



GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

**A resource document for our
WRDSB community**

August 2020

SCHOOL REOPENING: GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

As we embark upon a school year unlike any other, I want to express my deep gratitude for our students, staff, families, and communities who have persevered in an extraordinarily challenging time. We have experienced unprecedented change since our school year was interrupted last March and I know this process has been difficult for everyone as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic together.

Our system has undergone a major transformation in preparation for reopening our doors to in person learning. Our schools and operations, especially, have undergone significant change to help support our commitment to health, safety, and wellbeing. Every facet of our system has been examined and re-imagined to prioritize the safety of all those who enter our buildings and to ensure that Human Rights and Equity is at the forefront of everything we do.

We know that school will look a lot different this year, but our commitment to our students remains unwavering and we are incredibly excited to welcome our staff and students back to the classroom this year. We want all of our families to know that they are a valued partner in their child's education and we will be making every effort to stay connected as the year unfolds.

The Waterloo Region District School Board has ensured we are following the direction and advice of the Ministry of Education and Public Health, as we equip our facilities, staff, students and school communities with the resources and information needed to best support a healthy and safe school year. We know there will be many questions along the way, but I hope you find this Guide for Families helpful as you prepare for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year.

Sincerely,

John Bryant

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Over the last several months we have been working closely with Waterloo Region Public Health, the Ministry of Education, subject matter experts from throughout the Waterloo Region District School Board, Labour Groups, Community members, and our Board of Trustees to develop plans that honour human rights and equity, promote health and safety, and encourage the well-being of our students, staff and the broader community. We are committed to supporting our most vulnerable students and staff while providing high-quality learning. We know that clear communication is important to our families as we harness the feedback from the 18,000 families, 5,100 students, and 3,000 staff who completed our Exchanging Ideas survey in June.

The following Guiding Principles have been developed to direct our efforts toward Return to School/Work. Importantly, **Human Rights and Equity have been at the forefront of our decisions.**



Staff and Student
Health and Safety



Staff and Student
Well-being



Differentiated
supports for our
most vulnerable
learners and staff



Continuity of
high-quality learning
and operations



Adaptable and
Flexible



Clear, transparent,
timely, responsive
and consistent
communication



Engagement in data and
evidence-informed
decision making



Financial
sustainability

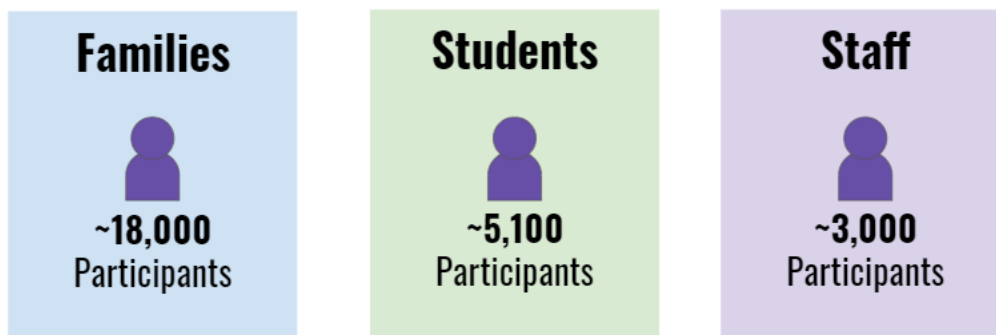
EXCHANGING IDEAS: HEARING FROM WRDSB

On May 6, we launched Exchanging Ideas, a campaign that allowed us to connect with families, students and staff during the school closure.

FEEDBACK ABOUT REOPENING

As part of this campaign, on June 24, 2020, WRDSB launched three surveys which asked families, students (grade 4-12), and staff about their priorities for the reopening of school.

WE HEARD FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS



REOPENING QUESTIONS - **FAMILIES, STUDENTS, STAFF:**

What factors would help you feel more comfortable when you/your child return to work/school?

Top Responses

- Knowing work spaces are cleaned/sanitized daily
- Knowing that public health regulations are being followed
- Cleaning/sanitizing supplies are made readily available to all students and staff
- Knowing that the social/emotional needs of students and staff will be met
- Knowing that the learning/working environment will be well suited for learning/working

REOPENING QUESTIONS - **FAMILIES, STUDENTS, STAFF:**

What are your main concerns about coming back to work/school?

Top Responses

- Ability to meet new expectations around physical distancing regulations while carrying out regular responsibilities
- Non-compliance by others
- Public health regulations not being followed
- Being overwhelmed trying to catch-up with learning
- The school not being properly disinfected

CONFIRMATION OF ATTENDANCE FORM




In order to plan for the upcoming school year, parents are required to complete the [Confirmation of Attendance form](#) and indicate whether or not their child (or children) will be returning to in-person learning in September. **A separate form must be completed for each child** and is required for both elementary and secondary students. The deadline to complete this form was Thursday, August 13, 2020. The form will be reopened after August 17, 2020 for any families who are registering their child(ren) to attend a WRDSB school for the first time.

WHEN FAMILIES CHANGE THEIR MIND AND REQUEST A CHANGE FROM ONE MODE OF LEARNING TO ANOTHER...

