



Small Schools Make a Difference

2020/06/24

Dear Parent(s), Guardian(s) and Caregiver(s),

This week marks the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year. As students and staff head off for a summer break that is looking quite different, I want to send my thanks and appreciation to you, the families and caregivers of the students. We acknowledge that this year was one filled with tremendous challenge as your children missed school days due to job action and then shifted learning to your homes during this pandemic. We acknowledge that this was not easy, and we send our thanks, appreciation, and sincere gratitude.

We also know that you have many questions about what September will look like as we head into the summer break. Currently, under the direction from the Ministry of Education, we have been planning for three possible scenarios; the reopening of schools with enhanced safety measures, the continuation of distance learning, or a hybrid model whereby students attend school on a modified schedule (e.g. alternating days) and engage in distance learning. The return to school in the fall of 2020-2021 will be voluntary and based upon parent choice. Distance learning will continue to be implemented next year as required by circumstances. The Ministry of Education has indicated that they will be receiving guidance from Public Health early in August to confirm the scenario for students returning to school in September. This will be done using a regional approach.

The Ministry of Education will be requiring school boards to adhere to a final date in mid-August for school registration and parental choice for their child's attendance (in school instruction or distance learning) for the September start up. It will be important that parents/guardians make this decision by **August 18, 2020** as this will allow schools to create class groupings of 15 students or less students. Late notification may result in delays for entering school.

We would invite families to review the "Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year" available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year> for further information at this time. This is the document that we are required to follow when planning for September. Based upon this newly released document, we will be creating a number of Fact Sheets for families that outline the details of several enhancements, policies and procedures for the coming school year.

Currently, we are asking for your feedback and concerns so that we can do our best to tailor our approach to the needs of families, while adhering to the requirements from the Ministry of Education. This information will assist us in planning moving forward, as we endeavor to ensure that the safety of students continues to be our primary concern. We would invite you to share your thoughts, and to hear and “rate” the thoughts of others through an online tool. The link will be sent to you in a separate message tomorrow. Please join the conversation! We want to hear from you.

To support students throughout the summer, the SGDSB devices (laptops and Ipads) that have been loaned to families for distance learning will remain with families during the summer break. Graduating students (grade 12) are asked to make individual arrangements with your high school principal for timelines to return your devices. Note that if you require them for the summer months, these arrangements can also be made.

I acknowledge that there will be challenges ahead of us due to COVID-19. We continue to be committed to the safety of students and staff, and to ensuring that we are following all advice from the Ministries of Health and Education. We are working carefully to balance the risk of direct infection and the transmission of COVID-19 in children with the impact of school closures on their physical and mental health.

I apologize for not having answers for you at this time; however, we will endeavor to keep you informed over the summer break. We would encourage you to stay tuned to our Facebook page and to alerts shared through the School Messenger platform.

I send you my sincere thanks and well wishes for a safe and happy summer break.

Yours in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Morden Cormier', written in a cursive style.

Nicole Morden Cormier
Director of Education