



March 31st, 2020

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

We hope that you and your family are well and staying healthy. Today we learned, that as a key part of the Government of Ontario response to the COVID19 crisis, that the closure to schools is extending to May 1st, 2020. The government will continue to monitor the situation and further extensions or updates may occur. We reiterate, that these decisions are being informed by a concern for preserving the health and safety of all, and in this regard we know that each of us shares a common goal. Realizing that this extension of the closure was likely, and as previously communicated, both the provincial Ministry of Education and locally here at Waterloo Catholic, we have been preparing for remote teacher-led learning.

Today the Ministry released a memo that provides explicit guidance to all of us about expectations for learning. It provides an outline of the number of hours teacher and student should engage in learning – based on their grade level. To be clear – the suggested hours reflect both the time a teacher might use in providing formal instruction or guidance, as well as the time the student will spend completing the learning task or activity. There is not a firm expectation that all students have to be “online” at the exact same time, although in some cases that might happen on occasion.

Both Waterloo Catholic and the Ministry of Education have been thoughtful about matters of equity, as they apply to access to technology, to internet, language barriers, students with special needs and varying home environments. All to say – this is not a “business as usual” learning environment but at Waterloo Catholic we will strive to do our very best to ensure each student feels valued and is connected to learning. One thing we are doing in this regard is working on Chromebook distribution to those families who indicated the need for a learning device. Your local school will provide more detail if you are an affected family. Deployment is happening this week. That said – at Waterloo Catholic, our number one priority will be ensuring that each child experiences connection and that they know their teacher cares.

We would also like to draw attention to the fact that while there will be consistent expectations for students in the same grade, that optional, additional activities will also be made available to all students. On our WCDSB board website you will find from our home page a link to WDCSBLearn@Home where a host of additional resources for all learners will be found. <https://wcdsblearnathome.wcdsb.ca> We also encourage you to continue to follow the #STEAMDays hashtag where lots of fun and engaging activities are being posted.

We understand that there is added anxiety for students who are in senior grades of high school or in graduating years. This too is something to which we are very attuned. The Ministry has provided some direction today and there will be ongoing conversations and plans that will be communicated in relation to these students. Certainly there is an intent that no student on track to graduate – or any student – should be negatively impacted by the current public health crisis. They remain a high priority.



Finally – we encourage you to closely follow any and all directives from our governments and Waterloo Region Public Health. As a global community – we have never been more connected by an event or issue and now is the time to do everything we can to ensure we can soon return to life as we knew it not so long ago. We wish your family good health as we look ahead to Holy Week. Please continue to remain confident that we are here to support you, as we walk together as a hope-filled community. Our faith will be a source of comfort and strength, as will the sure knowledge that after the pain and heartache of Good Friday, comes the hope, joy and new life of Easter.

Sincerely,

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

Bill Conway
Chair of the Board

