be able to ride on their assigned bus. Families looking to make after school plans with other students/families will need to make alternate arrangements; students are not able to ride on alternate buses.

Code of Conduct

HWDSB is committed to making each one of its schools a caring place that is safe for learning. Every student deserves to feel and be safe in a school, on the school grounds, on the school bus and at school events and activities. Visit HWDSB's [Code of Conduct webpage](#) to learn about these changes.

Family Communication

HWDSB offers many ways for parents and caregivers to stay connected. To learn how you can access the most up-to-date information, visit [HWDSB's Parent page](#). We also invite families to keep up with HWDSB by [subscribing to email updates](#) or following HWDSB [on social media](#).

At Balaclava, we also use our school website for frequent communication. To sign up for email links when a post is made, please go to <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/balaclava/>

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And hit the subscribe button.

For classroom communication, our grade 1 to 8 students will come home the first week with an agenda and Kindergarten students will have an important bag. These tools can be used to help you and classroom educators connect and share information.

SchoolMessenger

Balaclava and all HWDSB schools use SchoolMessenger to notify families about unexplained absences, as well as other important announcements. Families can use the free [SchoolMessenger app or website](#) to choose how they wish to receive these messages. Please contact your child(ren)'s school to provide current - or to change - your information.

Student Dress Guidelines

Please see our updated Student Dress Guidelines to help foster positive and inclusive learning environments. Developed with extensive student input and community consultation, these guidelines focus on equity, dignity, and well-being for every student. They can express themselves freely, without fear of bias or discrimination. Visit hwdsb.info/student-dress to learn more.

Volunteer Opportunities

Balaclava and HWDSB values and appreciates dedicated volunteers who share their time and talents in support of healthy, positive and flourishing school communities. If you are interested in exploring volunteer opportunities like School Council please contact the school at balaclava@hwdsb.on.ca if you are interested in volunteering for Home and School food days and special events, please contact balaclavahands@gmail.com. Please see HWDSB's [Volunteers in Schools](#) page for more information.

Personal Student Devices at School

PPM 128 came into effect in September of 2024. The goal of this new action is to reduce distractions and improve the health of children. This impacts Balaclava students because all students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 must have their devices stored out of view and powered off (or on silent mode) **throughout the full instructional day (school day)**, including nutrition breaks.

Students are responsible for their personal mobile devices and how they use them. If an educator sees a personal mobile device not stored out of view and powered off, the



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student must **hand it in for the instructional day**. It will be placed by the student in a storage area in a location designated by the educator.

Bell Times

Balaclava's bell times:

9:15 Entry and Period 1
10:15 Period 2
10:55 Nutrition Break 1
11:35 Period 3
12:25 Period 4
1:15 Nutrition Break 2
1:55 Period 5
2:35 Period 6
3:35 Dismissal

At Balaclava, we are committed to partnering with our families to ensure that your child(ren)'s school experience reflects HWDSB's values – dignity, trust, compassion and joy. We are committed to ensuring your child(ren) are celebrated for who they are, experience safe and caring school environments and are supported to achieve their own academic success and positive learning outcomes.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out at 905.659.3396 or balaclava@hwdsb.on.ca

Sincerely,
Anna Ricci
Principal
aricci@hwdsb.on.ca