



December 31, 2021

Dear Families,

As you may be aware, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has made the decision to delay the start of school in January (both in-person and the remote school) to **WEDNESDAY, January 5, 2022**. This move has been made in response to the rapid increase in COVID-19 cases, including the Omicron variant that has a high rate of transmission. This delay will also allow schools to fully prepare for added health and safety measures. You can read the Ministry's media release here: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001386/ontario-updating-public-health-measures-and-guidance-in-response-to-omicron>

### **Government Screening Tool**

Please ensure you access and use the Government of Ontario's screener daily before sending your child(ren) to school. The screener can be found here with details and explanations regarding symptoms. [COVID-19 school screening \(ontario.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/covid-19-school-screening)

### **Temporary Asynchronous Learning**

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) is working hard with Principals, Vice-Principals, staff, Public Health Officials, and the Ministry of Education to ensure we are prepared for any situation that may arise as this pandemic continues.

Students and staff are well versed with D2L and other online platforms to share asynchronous learning materials and assessments as required. We respect families may feel uneasy about returning to school in-person currently. For the month of January, teachers will be posting asynchronous work to your child's D2L page in the event your child is isolating or is absent from school.

**A survey for parents will be sent out on Friday, January 7, 2022, for families to choose remote learning for the balance of the 2021-2022 school year. This will be effective February 3, 2022.**

Secondary students will continue to be able to access work and assignments from their D2L page as is the current practice.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's learning or require support in getting connected to the online classroom, please contact your child's school.

### **Supports for Students**

ALCDSB will continue to ensure plans are in place to support students with special education needs through the capacity of education workers and board professionals

(e.g. behavioural experts, speech language pathologists, and other professionals) to support learning.

Please be reminded of the mental health resources available to students at school, including Chaplains, Youth Workers, and high school Social Workers. In addition, Kids Help Phone is available which offers 24/7 counselling and referral services across the province. To use this free resource, children can call 1-800-668-6868, text CONNECT to 686868, or visit <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>.

School Mental Health Ontario also has several excellent resources for students, parents, and families on their website at [www.smho-smso.ca](http://www.smho-smso.ca). and child and youth mental health agencies across the province continue to provide services.

### **Ventilation**

We continue to follow maintenance requirements for ventilation systems and HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) systems already deployed in schools and classrooms. Based on yesterday's announcement, we await further information on whether our Board will receive additional HEPA filters.

### **PCR and Rapid Antigen Testing**

PCR testing will be focused on the health and long-term care sectors; however, school boards will continue to provide take-home PCR testing kits when required and available. The Board has a limited number of PCR test kits and demand could quickly outstrip supply. It is our understanding that the provincial government is working toward providing additional access to Rapid Antigen Test kits for students and staff in the coming weeks.

### **Additional Learning Resources**

The Ministry of Education recently announced the launch of two new portals, [TVO Learn](#) and [TFO IDÉLLO, apprendre à la maison](#), which provide supports for students learning remotely by accessing additional educational resources developed by Ontario certified teachers.

In addition, secondary students can continue to access TVO's [Independent Learning Centre \(ILC\) Open House](#) and [Portes ouvertes pour les cours TVO ILC in French-language](#), which provide access to 144 Grade 9 to 12 courses. These ILC resources are designed to provide flexible learning opportunities to help students keep up with their learning or deepen their understanding of a specific subject in addition to their regular course timetable.

### **Childcare Centres**

Schools will continue to provide access to their on-site childcare centres.

As a new year is upon us, we rely on our faith and the grace of God to nurture our hope so that as a Catholic learning community, we will get through this next stage

together. Our Catholic school board will continue to build faith-filled learning communities where every member is loved, inspired and successful.

I wish every member of our ALCDSB community a healthy and Happy New Year.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

Sincerely,



David DeSantis, Director of Education

