

# HWDSB

August 20, 2020

Dear families,

As we prepare for the first day of school, we know that your priority remains your child's safety, health and education. We share this commitment as we prioritize the well-being of students and staff.

This week, families are considering important decisions about the return to school. We are doing everything in our preparations for school to minimize the COVID-19 risk through enhanced public health measures.

For some, the return to school means this could be the first time that your child has been away from you at home since March. This is a stressful time and we feel the collective uncertainty. We are trying to make options open for you and your family. Please refer to [Mental Well-being during COVID-19](#).

## Parent Portal

Our enhanced Parent Portal is now open. Activate your account by visiting [Parent Portal](#). We apologize for issues that have caused frustration among some parents accessing their accounts this week. A team of staff are working to provide access for those parents who experienced challenges. Initiating this digital platform will have lasting communication benefits for parents during and beyond COVID-19.

***Parent Portal Support: For concerns related to accessing the platform, please complete the [Parent Portal Support Form](#). Your concern will be sent to a staff member who will make the correction as soon as possible. An email will be sent to the email on file once the changes are made. You will then be able to try again. As always, email [info@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:info@hwdsb.on.ca) or call 905-527-5092 for additional help.***

You are guaranteed your pre-registration preference so long as you submit your intention for in-person or remote learning by August 25 at noon. After this time, we will work with you as much as possible to honour your choice.

## Elementary:

- 1. Pre-registration:** In the Parent Portal, you can go to your child's profile (each child is named on the tab across the top of the menu bar) and then click the Forms tab listed on the left menu column. The pre-registration elementary form will be listed for you to complete by **Tuesday, August 25 at noon**.
  - CURRENT elementary families who did not complete the pre-registration process by August 25 at noon will automatically be listed as attending in-person learning. An Office Administrator will confirm attendance and the completion of the Student Screening Declaration Form during the week of August 31, 2020. This form will stay open until the first day of school when the process for daily screening will begin. If a parent or guardian wants to choose remote learning after August 25 at noon, then parents are able to contact the

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school starting August 31. Students can go from remote to in-person learning (or vice-versa) only on October 13, January 4 or March 22.

- NEW elementary students to HWDSB, after August 25 at noon, will not be accepted for in-person attendance until October 13. Students will be enrolled directly in the Remote Learning School.
- TRANSFERRING elementary students, due to a change of address, will automatically attend Remote Learning School, after August 25 at noon.

2. **Student Screening Declaration Form (Attestation):** Once you complete the pre-registration and you have indicated your child is attending school in-person, you must complete the Student Screening Declaration Form (Attestation) located in the Parent Portal. This form must be completed before your child attends school. This document outlines the screening criteria and symptoms that would require a student to remain at home and/or be required to leave the school along with the necessary steps needed prior to return.

## Secondary:

1. **There is no pre-registration form for secondary students:** Students in secondary schools who wish to do eLearning courses for remote learning should contact their school during the week of August 31. Students may also choose to remain in their designated courses, participating with classmates during the scheduled remote learning segments of the rotation, and undertake independent remote study during the in-person portion of the rotation for their assigned cohort. We encourage students to speak with their guidance counsellor to help them support their decision based on their learning needs.
  - TRANSFERRING secondary students, due to a change of address, after August 25 at noon, will be provided full eLearning course options for the first semester. Students can go from remote to in-person learning (or vice-versa) on October 13, January 4 or March 22.
2. **Student Screening Declaration Form (Attestation):** If the parent knows their child will be attending in-person at school, they can complete the Student Screening Declaration Form (Attestation) in the Parent Portal. This form will stay open beyond August 25 and will need to be completed in order to attend school. A student 18 years of age or older can complete the form.

## Upcoming Board Decision: Elementary Class Size Averages and Staggered Starts

There will be a Board Meeting on Monday, August 24, 2020 to discuss an announcement by the Ministry of Education. Trustees will discuss topics such how to use \$11.8 million dollars in reserve funding and a recent decision that allows school boards to engage in discussions related to staggered entry. The [Board agenda](#) will be posted on Monday. Tune in at 5:00 p.m. for the Board Meeting streamed live on [HWDSBtv](#).

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## Learning in September

**Regular Day School (in-person learning):** Elementary students will attend school every day, with enhanced public health measures. Students will remain in their assigned classrooms for the entire school day, including nutrition breaks unless they are utilizing a specialized space. Teachers will meet with students in the student assigned classroom whenever possible to reduce the need for student movement throughout the school.

Secondary students will attend school in an alternate day rotational model that will include a combination of in-person at school instruction and remote learning. Students will attend in-person, based on their cohort designation (A or B) on either Monday and Wednesday and alternate Fridays or Tuesday and Thursday and alternate Fridays for approximately 150 minutes with the option to remain at their school location for the afternoon portion of remote learning. Following a minimum 80-minute transitional time they will then engage in 3 x 50 minute periods of remote learning. The remote learning periods will be teacher directed for the first 40 minutes followed by 10 minutes of independent study. Through this model, students have the opportunity to engage with each of their courses in-person throughout the semester.