If families change their mind and request that their child(ren) move from one mode of learning to another (from distance learning to in person learning for example) we would ask that our families be patient as we work to accommodate your requests. There will be natural entry and exit points for students and we will communicate these once confirmed. There are health and safety and staffing implications to requested changes and so we will need to respond in a way that maintains stability and consistency in the learning environment for our students, our staff, and our school communities. As always, on compassionate grounds, with the best interests of students and families in mind, we will accommodate family and student requests where we are able and in as timely a fashion as possible. Where families would like to make a change, we would encourage you to reach out to the Principal of your child's school.

WHAT SCHOOL WILL LOOK LIKE IN SEPTEMBER

Earlier this summer, the Ministry of Education tasked school boards across the province to prepare for three potential learning scenarios which may be in effect at some point throughout the school year.

- 1  **Full Return with Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols**
- 2  **Adaptive / Hybrid Model**
- 3  **Full Distance Learning**

On July 30, 2020 the Ministry of Education released its [Guide to Reopening Ontario Schools](#).

The Ministry has directed that for this September, all elementary schools in the province will open for conventional in-person delivery of teaching and instruction, five days a week. This applies to all Kindergarten to Grade 8 students. Parents will continue to have the option to opt their children out of in-person delivery, which respects the fundamental role of parents in making the final determination whether they feel safe with their children returning to school.

In Secondary schools, the Ministry has directed designated school boards, including the WRDSB, to open secondary schools on an adapted model, with class cohorts of approximately 15 students, on alternating schedules with at least 50% of in-class instructional days. The designation of these school boards is based on several factors that take into account the size of the school board, the number and size of the board's secondary schools, the size of secondary grade cohorts and whether the board is predominantly urban.

WRDSB staff have been working tirelessly to develop a Return to School and Work Plan that meets this direction from the Ministry while putting human rights and equity at the forefront and ensuring the health, safety and well-being of our students and staff.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Ministry of Education announced on July 30, that Elementary schools across Ontario would begin the school year in a Full Return model.

FULL RETURN MODEL WITH ENHANCED HEALTH AND SAFETY MODELS

For families who choose to have their child/children return to school in person, your elementary student(s) would return to school with enhanced safety measures and will be part of a common cohort of students to limit contact. The Ministry of Education has directed school boards to ensure that direct and indirect contacts in schools for students be limited to approximately 50 students. Bell times and school day schedules would look mostly like what students and families experienced prior to our school closures in March with approximately 300 minutes of face-to-face teacher instruction. Students would have two, forty-minute nutrition breaks with staggered outdoor breaks to ensure cohorts are maintained and physical distancing is maximized. However, there will be increased health and safety measures in place including staggered entry and exit of students, frequent hand hygiene, the required use of masks for students in grade 4-12 and enhanced cleaning measures as a few examples.

SAMPLE SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE

Time	Sample Day
9:00 - 9:30	Period 1 Staggered Student Entry
9:30 - 10:00	Period 2
10:00 - 10:30	Period 3
10:30 - 11:00	Period 4
11:00 - 11:40	Nutrition Break
11:40 - 12:10	Period 5
12:10 - 12:40	Period 6
12:40 - 1:10	Period 7
1:10 - 1:40	Period 8
1:40 - 2:20	Nutrition Break
2:20 - 2:50	Period 9
2:50 - 3:20	Period 10 Staggered Student Dismissal

** Within each instructional block, teachers will be expected to implement outdoor activities / play / recreational time for their class to be outside within their cohort only.

COHORTING OF STUDENTS

This practice limits the number of other students that a single student is in contact with. Direct and indirect contacts* in schools for elementary students should be *limited to approximately 50*. This practice will also facilitate *contact tracing* should that be necessary. Elementary students should be cohorted with their classmates and their homeroom teacher. Specialized teachers, like French teachers, will still be able to go into classrooms to provide the full breadth of programming for students.

**Indirect contacts include*; planning time teachers, support staff and educators, administrative staff, office staff, etc. to a maximum of 50 contacts per student.

STAGGERED ENTRY

Students will enter and exit our school sites and classrooms in controlled ways and under the supervision of staff. Entry and exit procedures will ensure adherence to physical distancing and other enhanced health and safety protocols such as wayfinding to support directionality and signage throughout the school.

NUTRITION BREAKS

Students will remain in their cohorts and eat lunch in their classrooms and will be under the supervision of our staff. Students will be expected to engage in proper hand hygiene before and after students eat.

STAGGERED RECESS

Students will engage in outdoor play and recess in staggered ways. Students will play outside within their class cohort, weather permitting. Please note, **all Creative Playground structures will remain closed until further notice.**

SHARED SUPPLIES

Use of shared objects (for example, gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) will be limited when possible, or the objects that must be shared between cohorts will be cleaned between each use. Whenever possible, students will be provided with individual learning materials for their use in class.

EXPECTATIONS FOR PERSONAL BELONGINGS/DESKS/LOCKERS

- Personal belongings brought to school should be minimized.
- Personal items being brought to school (e.g., backpack, clothing, sun protection, water bottles, food) should be labeled and stored separately in cubbies/designated areas or lockers.
- Student Desks - All students will be assigned to a desk or to a spot at a collaborative table and a seating plan must be created and kept up to date.
- Student Lockers - Student Lockers will **not** be used at this time.

