

HWDSB

March 20, 2020

Dear Families,

As March Break nears an end, the Ministerial Order remains in effect and **schools are closed until April 5** to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We are deeply grateful to Hamilton Public Health Services, healthcare workers and all those helping in the response.

Education plays a role in this collective response. HWDSB staff are ready to help and support our students and families during this unprecedented time.

HWDSB's COVID-19 Contingency Committee has been meeting daily to develop two plans. The first plan is for a safe and structured reopening of schools in the scenario that Ontario schools reopen on April 6, 2020. The second plan is to deliver a remote learning strategy in the event that Ontario schools remain closed for a longer duration.

Continuity of Learning for Students

Our top focus is to support the continuity of learning for all students. Earlier today, the Minister of Education announced the first phase of Learning at Home, which can be accessed at www.ontario.ca/education.

At HWDSB, our Learning Services division is working quickly to develop an implementation plan for the second phase of Learning at Home that will complement the Ministry of Education resources.

Parents can expect contact from our educators throughout this Ministerial Order. Our efforts to continue learning for students will be a phased approach. Next week, we will release more information as we identify local learning needs, develop resources, establish training, and consider logistics.

Our priority is to identify the barriers in a continuity of learning plan to ensure that we meet the needs of all our students. Examples of barriers include equity of access to technology and the internet, as well as support for our most vulnerable student populations.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Assessments

EQAO assessments are cancelled for the 2019-20 school year, including the graduation requirement for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test for students graduating in the 2019-20 school year. In addition, students poised to graduate will continue on this path, regardless of the provincial COVID-19 response.

HWDSB

Mental Health Resources

These are anxious times. Families can access School Mental Health Ontario resources to support your child's well-being from our Board website's [Mental Health and Well-being page](#).

Public Health Resources

Families are to take the advice of public health. We appreciate that you are practicing social distancing and staying at home, if you can. Another preventative measure is to wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.

For health information about COVID-19, contact [Hamilton Public Health Services](#). Hamilton residents can contact the COVID-19 hotline at 905-974-9848 or phscovid19@hamilton.ca.

Reliable Information

Be on alert. Fraud and crime by email or electronic means remain a real threat during these challenging times. Heightened vigilance is required. Reliable sources of information include:

- [City of Hamilton](#)
- [Province of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)

Stay Connected

During this closure, it is important that you stay connected. Visit the HWDSB website at www.hwdsb.on.ca for updates and follow HWDSB on social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). We will also communicate with families through our SchoolMessenger service (phone calls, emails and SMS messages).

As an HWDSB family, we will miss seeing our students and staff in person. Our staff are committed to student learning and we thank them for their valued contribution. We want to assure you that we care about our students and we will do what we can to engage with families during this time.

Be safe and stay well,



Alex Johnstone
Chair of the Board



Manny Figueiredo
Director of Education