**Remote Learning School (Remote Learning):** Elementary students whose parents and guardians choose remote attendance will be registered in the HWDSB remote learning elementary school. Many features of the remote learning school will mirror those of a regular day school, including:

- A full day of instructional time with frequent student-teacher interaction;
- Grade based or combined grade homerooms with a homeroom teacher;
- Instruction and learning in all subject areas; and
- Delivery of live instruction throughout the day.

Primarily, staff and students will use the HWDSB standard blended learning platforms (The HUB and MS Teams) as their learning and communication environments.

Secondary students that would prefer to attend school remotely have two options:

- They may choose to enrol in available eLearning courses (note – this may require changes to the student timetable and/or course selection); or
- Students may choose to remain in their designated courses, participating with classmates during the scheduled remote learning segments of the rotation and undertake independent remote study during the in-person portion of the rotation for their assigned cohort.

Students pursuing remote options should contact their school during **August 31 to September 4**.

**Benefits of our Rotational Model:** Our model best achieves the elements of the guiding principles of safety for all, minimizing the disruption to regular school day routines as much as possible, ease of transition between potential scenarios, honouring collective agreements and employee terms and conditions, and fiscal responsibility.

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The Rotational model has several more benefits for students and staff that include:

## *Safety*

- Strictly follows the advice of Public Health to limit student exposure to one cohort by:
  - Restricting the direct and indirect contacts students have, to approximately 15 students. This is well below the limits set by the provincial guidelines and follows the advice provided by Hamilton Public Health.
  - If secondary schools are required to return to regular day school, our model will continue to limit the direct and indirect contacts students have to a single cohort, expanded to approximately 30 students.
- Should health conditions in the province worsen, students are positioned to go to full remote learning quite easily since all classes are already active – there will be no learning time lost in launching remotely.
- Should health conditions improve, students will not return to more in-person time doing just one courses. This option provides flexibility depending on the circumstance to expand in-person time gradually from 1 to 2 courses, and 3 to 4 courses, for example.

## *Student Achievement*

- Active learning takes place throughout the day
- Students have more time to engage with the curriculum with all four courses running
- Students have more opportunities to receive feedback from teachers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of concepts being taught
- Students are exposed to more caring teacher contacts – one for each active course
- If a student has a spare – at all points throughout the semester, they are always able to work on their other three courses
- This model preserves student schedules and maintains the full array of student options that each individual chose

**French Immersion:** Currently, we are working to understand the number of students that will be attending in-person and those choosing remote learning. Once we have a thorough knowledge of these numbers throughout HWDSB we can begin to adjust staffing. Given this, French Immersion may be offered remotely depending on enrolment and the availability of qualified staff. If French Immersion is not offered remotely, students will be able to resume the program when they return to school in-person.

**Athletics and Extra-curricular Activities:** As we focus on school reopening, athletics and extra-curricular activities will be paused for the month of September. We will monitor this on a monthly basis and share updates with students and families.

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## Enhanced Public Health Measures

**Cleaning and Disinfection:** Staff will increase the frequency (minimum twice a day) of cleaning and disinfecting objects, equipment and frequently touched items or surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, accessible pushbuttons, faucet handles, tabletops, eating areas (e.g. tables, sinks, countertops). All water fountains will be bagged and not used. Hydration stations will be available in all schools. Learn more about Cleaning and Disinfection on our Enhanced Public Health Measures web page.

**Ventilation:** HWDSB initiated a project to have licensed mechanical contractors go through every school and verify ventilation equipment is operating as per manufacturers' recommendations. Reports for each piece of equipment is being received and noted deficiencies corrected for September. All reports will be available to the public.

We are also ensuring air is being exchanged, and fresh air is entering occupied spaces. Additionally, we will be performing "air flushes" of all spaces before occupants re-entering the buildings. This will be done daily by having mechanical systems operate in 'occupied' mode starting at 6 am before students entering the building.

**Masks:** Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear masks indoors and on the school bus. Students may wear their own non-medical masks, and non-medical masks will also be made available for students. Reasonable exceptions on the requirement to wear masks will apply. These requests will follow the existing accommodation process and requests should be made to the principal. Staff are currently developing the exception criteria.

Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces and on the school bus where physical distancing is not possible. Families are encouraged to work with their child(ren) before the beginning of school to help them become comfortable with masks.

Mask wearing should be among the back-to-school routines that families should practice with their child. Information on wearing masks can be found on the [City of Hamilton](#) website, [Sick Kids](#) website and the [Caring During COVID Video](#) from McMaster Children's Hospital on masks.

As always, if you have questions, please reach out to [info@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:info@hwdsb.on.ca) or call 905-527-5092.

Stay well and be safe,



Alex Johnstone  
Chair of the Board



Manny Figueiredo  
Director of Education