BATHROOM BREAKS

Schools should timetable bathroom breaks in the school day to stagger use of bathrooms and monitor physical distancing. Signage will be posted that indicates the maximum number of people simultaneously using the bathroom at any given point. Individual students should not be prevented from accessing bathrooms as needed.

ROTARY TEACHERS & SUBJECTS

Rotary teachers are regarded as indirect contacts with students. Rotary / Subject specialized teachers will still be able to move between classrooms to provide the full breadth of programming for students. In some cases, students will need to travel to other classrooms. In this instance, students should use school wayfinding and practice physical distancing while travelling throughout the school.

FRENCH IMMERSION

French Immersion students will continue to engage in the French Immersion program. Where possible, students will remain in their classroom and the teachers will rotate into the classrooms for instruction.

KINDERGARTEN CONSIDERATIONS / HEALTH & SAFETY

The ministry recognizes that physical distancing between young children is difficult and encourages educators to maintain a welcoming and caring environment for children. Kindergarten educators will welcome and support children to play and learn in ways that adhere to enhanced health and safety requirements as established by WRDSB in cooperation with public health:

- Each kindergarten classroom will be considered a cohort, children attending kindergarten will participate in play-and inquiry-based learning.
- Educators will plan for learning opportunities that balance the need for increased physical distancing while recognizing the need for young children to move freely within the room and interact with one another.
- When in the same common space (e.g., entrances, dressing for outdoors in hallways) physical distancing of at least 2 metres will be maintained between *different classroom cohorts*.

ELEMENTARY DISTANCE LEARNING

The WRDSB recognizes that some families may elect to have their child(ren) learn from home rather than return to school in September. The WRDSB has developed a plan to support students who will engage in Full Distance Learning until such time as they are able to return to school. Through the WRDSB Confirmation of Attendance Form, available between August 7-13, 2020, families communicated if they wish their child(ren):

1. To attend school in-person (Elementary In-Person Learning and Secondary Adapted Learning), or
2. To participate in Full Online Distance Learning from home, or

3. Tech-free/Paper-based Distance Learning

WRDSB Elementary students who choose Full Distance Learning - Online or Tech-free/Paper based, will participate in real time, synchronous learning for a portion of each day. Students will learn at home using WRDSB platforms: Google Classroom and Brightspace (VLE). Classes will be led by qualified teachers at scheduled times during the school day. The amount of time students will spend in Full Distance Learning will be equal to the same amount of time as students who chose In-Person Learning. It will be expected that students in the Full Distance Learning Model participate every day; attendance will be monitored.

For students who engage in Full Distance Learning in a technology-free manner, packages of learning resources and supports will be provided and will fulfill grade appropriate curriculum requirements. A teacher or designated education staff will be supporting students through this learning mode and will make regular contact by phone. Phone calls are intended to be a way of connecting with students, providing opportunities to answer questions they may have and providing feedback on completed work. Regular Cycles of student Assessment and Evaluation (diagnostic, formative, summative) will apply. There will be an emphasis on conversations and observations to complement the collection of student work products.

WRDSB families/students who require support with technology or Internet access to engage in Full Distance Learning can contact their school in the week August 31-September 4 to request support. Students in this model will be assigned to a qualified WRDSB teacher (the teacher may not be from their school) and with other peers (who may not be from their school) in a Full Distance Learning class. This Full Distance Learning class will have its own digital learning platform and instruction will occur online through asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. Ontario curriculum will be taught, assessed and evaluated. Full Distance Learning Teachers will provide synchronous learning opportunities which may include individual or small group support (video conferencing via Google Meet, phone calls), mini-lessons and content/skill-based instruction, as appropriate.

WRDSB families of elementary students in the Full Distance Learning model will be provided with a schedule of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (independent) learning opportunities. This schedule will be provided in advance to support families with planning.

Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time.

Asynchronous learning: Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

Student attendance will be taken daily. Families will be contacted in the case of an unreported absence to ensure the child's safety and well-being. Students will receive the daily minimum learning time:

Kindergarten: 180 minutes of live (synchronous) learning each day and 120 minutes of independent (asynchronous) learning each day.

Gr 1 - 8: 225 minutes of live (or synchronous) learning each day and 35 minutes of independent (asynchronous) learning each day.

Students will have frequent, live contact with their teacher. Live (or synchronous) learning will include text, video, or voice communication that allows teachers to instruct and connect students in real time. Live learning supports the well-being and academic achievement of students with immediate feedback from teachers and student to student interaction. Live learning will include whole class, small group, and individual interactions. Independent (or asynchronous) learning is not delivered in real time. It may include watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Ministry of Education announced on July 30, 2020, Secondary Schools in designated boards would return to school in September under an Adaptive/Hybrid model. WRDSB has been deemed a designated board so will return in an Adaptive/Hybrid model.

ADAPTIVE/HYBRID MODEL

In this model for secondary students who choose to attend in person, there would be two cohorts (groups): A, B.

Each class would be divided into two cohorts, either A or B, with approximately 15 students per cohort. A combination of face-to-face instruction and distance learning, delivered through asynchronous (independent learning with online resources) would make up the learning experience for our students.

