



August 26th, 2020

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians:

As we draw closer to schools reopening on September 8th, we continue to keep all students, staff and families in our daily prayers that you are healthy and safe. This letter provides you with an update to the August 5th, 2020 letter.

We know that there continues to be anxiety and new questions that arise as families make important decisions about the return to school. We understand and respect that the decision to have your child/children attend school in-person or remotely are personal family decisions that are not made lightly.

Our team of trustees, administrators and staff continue to work hard to prepare all of our schools and worksites for reopening. We know that information from medical experts continues to be adjusted as more is learned about the virus. We remind families that we remain committed to ensuring that you receive only accurate information from our Board. As information becomes available to us, we will update our [Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan](#) and our FAQ to ensure you have the most accurate information available. We will update this information every Wednesday and Friday at noon, and outside of those times if there is an urgent need. We will always advise families of changes so that you know where to check the Plan for updates.

In less than two weeks, students across Niagara Catholic will head back to school whether in-person or virtually. A reminder that you will receive a letter from your school principal on August 28th outlining items that are specific to the reopening of your child's school.

From a system level, the following updates are included for your information.

- ✓ Health and Safety - Physical distancing markers, student table dividers, hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment, reception desk shields and internal and external health and safety signage will be delivered and installed in all schools over the next week. When school resumes, all students will receive instructions about the expected health and safety expectations.
- ✓ Staggered Entry - All schools will be ready to accept students on September 8th. With just under six months since students were last in school and with the new health and safety routines and expectations in place, we will stagger the entry for elementary students during the first week of school. Elementary students with family names from A to L will attend school on Tuesday, September 8th and Wednesday, September 9th, and students with family names M to Z on Thursday, September 10th and Friday, September 11th. All elementary students will attend school beginning Monday, September 14th. This staggered entry plan is designed to keep children in a family attending on the same day with approximately half of the students in a class. Niagara Student Transportation Services (NSTS) is aware of this model and has advised bus drivers of the staggered entry for students riding a bus.

For our secondary students, staff will use part of Period One Cohort A on September 8th and part of the Period One Cohort B on September 10th to review all new norms and student health and safety expectations in our secondary schools.

- ✓ Class Placement - During the week of August 31st, students, parents and guardians will be able to access class assignments on the *Niagara Catholics Parent Portal*. A slide will be placed on the Board website when the Niagara Catholic Parent Portal is live.

- ✓ Health Self-Assessment - By August 28th, we hope to provide all students, parents and guardians with information on Student Self-Assessment Health Protocol which is required to be completed by all students before they leave for school daily.
- ✓ Masks - In compliance with the Provincial Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools and Niagara Region Public Health, students in Grades 4 to 12 are required to wear a mask on a bus and while at school. Specific information on when masks do not need to be worn, such as at recess and lunch, will be provided by school staff. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 are encouraged to wear a mask. Students are expected to store their masks in a sealed plastic container or baggie when it is not being worn. "Your mask protects me, my mask protects you".
- ✓ Dress Code/Uniform - All students attending school in-person are to be wearing full dress code / uniform.
- ✓ Outbreak Protocol - As of the date of this letter, we are waiting to receive, review and implement the provincially approved Outbreak Management Protocol. Once we receive this document, we will share the expectations with all students, staff and families. A reminder to parents to continue to promote with your children the requirements of physical distancing, frequent handwashing, wearing a mask, and if your child is ill, to stay home until it is safe to return to school.
- ✓ Athletic Co-instructional Activities - As noted in our Reopening Plan, athletic co-instructional activities for the fall have been placed on pause by the Niagara Catholic Athletic Association (NCAA) for all elementary and secondary schools. Following consultation with the Province and local public health experts, students and families will be informed when it has been determined that it is safe to resume athletic co-instructional activities.
- ✓ Child Care - Childcare operators have been successfully running infant, toddler and preschool programs in some Niagara Catholic sites since July. Board staff are continuing to work with the Niagara Region and our childcare partners to finalize our plans for before and after school childcare in our schools. In order to determine the need in a school that does or does not currently provide child care, we are asking that parents register or update your existing registration on the Niagara Region's Child Care Registry, OneHSN portal at <https://niagara.onehsn.com> no later than August 28th. If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Ogilvie at 905-735-0240 ext. 277.
- ✓ Principal Letter - In addition to the information provided above, the August 28th letter to all students, parents and guardians from Principals will provide specific school information and expectations including:
 - Arrival and Departure Procedures – bus, walkers and drivers
 - First Day organization for arrival / classes
 - Student Schedules - teacher assignments (Parent Portal week of August 31st)
 - Health and Safety Protocols
 - Self-Assessment Students
 - Expectations for students (hallways, washrooms, eating, lockers, mask storage)
 - Parent / Visitor Procedures - Assessment for authorized entry
 - Stay home if ill / physically distant / wash hands / wear mask
 - Schedule - bell times / classes / breaks / lunch
 - All students in dress code / uniform
 - Nutrition Program - "Grab and Go"
 - Keep connected with Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan and FAQ

