



May 18, 2021

Dear Niagara Catholic families:

As we learned last week, it seems we will not be together until, hopefully, sometime in June. We miss all the lively activity and learning in our schools, and hope that our in-person students will be able to attend school again before the end of the year.

As June approaches, we are planning ahead for the 2021-2022 school year, and we are doing so with cautious optimism for a year more familiar with what we are all used to. Public Health reports that approximately half a percent of all COVID-19 cases reported in Niagara were found in schools; proof that our schools are safe places for students and staff. We are hopeful for a more normal school year beginning in September, particularly as staff and students aged 12 and older are expected to be fully vaccinated when the new school year begins due to a new vaccine schedule announced by the Ministry of Education. We will work with Niagara Region Public Health to communicate information about vaccinations for 12-17-year-olds in Niagara as that information is made available.

Exactly what the new school year will look like remains to be seen. We hope that we can begin the year with all of the events and activities that usually come with the start of school, particularly the outdoor ones, and build from there. We know that school is about more than learning. Our goal is to provide as many of those enriching experiences as possible to our students through sports, clubs and activities next year.

We are planning for a full, safe return to school in September, every day, for all of our students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. You may have heard by now that the Ministry of Education has instructed school boards to make remote learning available for the coming school year. Elementary families will receive a survey in early June about what their plans are for the coming year, and we are creating a video question and answer session with staff from our elementary virtual school outlining our expectations for the coming year to ensure you are making an informed choice. We will share this on our board website and social media platforms in late May or early June, before you receive the survey. A second survey will be sent to families in early August when families will make their final decision on whether to have their child attend in person or virtually.

In our secondary schools, the octomester model will continue in 2021-2022, and we expect that the school day will be similar to the current hours for secondary school. Virtual students will be integrated into classes with in-person peers, so there will be no virtual secondary school after the end of June.

This year, parents will have the final say on which style of learning is right for their child, and we respect that some may wish to continue with online learning in 2021-2022. Our schools are places for students to learn and grow in their faith, and that does not change whether a child is learning in a classroom or at home. But there are some things that, despite everyone's best efforts, can never be fully replicated online, so it is our greatest wish that families will feel confident in sending their children back to school in September.

We will continue to provide information about any changes to the remainder of this school year and the coming school year as it becomes available.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your child's principal for assistance.

Sincerely,

Camillo Cipriano
Director of Education