In September, secondary schools will experience a quadmestering format, which involves a four-semester school year, with each semester offering two credits each. An example of a quadmester would be September 8 - November 10 with exam days from November 11-13. Each quadmester is approximately 9.5 weeks and ensures students are still engaging in the required 110 hours of learning.

SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE

Below is a sample daily schedule. Please note that bell times may vary depending on each secondary school's starting bell time. Secondary starting bell times will remain the same.

Secondary Quadmestering (2 Credit) Adaptive/Hybrid Model

Entry	Sample Day
8:30 - 10:00	Course 1/2 Learning Block
10:00 - 10:45	Nutrition Break
10:45 - 12:15	Course 1/2 Learning Block
12:15 - 1:00	Teacher/Student Distance Learning
1:00	Student Dismissal Teacher Lunch
1:00 - 2:15	Teacher Prep Student Distance Learning

QUADMESTERING

A quadmester refers to a half semester (ie September 8-November 10). A quadmester model provides four quadmesters per year, offering two courses per quadmester. This model allows for less movement throughout the school and limits touch points among students and staff.

COHORTS

Secondary students will be divided into Cohorts (groups) of approximately 15 and will experience both in-person and distance learning. The learning schedule will involve one cohort or 'Cohort A' attending Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and the other 'Cohort B' attending Thursday and Friday. This schedule would rotate the following week.

Below is a visual reference for how the Adaptive/Hybrid weekly schedule will rotate.

Secondary Quadmestering (2 Credit) Adaptive/Hybrid Model

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Cohort A Course 1	Cohort A Course 2	Cohort A Course 1	Cohort B Course 1	Cohort B Course 2
Week 2	Cohort B Course 1	Cohort B Course 2	Cohort B Course 1	Cohort A Course 2	Cohort A Course 1
Week 3	Cohort A Course 2	Cohort A Course 1	Cohort A Course 2	Cohort B Course 2	Cohort B Course 1
Week 4	Cohort B Course 2	Cohort B Course 1	Cohort B Course 2	Cohort A Course 1	Cohort A Course 2

TRANSPORTATION

As per Public Health's recommendations, all secondary school buses in our Region must be loaded to achieve some physical distancing during a student's ride to and from school. Each bus will be loaded with a maximum of 24 students or 1 per bench. The exception is that siblings will need to sit together. This limits the transportation capacity and causes the need to create cohorts based on home address. Due to this change in loading capacity, STSWR staff divided each secondary school catchment in 2 zones. Transportation will only service one zone or half the catchment with each cohort.

The school will be able to modify the cohorts to suit their needs using the non-transported students. Students in the transported area will need to remain in their original cohort. Any new students requiring transportation must be assigned to the corresponding cohorts based on their home location.

Communication with your transportation technician will be needed to ensure proper cohort assignment, otherwise transportation will not be available to those students as only half the school catchment is serviced on any given day. We will not be able to accommodate additions to transportation between August 24th and September 15th. A seating plan will be in place for all transported students and must be adhered to. The cohorts will rotate every Thursday morning. Cohort A, will be in class on September 8 and 9. Cohort B will begin classes on September 10 to the 16th. Cohort A will return to classes on September 17.

EXAM SCHEDULE

The quadmastering model involves a four quadmaster school year offering two credits each quadmaster. Semester one quadmasters run from September 8th to November 10 and November 16 to January 29. Exams would be scheduled at the end of each quadmaster – . Exam dates for the upcoming four credits will be November 11, 12, 13 (end of quadmaster 1) and February 1 and 2 (end of quadmaster 2).

SECONDARY DISTANCE LEARNING

The WRDSB recognizes that some families may elect to have their child(ren) learn from home rather than return to school in September. The WRDSB has developed a plan to support students who will engage in Full Distance Learning until such time as they are able to return to school. Through the WRDSB Confirmation of Attendance Form, available between August 7-13, 2020, families communicated if they wish their child(ren):

1. To attend school in-person (Elementary In-Person Learning and Secondary Adapted Learning), or
2. To participate in Full Online Distance Learning from home, or
3. Tech-free/Paper-based Distance Learning

WRDSB Secondary students who choose Full Distance Learning - Online or Tech-free/Paper based, will participate in real time, synchronous learning for a portion of each day. Classes will be led by qualified teachers at scheduled times during the school day. The amount of time students will spend in Full Distance Learning will be equal to the amount of time as students who chose In-Person Learning.

WRDSB families/students who require support with technology or Internet access to engage in Full Distance Learning can contact their school in the week August 31-September 4 to request support. Students in this model will be assigned to a qualified WRDSB teacher (one who may not be from their school) and with other peers (who may not be from their school) in a Full Distance Learning class.

Students who choose Full Distance Learning, and who will be using technology, will be enrolled in D2L Brightspace. They will be registered in two classes per quadmaster with students and teachers from throughout the WRDSB. Students who choose Full Distance Learning may not have the same timetable or course selections they requested in the spring. All attempts will be made to honour student courses requests; however, the priority for Full Distance Learning will be to provide

compulsory courses. As such, there will be limited optional courses available in the Full Distance Learning program.

