



Lindsay Liske
Chairperson

Rose Burton Spohn
Director of Education

May 19, 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians:

As you know, Premier Doug Ford and Minister Stephen Lecce announced today that schools would remain closed until the end of June to prevent the spread of COVID-19. **This means that teacher-led distance learning, which began on Monday, April 6, will continue until Friday, June 26.** In a letter sent to all parents and guardians on April 27, I provided some information about the Learn at Home initiative; these updates remain in effect until further notice.

My letter today is intended to provide you with additional information related to the remainder of the school year.

- **Graduation Masses, Ceremonies, and Celebrations** – Unfortunately, health restrictions prevent us from celebrating graduations as we have traditionally done in previous years. Currently, gatherings of more than five people are prohibited and regular masses in churches have been cancelled; all restaurants remain closed except for take-out orders. We cannot predict when these emergency orders will be lifted or if they will need to be reintroduced at a later date.

After much deliberation and with full consideration for what the fall might bring, **the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board has made the difficult decision to celebrate most Grade 8 and 12 graduations virtually this June.** Virtual graduations will permit all students and staff, particularly those leaving their schools, our school system, and/or their community to experience some closure. We acknowledge that, in some smaller schools outside of Sault Ste. Marie, there may be a limited number of students graduating, and in such circumstances, in-person alternatives may be permitted if social distancing rules are both eased and followed. Our board is committed to working with school administrators and local health officials to develop a plan that works for individual communities and respects everyone's safety.

We acknowledge how disappointing this news will be to many students and their families. Within the foreseeable future, principals and vice-principals will provide additional information specific to their schools, including details related to dates and times of virtual celebrations, requirements for students, and reimbursements for families.

- **Student and Parent Access to Schools** – We recognize that, when students left for March Break, they did so without knowing how long they would be out of school. Currently, access to schools and board buildings is confined to employees who are providing emergency and/or essential services. Those entering our buildings must comply with a strict protocol that protects everyone's health and safety. The board is currently collaborating with the Algoma, Porcupine, and Sudbury Health Units to create a process that will safely allow everyone to obtain their personal effects before the end of the school year. **This protocol will likely be put into place in mid to late June,** to permit families to drop off board-owned Chromebooks and pick up personal items, including diplomas for graduates, at the same time.
- **Technological Devices** – To date, over 1200 Chromebooks have been delivered to the doorsteps of those families who indicated a need for them. We encourage all students to continue using these devices throughout the school closure period.

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- **Teacher-Led Learning** – During the remainder of the school closure period, classroom teachers will continue to provide instruction, and students should continue to log in regularly to their virtual classroom environments, such as Google Classroom, Brightspace, SeeSaw, and Class Dojo, to complete the work assigned to them. Other employees of the board, including, but not limited to, school administrators, itinerant teachers, early childhood educators (ECEs), educational assistants (EAs), and school and family counselors will continue to provide support to students and families during this time.

We recognize that keeping students motivated for the rest of the school year may prove challenging, particularly as the weather improves. We urge you to support your children as best as you can in putting forth their best efforts in their studies. Material learned now will continue to be important to students' success, both now and in the future.

- **Summer School** – Our board is continuing to work on determining what courses / programming will be offered in summer school, and how that programming might be provided (i.e., in person or virtual). When more information becomes available, we will communicate it to you.

In closing, we thank you once again for your ongoing partnership as we work together to ensure our students learn as much as they can and remain safe while doing so. Should you require any additional supports to ensure these goals can be met, please contact your local principal and vice-principal.

God bless,

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