



**SCHOOL CLOSURES AS A RESULT OF COVID-19  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
FOR PARENTS**

as of March 24, 2020

**\* New information is highlighted in yellow**

**Background Information:**

All publicly funded schools in Ontario are officially closed for two weeks following March Break, in response to the emergence in Ontario of COVID-19.

The Minister of Education, the Honourable Stephen Lecce, issued a Ministerial Order to close all publicly funded schools. This order was approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on the advice of Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts at the COVID-19 Command Table.

**This means that Ontario schools have been ordered to remain closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020, inclusive.**

**Clarification on the timeline of extension of the closure is expected from the Ministry and will be communicated as soon as it is known.**

This precaution is necessary to keep people safe.

On March 17, 2020 the Premier of Ontario declared a [State of Emergency](#) for the Province of Ontario containing significantly enhanced measures to help contain the spread of COVID -19.

The situation continues to evolve and a number of decisions will follow from this. We will continue to update our communication in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Wellington Guelph Dufferin Public Health and community partners.

On Sunday, March 22 Minister of Education Stephen Lecce provided an [open letter](#) to parents providing reassurances to keep our children safe, well and learning.



## **PROGRAMS AND CHILDCARE**

### **Will Child Care Centres in schools be open?**

No. The St. Michael and St. John, Arthur Child Care Centres will be closed during the period of closure.

### **Will the Catholic Education Centre (Board Office) be open?**

In order to protect WCDSB staff and help minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our community, our WCDSB Board Office is CLOSED to public access until further notice.

### **Is Community Use of Schools running?**

No. Community Use of Schools will not run during the school closure period.

### **Will the International Languages Program continue to run during the school closure?**

No. the International Languages Program will not run during the school closure period.

### **Are Colleges and Universities included in the order of closure?**

The closure order only covers publicly funded schools and not post-secondary institutions. Colleges and Universities will communicate any closures to their institutions.

### **What happens to students expected to be in Dual Credit, Coop and OYAP programs?**

Students will not attend Dual Credit Programs, Cooperative Education programs, OYAP programs.

### **What happens to field trips and excursions?**

All field trips and excursions are cancelled during the period of school closure and for the remainder of the 2019/2020 school year. Information regarding end of the year trips and other excursions is being collated and Principals will provide further guidance regarding field trips and excursions to families.

### **Will students be able to participate in athletic and artistic competitions or extracurricular activities?**

Athletic competitions for students will be suspended. Coaches are not permitted to hold practices during the closure. Similarly artistic events and other extracurricular activities will not occur during the period of closure.

### **What else is cancelled at this time?**

All Board and school based events are cancelled until further notice with the exception of school board meetings.

## **INSTRUCTION/ASSESSMENT/GRADUATION**

### **Will there be any grade specific or subject specific on-line learning for students?**

The Ministry of Education has provided some initial resources for the first phase of school closure until April 5. Click to access [Learn At Home](#) resources. Efforts are currently underway to develop further learn at home resources for families for beyond April 5<sup>th</sup> and once developed, these too will be shared with everyone.

### **What happens with the OSSLT and EQAO GRADE 3, 6, and 9 assessments?**

Given the school closure period and the uncertainty beyond that point, the Ministry of Education has cancelled all EQAO assessments for the remainder of this school year.

For students who are graduating in the 2019-20 school year, the literacy graduation requirement as set out in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016 will be waived.

Students who are not graduating this school year will have the opportunity to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in the upcoming 2020-21 school year.

### **What happens to International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations?**

The May 2020 examinations will no longer be held. More information can be found at [ibo.org](http://ibo.org).

### **Will the school year be extended?**

The Ministry has advised that it is too early to determine. Any decision on the school year will be made by the Ministry of Education.

### **Will the closure impact student marks?**

Students will not be penalized for missed work or assessments.

### **Will students be at risk of not graduating?**

This closure is not expected to impact secondary school graduation.

### **Will the closure impact college and university applications?**

Applications were generally due in January. **The Ministry of Education is collaborating with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to develop a plan.** If you have questions, check with your college or university.

### **What is the expectation for sending home Individual Education Plans (IEPs)?**

IEPs will be sent home following the period of closure.

### **Will Parent Teacher Interviews for Secondary, originally scheduled for April 2, 2020, proceed?**

No. All school-based activities are cancelled during the period of school closure.

If there are concerns regarding a student's progress (e.g. student is failing a course, in danger of losing a credit, other concerns), we would expect that staff would be contacting the student's parents to alert them to this. Parents are also welcome to contact their child's teacher if they have questions or concerns.

## **HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND STAFF**

### **Will there be financial support for childcare during the period of closure?**

The family subsidy that was provided during labour disruptions is no longer available, however, the Federal government is expected to make an announcement regarding supports for families.

### **What will happen to Sacraments for Students?**

Administration of the sacraments is under the purview of the Diocese of Hamilton. At the time of writing, decisions regarding the sacraments will be made on a parish-by-parish basis. If students are receiving the sacraments for the first time, our staff are not expected to be present for the celebration during the period of closure.

The Diocese of Hamilton has issued guidelines for parishes regarding masses during the pandemic.

### **How are classrooms and schools being cleaned?**

Custodial staff are in the process of working through each school, cleaning and disinfecting. We have shared a checklist with Custodial staff as a visual reminder to support them and ensure all touchpoints are cleaned and disinfected. This checklist will ensure consistency in all schools.

## **How should we talk to our children and youth about COVID-19?**

There are some comprehensive resources on how to talk to children and youth about COVID-19 from the [National Association of School Psychologists](#) and tips for parents and caregivers from [Children's Mental Health Ontario](#) for what to say and do to help children and youth who are anxious and may find the information about COVID-19 particularly worrisome.

## **What about Travel Advisories?**

We encourage all WCDSB families and staff to follow the advice of public health authorities and the federal government. On March 13, 2020, the Government of Canada announced that Canadians should avoid all non-essential travel outside of the country effective immediately.

Further restrictions to International travel were announced March 16, 2020 by the Prime Minister. Canada will temporarily restrict the entry of most international travelers who are not Canadian citizens or Canadian permanent residents as part of a series of far reaching measures to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19. These special measures will remain in place as long as is necessary to respond to the pandemic.

As a Board, we want to ensure we use the closure period to reduce the risk of contagion when schools re-open. We therefore ask that during this time, you follow the advice of public health authorities and avoid public gatherings and travel outside of Canada. Self-isolate as required, so that when schools re-open we can be confident that we have all done our part to keep students and staff safe.