July 17, 2020

Dear parents/guardians,

I hope you and your family are having a wonderful summer!

As the situation with regard to COVID-19 improves in Ontario, we are hoping that the direction from the Minister of Education will be that we can return to school in September in our conventional way with enhanced public health protocols. However, we are planning for three possible models for return so that we are ready to begin again, one way or another, in September!

We understand that the unknown can cause feelings of uncertainty, frustration and worry as families try to determine childcare and their own return to work for the Fall. Our teams are working tirelessly this summer to determine all details for each model below. Once we have reviewed the details with both the Ministry of Education and the Huron Perth Public Health teams, we will share with our families. We greatly appreciate your understanding as we work through this complex task.

The three possible return-to-school models are:

**MODEL A**  Full return to school (conventional model)

**MODEL B**  Hybrid or adaptive model (with approx 15 students per classroom)

**MODEL C**  Fully online

Depending on COVID-19, we may need to move between these models throughout the 2020/21 school year. For example, if, as a province, we were to begin in Model B and then experience an increase in cases, we may be directed to return to full online learning for a period of time. Or, we may begin in Model B and if everything goes well, the Minister may direct us to move to Model A. Again, we completely understand the uncertainty that this causes, but as all of us in Ontario, we must remain flexible as this situation evolves. The health and safety of each student/family and staff member is our primary concern.

Thank you to those who completed our online survey in June. It provided valuable information about your feelings about returning to school and also gave us feedback about the online learning system (Learn at Home) that was implemented during the last several weeks of the school year. This feedback is helping us as we detail our plans around each model for September.

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Dr. Lisa Walsh, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board

Lynette Geddes, Chair of the Board
We can provide some details at this point, to help you understand our planning underway.

If **Model A** (all students returning full time) or **Model B** (two cohorts of students in each school with each attending on different days) is implemented, all protocols and processes will follow Ontario Public Health and local Health Unit guidelines. The following protocols will be in place:

- **Screening measures:**
  - Parent assessment of children before they attend school each day
  - Protocols in the event that a child becomes ill at school

- **Enhanced cleaning and safety measures:**
  - Hand-washing breaks (e.g., access to sinks, soap, hand towels, hand sanitizer, and age-appropriate hand hygiene training for all students)
  - Enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces (e.g., door knobs and washrooms) by our custodial staff throughout the day
  - Thorough cleaning of the entire school weekly and/or in between cohorts
  - The removal of items from classrooms that cannot be disinfected
  - Signage and mapping of movement throughout the building

- **Contact tracing measures:**
  - Bussing protocols (see details below)
  - Entry and exit doors specified for different groups of students
  - Designated washrooms for groups of students

If **Model C** (full online learning) is implemented:

- If we need to fully implement this model, it will be similar to the Learn at Home system that was implemented in the last few weeks of the 2019/2020 school year.
- Families will always have this option. If you are not comfortable sending your child to school, they can work remotely with support from a teacher.

Please continue reading for additional information as it relates to September.

**Students with Special Education Needs**

- Our commitment to meeting the needs of ALL students remains the same.
- No matter which model is in place, the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be met by our Special Education team.
Student Transportation (Bussing)

The following message is from Huron Perth Student Transportation Services regarding bussing for September 2020.

- Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB), Huron Perth Catholic District School Board (HPCDSB) and Huron Perth Student Transportation Services (HPSTS) and the Bus Operators are working together to establish safe transportation services for all publicly funded students in Huron and Perth Counties.

- We will seek advice from Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) regarding the COVID-19 Protocols to be put in place for transporting students in September under all possible return models.

- While there are many details to be finalized over the coming weeks, we do know that riding on the Bus will be different in September. Some of the changes to expect:
  - Bus Drivers will be wearing required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - There will be enhanced daily cleaning on every bus
  - Each bus will serve one school only
  - There will be fewer students on a bus, with less than half the normal number of students.
  - Bus routes will be different and rides may be longer than in the past.
  - Given the limited bus availability, exceptions made in the past may not occur. Specifically it may not be possible to provide more than one pick-up or drop off location per student, out of bounds students may not be able to ride a bus, and some in-town busses may not be available.

- As we gain clarity over the plans for September, and obtain approval from HPPH, we will communicate specific details with families.

Mental Health

- The mental health and well-being of our students and staff remain a priority.

- Our Mental Health Team is working throughout the summer and supports are available. Contact our mental health phone support line for more information.

- We recognize that students may be nervous about returning to school and it is our goal to ensure that they feel a sense of belonging even though they may not be at school everyday. We hope that students and/or families will reach out to us through the information line, and we will forward questions/concerns to staff in our schools upon their return.

- We are working on resources for families to support their students with the consideration for a return to school.

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Next Steps

1. We are busy planning the details for each Model (A, B, or C). We will inform parents of what Model B (our adaptive model) will look like by the end of July.

2. In early August, the Minister will inform the province what Model of learning schools will open in (full return, hybrid model or online learning).

3. After this announcement, in early August, we will share the details for AMDSB so you will know specifically what this means for your children.

We know that families need time to prepare and we are hoping this information will help. We are in this together and our commitment to provide the best educational experience for our students remains the same; even if it looks a little different. We appreciate your partnership and patience during these unusual circumstances.

We will be in touch soon.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Walsh, Director of Education
Avon Maitland District School Board