

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you and your family had a wonderful Christmas and that you have enjoyed a safe and happy break so far.

On December 21, 2020, I wrote to advise you that the provincial government has directed all school boards to **move to teacher-led remote learning on January 4, 2021**.

I am writing to provide some additional information, including some resources related to remote learning for parents and guardians.

Elementary Schools

- **Our elementary schools will be closed for in-person learning between January 4-8, 2021.**
- Beginning Monday, January 4th and ending on Friday, January 8th, all elementary students will learn remotely from home.

On Monday, January 4th, the day will begin with asynchronous learning for students in our elementary schools.

- Teachers will post asynchronous learning activities on their Learning Management System for the start of the morning session.
 - **Synchronous (real-time) instruction will commence at the end of your child's regularly scheduled lunch period.**
 - On Tuesday, January 5, and for the remainder of the week, synchronous and asynchronous learning will commence at the regular school start time.
- In-school instruction for elementary school students **will resume on Monday, January 11, 2021**.

Secondary Schools

- **Our secondary schools will be closed for in-person learning between January 4-22 2021.**
- Beginning Monday, January 4th and until Friday, January 22nd students will follow their regular Quadmester 2 schedule, but all cohorts (A, B, and C) will learn remotely from home.
- In-school instruction for secondary school students **will resume on Monday, January 25, 2021**.

Virtual Elementary School

- Students enrolled in the Virtual Elementary School will continue to follow their established schedules.
- The change in learning format between in-person and virtual instruction is still scheduled to take place as planned on Monday, January 11, 2021.

Expectations Around Remote Learning

We knew at the start of the school year that we may need to pivot to remote learning at some point. Our teachers are prepared to deliver instruction via online learning platforms, and throughout this period of remote learning students will be provided with 300 minutes of daily learning opportunities, which includes a combination of synchronous (real-time) instruction and asynchronous learning activities.

As noted in the Ministry memo to school boards, teacher-led remote learning during this period will be provided for all students in accordance with [PPM 164: Requirements for Remote Learning](#).

Here are the minimum requirements for synchronous learning:

Division	Grade Level of Students	Daily Minimum Synchronous Learning Time Requirement
Elementary	Kindergarten	180 minutes

	Grades 1 to 3	225 minutes
	Grades 4 to 8	225 minutes
Secondary	Grades 9 to 12	225 minute

Synchronous learning will be provided for large and small groups of students each day, in a manner similar to in-person classroom teaching. Synchronous learning time may include students working independently and in small groups while engaged in a virtual classroom with the teacher overseeing their learning and available for questions.

Resources for Parents and Families

The following links and documents provide some guidelines for parents and students to help ensure safe and effective live online learning:

- [Role of Parents in Virtual Learning \(Elementary\)](#)
- [Role of Parents in Virtual Learning \(Secondary\)](#)
- [Learning at Home – Live Online Learning Tips for Parents](#)
- [Learning at Home – Live Online Learning Tips Students](#)

- Access to Your Child's Learning Platform:
 - [D2L Brightspace](#)
 - [Google Classroom](#)
 - [Office 365](#)

- Having Tech Issues? [Contact our HCDSB Help Desk for Remote Learners](#)

Distribution of Devices for Elementary Students

For those families who have requested the loan of a device to support student learning during the period of remote learning, distribution of devices will take place beginning on Monday, January 4, 2021. Your school will be contacting you directly with further instructions.

Special Education

- To support remote learning for all special education students, school staff (Teachers, Educational Assistants, etc.) as well as board professionals (e.g. Speech and Language Pathologists) will continue to provide ongoing support and services virtually.
- For students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning, we will provide in-person support during the remote learning period commencing January 4, 2021.
- Parents with children in the Community Living Class, Structured Teaching Class, Essential Skills Class and Life Skills Class have been contacted directly and asked to share their intentions for the remote learning period.
- Most students with special education needs will be learning remotely during this period. In-person learning should be reserved for those students with special education needs, who **cannot be accommodated** through remote learning.
- If your child is not in one of the specialized classes noted above but has special education needs that cannot be accommodated through remote learning, please contact your School Principal.

Child Care

- Child care centres will remain OPEN for the duration of the remote learning period.
- All Before and After School Programs will be CLOSED during the week of January 4-8, 2021, when elementary schools are closed to in-person learning.

Faith and Well-Being Supports

School Mental Health Ontario has posted a number of excellent resources to help students, families and staff navigate through this difficult period: www.smho-smsso.ca.

As a Catholic faith community, we understand the importance of finding time for prayer and reflection – most especially during times of stress and uncertainty. We have posted a number of faith resources on our Return to School website at: <https://learnathome.hcdsb.org/faith-well-being/>.

It has been a difficult year for everyone as we live and work through a global pandemic, and I recognize that the move to teacher-led remote learning, however temporary, will create additional pressures for our families, as well as our staff. We appreciate the challenges of working from home, while caring for children who will now be learning remotely. Please remember that many of our school administrators and educators have young children of their own, who will also be learning from home as of January 4th. Thank you for your ongoing patience, understanding and support as we all adjust to the current requirements.

Working together, we will continue to prioritize the health, safety and well-being of our students, staff and families, as we provide a quality Catholic education for your children that is flexible and engaging.

As always, I hold all students, families and staff in my thoughts and prayers. Wishing you a happy, healthy and safe New Year.

Pat Daly
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