



January 3rd, 2022

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

I hope that you have enjoyed a joyous and healthy New Year's weekend with your family. While we were just in communication with you last week, a number of important changes have occurred just today, Monday January 3rd. The province is moving to a modified Stage 2 response to the pandemic, given the increase in COVID-19 cases as a result of Omicron variant and more specifically as a result of the potential impact to the Healthcare system. While these measures are intended to be temporary, they are significant. The most relevant to us as a school board is the pivot once again to a virtual learning reality.

Return to School:

The return to learning for all students will now be a virtual one and will commence on **Wednesday January 5th 2022**. (*This includes St Isidore and St Louis*) On January 5th we will take the day to have teachers connect with their students, and ensure everyone has a good virtual-connection and is able to connect with their teacher. Teachers will meet with students first thing in the morning – per usual bell times, however they will connect for no more than 1 hour synchronously. (*In secondary this will be approx. 30 minutes per class.*) They will provide work that can be done for the day. **Full synchronous virtual learning will then resume on Thursday, January 6th 2022.** **Currently the province is indicating that the earliest we will return to full in person learning will be Monday January 17th.** We will stay tuned for any further updates.

Students with high needs in Special Education

Schools will be in touch with those students who may be eligible to access in person learning due to high special education needs where virtual learning is not a viable option. We will also look to see how we can best support our ELD students who may have difficulty in a virtual learning environment. You will receive more precise and detailed communication through your local school. In person learning for our high needs special education students will commence **Monday, January 10th 2022**.

Screening:

It is more important than ever before, that anyone feeling ill should *not* attend school. All children, students, staff, and visitors must be screened for symptoms of illness every day before attending school or childcare. Any student or staff member with **any symptom** should **not** report to school. To help meet this requirement, you may use the provincial screening tool found here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>. It is continually being updated and using the link on a daily basis should provide you with the most recent guidance. Confirmation of self-screening will still be a requirement when we return to school and we will continue to reinforce masking and hand hygiene, as well as cohorting and physical distancing with students and our staff.



Vaccination:

Vaccination for children ages 5 – 11 is currently underway. Booster shots for anyone over 18 years of age has been possible since Monday, December 20th. We are in communication with Waterloo Region Public Health to organize vaccination clinics specifically for education staff. Vaccination remains the best defence against COVID-19, as endorsed by experts at the Ontario Science table, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and our own Waterloo Region Public Health. The omicron variant is highly transmissible and so consideration for vaccination for yourself and your child is very important in stopping the disease spread **and also** in ensuring that if COVID is acquired, that symptoms remain mild and manageable. Stopping its spread is important so that everyone can spend more time in school and so the most vulnerable amongst us are not negatively impacted.

We remain every grateful for your support and partnership as we navigate these challenging times. We understand that many of you will be concerned and will only want the best for yourself and your children. We encourage you to follow the guidelines as outlined to the best of your ability and to trust that our schools still remain largely safe. As I offered last week, let us hold to the promise of the nativity and the message of love, hope and joy that it offers. Together we will make it through this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