During Full Distance Learning, students will engage in a combination of asynchronous and synchronous (during school hours) learning to achieve the 110 hours of instruction per course. Students will be expected to log in to their Distance Learning classes every day. Attendance will be taken daily. Students and parents will be provided with a daily schedule or timetable that includes 150 minutes of learning opportunities per course, with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Programming will be based on the full Ontario curriculum and include opportunities for guided instruction, large- and small-group learning, synchronous check-ins, and asynchronous independent work. Synchronous learning is Learning that happens in real time.

Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time.

Asynchronous learning: Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

For Secondary students in Grades 9 -12 the daily minimum synchronous learning time requirement will be 120 minutes for each 150 minute class. The 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.

Students may be exempted from the minimum requirements for synchronous learning, on an individual basis. Requests for an exemption must be made in writing. To support meaningful access to education, alternative learning approaches will be put in place for all exempted students. Exempted students will be provided with a daily schedule or timetable in accordance with 150-minutes per course. WRDSB will assess whether there are students who need access to a device or Internet and take steps to distribute school resources to ensure students can stay connected, wherever possible, to learning.

For students who engage in Full Distance Learning in a technology-free manner, packages of learning resources and supports will be provided and will fulfill grade appropriate curriculum or course specific requirements. A teacher or designated education staff will be supporting students through this learning mode and will make regular contact by phone. Phone calls are intended to be a way of connecting with students, providing opportunities to answer questions they may have and providing feedback on completed work. Regular Cycles of student Assessment and Evaluation (diagnostic, formative, summative) will apply. There will be an emphasis on conversations and observations to complement the collection of student work products.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY

- Organized Sports - At this time, participation in inter-school sports runs contrary to current Public Health directions and will not take place. The WRDSB will be regularly reviewing these directions and provide guidance if the situation changes
- School Clubs and Committees - At this time, in-person clubs and extracurricular activities do not align with directions from Public Health and will not take place. The WRDSB will be regularly reviewing these directions and provide guidance if the situation changes
- Large In Person Gatherings - No in-person school assemblies or large gatherings should occur within the school/site.
- Lunch - Students will be required to eat in their respective classroom, using directions supplied by the teacher. Microwaves will not be available.
- Recess will take place outside whenever possible, physical distancing should be encouraged
- Field Trips - At this time, field trips will not take place. The status of this decision will be regularly reviewed
- Cafeterias - Cafeteria services will not be available at this time.
- Nutrition Programs - Student nutrition programs will be in place with enhanced health and safety guidelines

IN THE EVENT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES A REQUIRED CHANGE IN THE MODE OF LEARNING...

The WRDSB worked to develop learning models for each of the three scenarios identified by the Ministry of Education back in June. Descriptions for each can be found [here](#). We want our students, families and staff to know that if direction changes, we are ready with possible learning models for each of the three scenarios.



**Full Return with Enhanced
Healthy and Safety Protocols**



Adaptive / Hybrid Model



Full Distance Learning



FULL RETURN WITH ENHANCED HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

ELEMENTARY

In this model, elementary students would attend school with enhanced safety measures and a maximum of 30 students per class. Bell times and timetables would remain the same as pre-COVID-19 pandemic, with 300 minutes of face-to-face teacher instruction. Students would have two, forty-minute nutrition breaks with staggered outdoor breaks.

However, there will be an increase of health and safety measures in place such as staggered entry and exit of students, frequent hand hygiene, the recommended use of masks when physical distancing cannot occur, and enhanced cleaning measures as a few examples.

SECONDARY

Secondary students would return to school in a quadmestering model, which means students would return full-time but attend two classes per day in person with supervised blended learning periods using platforms such as Google Classroom and Brightspace. Class sizes would vary depending on grade and level, usually to a maximum of 30 students, and a staggered lunch block would be implemented to help with the enhanced safety protocols.



ADAPTIVE/HYBRID

ELEMENTARY

In this model for elementary students, there would be four cohorts: A, B, C, and D.

Cohorts A and B will be determined by [Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region \(STSWR\)](#) as transportation plays a significant role in cohort development. Each class would be divided into two cohorts with a maximum of 15 students per cohort, with each cohort attending class on different days. This would have students attend five full days of class instruction over two weeks. A combination of face-to-face instruction and blended learning, delivered through asynchronous and synchronous learning, would complete the learning experience for our students.

Cohort C and D will be supported fully through distance learning either through tech-enabled devices (Cohort C) or via tech-free options (Cohort D) and by parent or legal guardian request.

SECONDARY

In this model for secondary students, there would be four cohorts: A, B, C, and D.

Each class would be divided into two cohorts, with a maximum of 15 students per cohort. In September, secondary schools would start with an adaptive model and then shift to quadmastering, as directed by the Ministry of Education. A combination of face-to-face instruction and blended learning, delivered through asynchronous and synchronous learning, would make up the learning experience for our students.

Cohort C and D will be supported fully through distance learning, as determined by completion of the “Intent to return to school in person Form by parent or legal guardian request.



FULL DISTANCE LEARNING

In this model, elementary and secondary students would engage in learning from a distance, in most cases, through digital devices. All educators would establish an online classroom using one of the WRDSB designated platforms and schedule synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for their students, along with Special Education Resource Teachers, EAs, and CYWs to provide synchronous support to students with IEP's and students who require additional support.

