



Nov 22nd, 2021

Dear WCDSB Community,

We hope that you continue to be well and that you have had a healthy and enjoyable fall season. We are pleased that, for the most part, our schools continue to be safe and healthy places for learning to prosper. We have not been without our challenges this fall, but with a few exceptions, our COVID-19 case counts have remained quite low and we are so grateful to both our staff and our families for working hard to follow all the necessary guidelines and precautions.

This letter once again brings a few very important updates of which we would like you to be aware as they are important to your understanding as to how things are unfolding and precautions we wish to continue to enforce, so that we may continue on a safe, healthy and positive path as a community.

### **Vaccination**

As you have no doubt heard in the media, vaccination for children ages 5-11 is now ready to be rolled out in the province and within Waterloo Region. The Chief Medical Officer of Health for the Province and local Public Health offer us the guidance, as the experts, that this is our best defence against COVID-19. It will assist in keeping our children healthy, as well as all those with whom they have contact. Vaccinations will be available at Public Health vaccination sites, community hubs, local pharmacies and at a few school pop-up sites (of which you will be informed when they are occurring). A parent's approval will be required for any child 5-11 to be vaccinated and any school-based sites will happen after hours. Parents can begin making appointments as of today.

As a parent you may have questions about the vaccine for children 5-11 year olds. Our local Public Health Unit is sponsoring a **virtual parent information session**, via Zoom, on **Thursday Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, from 7 – 8:30 p.m.** The presentation, along with a question-and-answer session, will be given by Dr. Kelly Grindrod, Ontario College of Pharmacists Professor in Pharmacy Innovation and Associate Professor, University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy. We would encourage any parent who still has questions about the vaccine to attend this session.

### **Rapid Antigen Testing for Students over Christmas Break**

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the provincial government announced that over the Christmas Break rapid antigen screen kits will be provided to any and all students who wish to take home 5 tests to be administered every few days between Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> and Jan 4<sup>th</sup>, so that we are better assured a safe and healthy return to school in January 2022, and a safer, healthier coming together with Friends and Family over the Christmas Season.

### **Sports / Athletics**

As reported in previous letters, we have been pleased to see the return of athletics and sport to our schools and for inter-scholastic play to have returned for those age 12 and older. The criteria to play is full vaccination



and/or proof of a negative test. This strategy is being used in a very targeted way for students who are not able to use our other usual strategies to ensure their safety – that is – they are unable to ensure masking and social distancing. This strategy has now been endorsed by the province and will now continue for the foreseeable future for us at WCDSB. We are extremely pleased by this decision.

#### **Additional Health and Safety Measures**

Also part of the November 19<sup>th</sup> announcement was the direction that all Parent-Teacher interviews should take place virtually (or by phone). Similarly, schools are asked to ensure that assemblies occur virtually to ensure cohorts are not blending and social distancing is maintained.

#### **Secondary Delivery Model**

The province has opened the door to the second half of the year being delivered through a proper semestered model – which is 4 periods or 4 75 minute classes in a day. This decision will have to be supported by Public Health based on cases and other relevant data. At the current time we are hopeful that we will be in a position to return to a semestered/4 period day in February.

#### **Potential Travel**

A reminder that students under 12, travelling with vaccinated parents do not have to quarantine per se, but they are not allowed to return to school until **14 days** from return have passed. This guidance is found on our webpage. This is federal policy we are sharing.

<https://www.wcdsb.ca/covid-19-student-screening-and-testing/>

#### **Screening**

As we have shared before, please know that one of the most important things you do each and every day is to complete the screening tool before you as a staff member or student (or parent of a student) arrive at school. Any individual who fails the screener or who is symptomatic in any way should not be reporting to school. That is part of our collective responsibility to one another.

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>

**Please review** our full [Operational Guidelines](#) to ensure you understand how we are continuing to ensure a safe and happy school experience for all.

We continue to be exceptionally grateful for your support and partnership as we navigate this unique year.

Sincerely



Loretta Notten  
Director of Education