- ✓ Niagara Catholic Virtual School - For families that have decided to have their children attend school remotely, we are in the process of establishing a Niagara Catholic Virtual School. This school will have a principal and staff assigned to the school to provide elementary and secondary classes live and synchronously, where possible. Once the current re-registration process data has been reviewed and updated, parents and guardians who have selected remote virtual learning for their children will be contacted by the principal of our virtual school with specific information on programs, supports and services that can be provided in a remote environment starting the week of September 14th.
- ✓ Re-Entry Dates for In-person or Online Remote Learning - Parents and guardians who have decided to select either in-person or online remote learning for their children to begin the school year are advised that specific dates have been provided for any transitioning between the two modes of learning. For elementary students, transitioning dates between in-person or online remote learning will occur on the 15th and 30th day of each month. For secondary students, transitioning dates between in-person and remote online learning will occur at the conclusion of each 22-day block of secondary classes. For both elementary and secondary students, parents and guardians are required to provide two weeks' advance notice to the in-person or virtual school principal and complete a transition form that will be provided by the principal.

As much as we have continued to provide factual information regarding the reopening of schools, we recognize that there may be continued questions that families have regarding school reopening. Families are asked to contact your school principal for specific school information, stay connected to our [Niagara Catholic Reopening Plan](#) and the [Niagara Catholic Reopening of Schools Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ](#). We will also continue to advise families of any major updates through School Messenger, our website and social media platforms. Please contact your school Principal with any reopening questions for September 8th.

This letter provides the most current information as of August 25th. We will continue to adapt and respond to new information as it becomes available, and changing situations as necessary. Please be assured that the health, safety and well-being of our students and staff remains our top priority.

This will be my final letter to families as Director of Education of Niagara Catholic. It has been my profound honour to service students, staff and families as a teacher, administrator, Superintendent and Director for the past 35 years at Niagara Catholic. I will continue to be a strong supporter of Catholic education as I begin the next stage of my journey. Please know that I will keep all students, staff and families in my prayers and I thank you for your support.

Please join me in wishing all retirees, particularly Yolanda Baldasaro, Frank Iannantuono and Scott Whitwell, my colleagues on Senior Staff, retirements that are filled with health and happiness. I also ask that you join me in welcoming incoming Director of Education Camillo Cipriano, Superintendents of Education Kimberly Kinney and Gino Pizzoferrato, and Controller of Facilities Services Clark Euale to Niagara Catholic's senior leadership team. These new members will continue to build on the strong foundation of Catholic education in Niagara.

On behalf of Bishop Bergie, Chair Fera, the Board of Trustees and all staff, have a safe, healthy and enthusiastic return to school.

Sincerely,



John Crocco
Director of Education