Creating a sense of belonging will be foundational to all distance learning. Students will be engaged in 300 minutes daily of learning opportunities that are synchronous (live video or audio) or asynchronous independent work on one of the WRDSB designated learning platforms (Brightspace or Google Classroom). As in any learning situation, programming would be developed based off of the full Ontario curriculum.

Students who opt for tech-free distance learning will be assigned paper-based work based on the full curriculum and will have regular opportunities to interact with educators over the phone.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We know that parents have a lot of questions about the upcoming school year and we also know that schools and classrooms will look different when we return. The health and safety of students and staff is our top priority as we prepare for the upcoming school year. We will have increased health and safety measures in every school that operate in conjunction with the [Ministry of Education](#) and Public Health requirements.

MASK USE

Mask use or face coverings will be mandatory for students in Grades 4 through 12. The use of masks for Grades Junior Kindergarten through 3 students will be encouraged but not required in indoor spaces. Staff will be provided with medical-grade masks and eye protection. Every effort will be made to support physical distancing wherever possible.

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Appropriate signage will be posted throughout our school sites, plexiglass will be installed in appropriate spaces, hand sanitizer will be available in classrooms and offices, and our school buses and classrooms will be thoroughly and frequently cleaned. In addition, schools will have designated entrances and exits. Hallways and stairwells will be designated for one-way flow and physical distance reminders will be placed throughout the building. Health and safety is at the heart of every element of our return to school planning.

HAND HYGIENE

Staff and educators will regularly remind students of the importance of proper hand hygiene and assist younger students as needed. Staff will also incorporate frequent hand hygiene into their daily classroom routines. Signs will be posted at all sinks to remind students of proper handwashing techniques. In addition, signs will be placed throughout the school to indicate the nearest hand washing facility. Students **MUST** wash their hands:

- when they arrive at school and before they go home;
- before eating and drinking;
- after using the washroom;
- after sneezing or coughing into hands or tissue or assisting students with using a tissue;
- after using any common supplies, equipment or devices
- whenever hands are visibly dirty;
- when moving between different learning environments or centres(e.g., outdoor-indoor transitions)

In addition to hand washing, hand sanitizer will be placed throughout the school.

Further details are expected to come forward soon around COVID-19 protocols, from the Ministry of Education and Region of Waterloo Public Health. We will share more information on this process when we receive more information.

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As our students return to school we look forward to welcoming them back with warmth, calm, care and joy. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging experience for our students and families and as a result our priority for returning to school will be on building nurturing relationships and supporting student well-being. As a result our teachers will be supported through our central staff in fostering a trauma sensitive learning environment that places a priority on psychological safety, belonging and human rights and equity. In both the in-school and distance learning models school multi-disciplinary teams will continue to provide mental health support and services to our students through face to face, phone or virtual connections. Additional information will also be provided from School Mental Health Ontario who have developed a learning framework and toolkit resource for school boards..

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

Students with Special Education Needs continue to be a priority in our planning in both the in-class and distance learning models. In an effort to ensure they will receive the support they need to be successful. Central staff are working with our schools to develop and implement transition plans to ensure our students with special needs receive the support they need to be successful.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Secondary students who are in one of the WRDSB's Special Education Congregated Classes will have the option of attending school everyday. The needs of students with complex Special Education Needs who are not in a congregated class will also be reviewed to determine if they need to attend school on a daily basis as they are unable to access education through distance learning.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS

In-person learning may not be possible for everyone. If your child is medically fragile, immune compromised or has chronic or persistent health conditions, we recommend that you speak with your health care providers to identify which learning delivery model is best suited to your child's health needs. It is important that your child's healthcare provider(s) is consulted to ensure your child's physical health needs are considered as we plan for a return to school during the COVID Pandemic.

SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

RETURN TO WORK STAFF CONFIRMATION OF ATTENDANCE FORM

The Waterloo Region District School Board has distributed a form asking staff members to complete a Confirmation of Attendance Form in order to learn which staff members will be returning to work in person to their regularly assigned work locations. It is our expectation that staff will be returning to work in September 2020.

SUPPORTING STAFF AND EDUCATORS

We want all our staff to know that we have been hard at work planning for the reopening of our schools and that every effort is being made to ensure that the health, safety and well-being of our students and staff remains our top priority and is at the heart of our planning. In collaboration with the Board's Joint Health and Safety Committee, the Board has developed a robust and thorough COVID-19 Health & Safety and Employee Wellness Handbook that will be distributed and followed throughout the entire WRDSB system.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Employees of WRDSB have access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). This is a confidential, professional counselling service for eligible WRDSB employees and their dependents. It is a free, voluntary and high-quality service provided through Homewood Health Inc. Homewood Health has extensive experience supporting employees in the educational sector and addressing the specific challenges they face while leading and supporting students to academic excellence.

STAFF WELL-BEING STRATEGY

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) believes that a healthy workforce is essential for our ability to provide quality education and support for our students. We strive to assist our employees to balance their work and personal lives by supporting a positive, productive and respectful work environment. Employees of the Board have access to supports and resources that will assist in optimizing their health and well-being with the benefits, programs and resources that promote emotional, physical, social and cognitive health. One such resource, the LifeSpeak platform, has over 300 mental health and wellness videos available “anywhere and anytime” and can be accessed from any computer or mobile device. All of the experts featured in LifeSpeak's video training are leading North American experts.

