

HWDSB

April 17, 2020

Dear Families,

Thank you for your patience as we move through these difficult times. The situation continues to evolve, and our commitment is to keep you informed. Our intention is to touch base with you on a weekly basis with updates and further information.

This week, the Ontario government extended the Declaration of Emergency until May 12, on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and with the approval of the Ontario legislature. We continue to wait for the official notification from the Ministry of Education regarding a school closure extension. We remain committed to our plan, [*Caring in the face of challenge: learning and support during COVID-19*](#).

Deployment of Student Devices

This week, staff supported our unprecedented distribution of technology, so that all students can participate in distance learning. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all staff supporting this successful implementation.

Approximately 6,000 school devices were deployed to students this week with approximately 1,000 more internet-enabled devices to be deployed next week. We are prepared if the demand increases over time, as family situations might change. Many of these are assistive devices essential for students receiving special education supports.

If you need a device or if your situation has changed, please contact your child's school.

Supporting Learning at Home

As we continue in this new phase of learning at home, some students have unique learning needs when it comes to planning and organizational skills, including the ability to develop and follow a routine, to break down more complex tasks and to complete their work. These difficulties may increase when learning from home, as the normal supports, environment and routines of the classroom have changed. To help parents with strategies to support this learning at home, Specialized Services has developed a new resource: [Help your child learning at a distance: tips for parents](#).

As always, families should connect with their child's teacher about specific lessons and additional supports required.

Cancellations

We regret to inform you of another decision we have had to make about cancellations. All athletics, proms, banquets and similar events are cancelled for the remainder of the school year. We will

HWDSB

communicate early next week regarding June graduation ceremonies, including elementary school celebrations. We know how significant these milestones are for students and families. We are exploring other options and awaiting further updates from the province before finalizing our decision.

School Construction

As you may know, Ontario's announcement about essential services deemed some construction work essential. However, construction work for schools does not fall into the essential service category. This means that the following HWDSB projects have been paused due to COVID-19:

New builds on pause

- Greensville – New elementary school
- Rockton – New elementary school
- Memorial (Stoney Creek) – New elementary school
- School on the Glen Campus– New elementary school
- Spring Valley – New elementary school
- Nora Frances Henderson – New secondary school

Renovations on pause

- Ancaster High – Window replacement and two elevator installations
- Glendale – Renovations of science labs
- W.H. Ballard – Playground paving
- Saltfleet – Natural turf field and track
- Sir Allan MacNab – Elevator installation and accessibility

Some work may occur on these sites, as general contractors make them safe during the pause. Despite the pause, we continue to be on track with our new school openings and construction renovation projects. However, if this does change due to the duration of the pause, we will provide an update to our communities next month.

Maintaining School Facilities

All HWDSB schools will continue to receive regular security checks, inspections, maintenance and, when necessary, deep cleaning. We want to ensure that they remain in a state of good repair and available for students when we reopen. HWDSB takes its lead from Hamilton Public Health Services and should the public health department advise the school board to take any additional precautions, we will implement them immediately.

COVID-19 Relief Fund

Hamilton Foundation for Student Success has established the COVID-19 Relief Fund to ensure that HWDSB students have equal opportunities to stay healthy, learn, grow and succeed during this difficult time. The COVID-19 Relief Fund is focusing funding to fulfill the nutritional and technological needs of students who no longer have access to in-school nutrition programs and technology.

For those who are looking for an opportunity to help, please donate to the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

HWDSB

Food Supports

We thank our nutrition partners for their ongoing support through these unprecedented times. The Hamilton Bulldog's Foundation, Food4Kids and Tastebuds continue to be responsive in their mandate of providing our students and families with stability in food security.

Partnerships like these are instrumental in helping HWDSB create a foundation for student achievement and well-being. We continue to collaborate with community organizations to address the changing needs that our families experience.

[Hamilton Food Share](#) continues to respond to the rapidly evolving situation in the city as a result of COVID-19. Hamilton Food Share is an emergency food bank hub that supplies healthy food to 12 food banks and hot meal programs across Hamilton.

Community Supports

We continue to add to the listing of community supports available for families on our web page, www.hwdsb.on.ca/covid19. The following have been added:

- **Financial Support:** As of March 30, 2020, many types of financial support are available to help individuals and families experiencing challenges due to COVID-19. Learn more [here](#).
- **Learning Supplies/Resources:** Ontario funding that families can apply for if they have children who are not in school or childcare because of coronavirus (COVID-19), visit this [Province of Ontario web page](#).
- **Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan:** Visit the [Government of Canada website](#) for more to help Canadians who are facing financial hardship.

HWDSB Board Operations

Trustees continue to meet, to bring public debate, transparency and accountability to Board decisions, including the spring budget process. Trustee meetings are now using a virtual format to respect physical distancing. Our next Board meeting is Monday, April 20, at 7 p.m. and will be streamed live on the HWDSB [YouTube channel](#).

This closure has brought significant challenges and change to our system, but we continue to put student learning and well-being at the forefront of our operations.

HWDSB

If you are struggling with the impacts resulting from the COVID-19 situation, you are not alone. Our [mental health resources](#) are available to support you and your family.

As always, we invite you to contact your school with questions. If you need further assistance, you can reach Board staff by phone at 905-527-5092 or by email to info@hwdsb.on.ca. Previous letters and more detailed information can be found at www.hwdsb.on.ca/covid19.

Stay well and be safe,



Alex Johnstone
Chair of the Board



Manny Figueiredo
Director of Education