



January 8th, 2021

Dear Waterloo Catholic Community –

Happy New Year! We hope that you are well, and that you and your families are managing to stay positive during these challenging times.

I want to begin by sincerely thanking all our staff for the exceptional effort since our return from the break. They continue to respond with dedication and care to the new requests, and to our evolving learning environments. Similarly, we want to congratulate our students and parents for their flexibility, as we have all adjusted to a new way of learning. Excellent learning continues to happen for our students and for that everyone should be very proud. It is genuinely inspiring to observe. We know it is not always easy.

As you are likely aware, the Premier of the Province has indicated that the **remote return to school will continue until January 25th**, not only for our secondary students but also for our elementary students. That is, both our elementary and our secondary students will continue to learn virtually. The decision is being made out of an abundance of caution, as positivity rates have increased over the holiday period. We know our schools are safe and there is a desire to ensure they remain safe. The cases of COVID are not starting, nor are they spreading, in our schools, but we are a reflection of the community. Closing the schools to in person learning for January will help us contain the cases that come into schools and ensure that when we return to our buildings, we are doing so in the safest manner possible.

The exception to this direction are our students with special education high needs in elementary, and our community active living and ELD students in secondary. Families who are affected by this option for learning will have been contacted directly.

The announcement today is a direct response to the increase in cases over the break and the social habits that students and others have engaged in during that time. It is clear that in order to meet with success, our staff, students and broader community need to STRICTLY adhere to all public health guidelines and our own personal family bubble.

Once again, we encourage you to visit [Ontario.ca/covidresponse](https://www.ontario.ca/covidresponse) to learn what public health measures are in place in our community – but also please be aware that these could change depending on the most current public health advice. We also suggest checking out the WCDSB website <https://www.wcdsb.ca/living-learning-looking-forward/> and Region of Waterloo Public Health website <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx> as they contain helpful resources and supports. If you have any questions about what your particular school is doing, please reach out to your local school principal.



I will also take this opportunity to remind that mental health resources are available to students and families through Kids Help Phone, which offers 24/7 counselling and referral services across the province. To use this free resource, children can call 1-800-668-6868, or text CONNECT to 686868.

If there are any further updates we will certainly share them as soon as possible. Please know that we continue to be in this together and day by day we will make it through. Let's continue to remain people of hope, informed by our Faith and a desire to do the best for the students in our care. Please reach out to us if you need help or guidance, and remain confident that we are here to support you, as we walk together as a hope-filled community. *#InThisTogether*

Sincerely,

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