SUPPORTING OUR FAMILIES

PARENT/GUARDIAN ENGAGEMENT

As we reopen schools to in-person learning, your child may be nervous about the return-to-school. There will be changes and the more they have a chance to talk about those changes, the better they will feel. What has not changed are the caring educators that will look after your child's safety and learning with the utmost professionalism and compassion.

Your engagement with school staff and WRDSB communications will be integral in being informed and engaged in order to ensure your child is feeling confident, secure, and ready to reenter an in-person learning environment.

As a parent, we invite you to prepare your child for their return to school as much as possible. We have prepared a [Caregiver's Guide to Setting the Stage for Return to School](#).

DAILY STUDENT SCREENING CHECKLIST

Does your child / children have any of the following new or worsening symptoms or signs?

Signs or Symptoms	YES	NO
Fever (temperature of 37.8°C or greater)		
Cough		
Difficulty breathing		
Sore throat		
Difficulty swallowing		
New loss of taste or smell		
Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain		
Runny nose or nasal congestion		
Red eyes (conjunctivitis)		
Not feeling well, tired or sore muscles		
Chills or headache		
Lethargy, loss of energy, loss of appetite		
Been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19		
Within the last 14 days, been in close contact with someone who returned from travel outside of Canada		

If one or more signs or symptoms exist, students should not attend school or extended day programs. Families should contact the Region of Waterloo Public Health Assessment Centre or a Health Care Provider for guidance about return to school.

Parents'/Caregivers'/Families' Role in Keeping Schools Safe

Screen for symptoms EVERY morning	Stay home when sick or if in contact with someone who is sick	Keep a safe distance
<i>Using our pre-screening checklist to see if your child has any of the listed symptoms. If the answer is "Yes" to any of the questions, your child must stay home from school. Please contact Region of Waterloo Public Health for further direction</i>	<i>Feel sick or have symptoms of COVID-19</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had close contact with someone who is ill with a cough and/or fever • Have anyone in the household who has been in close contact in the last 14 days with someone who is being investigated or confirmed to have COVID-19 • Have traveled outside of Canada in the last 14 days • Had close contact with someone who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days and who is ill 	<i>Maintain physical distancing between you and others when possible:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During pick-up or drop-off • When interacting with others outside your bubble
		<p>Pick up students promptly if you are notified that your child is showing symptoms at school</p> <p><i>Please ensure the school has up-to-date contact information. Alternate contacts should not be in at-risk or vulnerable populations</i></p>

For anyone who is showing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, Public Health recommends that you [complete an online self-assessment](#). The assessment will connect you with a medical professional, if necessary. You may also contact your primary care provider for more information. Families must notify their child's school that they are showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

HYGIENE AND CLEANING

RESTROOMS

Students will be asked to adhere to physical distancing guidelines while using the washroom. Washrooms will be equipped with visual cues (floor markings and signs) to prompt physical distancing and hand hygiene

LOCKERS/STORAGE

At this time lockers will not be in use and students will be asked to keep their personal belongings with them through the day. Younger students will have access to 'cubbies' and hooks. Use will be staggered within and between cohorts.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

At this time, due to the level of cleaning required between users, playground equipment will not be available during the school day. This item will be revisited if expectations change

FITNESS EQUIPMENT

Fitness Equipment will need to be cleaned between users in addition to hand hygiene before and after use.

SHARED MATERIALS

Use of shared objects (for example, gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or the objects should be cleaned between each use. Whenever possible, students will be provided with individual learning materials for their use in class. Hand hygiene will be required before and after use of shared materials.

LIBRARY BOOKS

Safety protocols will be in place for students to access library materials. These protocols include, but are not limited to:

- Revised circulation limits
- Revised sign-out procedures
- Isolation of returned library materials (removal from circulation) for a prescribed amount of time prior to returning to circulation

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

(Please note that the WRDSB is still awaiting direction from the Ministry of Education, Public Health Ontario and Region of Waterloo Public Health)

Regular cleaning and disinfection are essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. Schools will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with Public Health Ontario's [Environmental Cleaning fact sheet \(PDF\)](#). The WRDSB utilizes Health Canada approved cleaning and disinfectant products that have Drug Identification Number (DIN).

Cleaning is the physical removal of visible soiling (e.g. dust, soil, blood, mucus). Cleaning removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. It is done with water, detergents and steady friction from a cleaning cloth. Cleaning for COVID-19 virus is the same as for other common viruses. All visibly soiled surfaces should be cleaned before being disinfected.

Disinfection is the killing of viruses and bacteria. A disinfectant is only applied to objects, never on the human body. Disinfectants have a required contact time (generally between 1 - 10 minutes) to ensure their effectiveness.

CLEANING RESPONSIBILITIES

Regular and as needed cleaning and disinfection will be performed by staff.

- cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces in common areas twice per day.
- there will be ongoing inspection and filling of hand washing supplies, including alcohol-based sanitizer dispensers where applicable.
- all necessary cleaning/disinfecting supplies are in stock and available.
- cleaning/disinfecting supplies will be provided to staff.
- during the evening a thorough cleaning of all areas in use at the site will occur
- garbage containers will be emptied daily.

All Board staff will be required to clean/disinfect in their areas of work as needed in order to maintain a clean environment and where applicable, support their duty of care.

CLEANING HIGH TOUCH SURFACES

Staff will support the cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces twice daily at a minimum, or as required. This includes washrooms (toilet fixtures, faucets), shared eating areas (tables, sinks, counters), doorknobs, light switches, handles, push buttons, handrails, bottle fillers, etc.

WATER FOUNTAINS

At this time, water fountains will be unavailable and where possible replaced with bottle-fillers.

GARBAGE

Students will be asked to bring "litterless" lunches as much as possible. Garbage will be collected in lined, touchless bins.

OPERATIONS

TRANSPORTATION

Wherever possible, active transportation (i.e. walking, biking) is a preferred method of travel to and from school. However, those students who are within the bus transportation boundaries and do not opt out of transportation will be required to wear a mask while riding the bus. Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region is building student cohorts and mapping out routes and will provide more information in the coming weeks. Please visit www.stswr.ca for updates on bus times.

If you do not wish to have your child assigned to the bus please fill in the [Do Not Ride Form](#).

EXTENDED DAY

Extended Day programs will operate this fall. This includes both WRDSB and third-party operated programs. Parents can now register and enter care schedules online at <https://regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com/>. Please note that care schedules must be confirmed online by **August 31** if you require care for the first day of school. Children in Grades 4-6 will be required to wear a mask. Children in Kindergarten-Grade 3 are encouraged to wear masks, but it is not mandatory. Parents and caregivers will be required to wear a mask to enter the school when dropping off and picking children up from programs. Hand sanitizer will also be available at entrances for parents to use. Educators will be wearing masks while working in the program and other PPE when appropriate.

Program rates for the 2020-2021 school year are available on the [Extended Day Programs website](#). Families can make changes to their Extended Day schedule online using the Region of Waterloo's [OneList](#). More information on how to register for programs and make changes to schedules is [available on our website](#).

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

The Board will be focused on opening and supporting our day time school operations in the Fall. As such, schools will remain closed to community use until at least November 2020. Staff will continue to evaluate the feasibility of opening our schools to community use and provide updates on our website.

Outdoor fields and specialty areas such as artificial turf fields remain available for community use through our Rentals Department or the appropriate Municipal office.

<https://www.wrdsb.ca/blog/2020/07/16/reopening-our-school-playgrounds/>

COMMUNICATION

The Waterloo Region District School Board is committed to providing meaningful communication to all parents/guardians/staff/students/stakeholders as we prepare for the upcoming school year. Important information and updates will be provided through our website, school websites and other school communication methods, and social media channels. We encourage our community to check back often for updates.

BUDGET

Trustees passed the board's 2020-2021 school year budget on August 10, 2020. The details of the budget are contained here in the [budget report](#).

As we prepare for a safe return to school in September, actions taken to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, support our students and staff, and maintain public confidence, represent the single most important challenge facing the board.

On August 10, 2020 the WRDSB Board of Trustees approved WRDSB 2020-2021 Budget including funding to support the Board's school reopening plans at a projected cost of \$7,126,000. The special project costs are provided in greater detail in the table below.

Cost Category	Item	Timeframe	Amount
Professional Development	Professional Development	Full Year	\$250,000
Non-Operating	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	3 months	1,270,000
	Personal Protective Equipment (Students)	Full Year	1,386,000
	Special Education PPE	3 months	1,120,000
	Transportation - Cleaning and PPE	3 months	590,000
School Operations	Facilities - Custodial and Supplies	3 months	900,000
	Barriers, signage	Full Year	660,000
	Health, Safety, and Wellness Department	Full Year	290,000
Transportation	Early Release Time Secondary	3 Months	<u>660,000</u>
		Total	\$7,126,000

It should be noted that cost projections based on initial return to school are subject to change and in some cases include projected costs for September, October and November only. Shortages in the supply chain will pressure both the budget and the ability of staff to maintain our facilities. We are preparing to have 30 to 60 days of PPE procured prior to the first day of school. Evolving direction from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Public Health will heavily influence the sustainability of reopening.

As part of the Ministry's return to school announcement on July 30, additional funding of approximately \$309M provincially was also announced. The WRDSB's share of this is approximately \$3.073 M. Details of the funding are still forthcoming but the table below summarizes the broad categories to which the funding applies.

Category	Provincial Allocation	Board Allocation
Mental Health Supports	\$10M	\$186,000
Technology	\$15M	461,000
Cleaning Supplies	\$4M	124,000
Staffing Support (Custodians)	\$50M	1,580,000
Health & Safety Training (Occasional/Casual Staff)	\$10M	298,000
Special Education Supports	\$10M	238,000
Mental Health Supports	<u>\$10M</u>	<u>186,000</u>
	TOTAL	\$3,073,000

***Given the recent Ministry of Education announcements on August 13th and August 14th , please note that a further update regarding the financial implications of these announcements will be provided at the Monday, August 17, 2020 Board Meeting.**