

September 28, 2020

Dear students, parents/guardians, and staff,

This year our school start-up was like no other. On August 10, the Minister of Education Jean François Roberge unveiled his revised *plan for a return to school*. The changes in school organization outlined in the minister's plan are wide ranging and far reaching. Almost every aspect of school life had to be reviewed and adjusted to ensure we reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 virus. As our schools and centres prepared for our students' return, we also worked with our partners in Public Health to develop and refine our safety protocols, including the proper use of personal protective equipment, preventive hygiene measures, enhanced disaffecting of physical spaces, and physical distancing measures.

We have, and will continue to work tirelessly with our staff, students and health partners to mitigate the risks of the spread of the virus in our schools and centres, but we cannot detach ourselves from the realities in our wider communities. We need to be prepared for the eventuality that students or staff in our schools or centres may contract the virus. When a person is confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19 in one of our schools or centres, we rely on the medical experts at public health to direct us in our response to the situation.

It is important to know that it is Public Health that investigates each positive case of COVID-19 and determines the actions to be taken including who should isolate themselves, and if a classroom or school/centre needs to close for a determined period of time. It is also important to note that neither the school, nor Public Health are permitted to divulge the name(s) of any infected person due to confidentiality obligations. The school principal is responsible for making the community aware of a case in the school or centre and it is Public Health's responsibility to contact each person who has been in close contact with a person who has been infected with the virus.

To date we have had ten confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our school board. They include:

- September 6 - 1 employee at Wakefield Elementary School
- September 14 - 2 students at South Hull Elementary School
- September 15 – 1 student at Symmes/D'Arcy High School
- September 18 – 2 students at South Hull Elementary School
- September 22 – 1 employee at Hadley/PWHS
- September 25 – 2 students at South Hull Elementary School
- September 26 – 1 student at Pierre Elliott Elementary School

In each case, parents, students, and staff have followed the directives of Public Health. In cases where full classes needed to be in self-isolation the school has switched to on-line learning for the students.

We are all deeply concerned about the health and welfare of our students and staff. We will continue to work diligently with all of our partners to make our schools and centres as safe as possible.

In closing, I want to thank our staff for their dedication, commitment, and professionalism in working through these challenging times. I also want to thank our parents and guardians for their trust and support. Finally, I want to thank our students for continuing to engage in their learning and adjusting to the new realities caused by the collective challenge to deal with this pandemic.

(Please find attached with this letter the Minister's COVID-19 Back to School Plan and a Question and Answers document from Public Health)



Mike Dubeau
Director General



Ruth Ahern
Assistant Director General