



May 27, 2021

Dear Parents / Guardians:

I am writing to advise you of some important updates that affect all school communities in the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board.

Vaccines for Students Aged 12 – 17

As you may know from recent media announcements, Health Canada has authorized the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for youth aged 12 and up. Ontarians aged 12 to 17 are now able to book an appointment for a free first dose of the vaccine. There will also be special “youth and families clinics” happening throughout the weeks of June 14 and 21. If you, adult family members and/or caregivers have not received the COVID-19 vaccine yet, you will also be able to book an appointment or go to the clinic with your child(ren).

Most children with COVID-19 have mild symptoms or none at all. However, some children with COVID-19 can get very sick. Children can also spread COVID-19 to other people. Vaccinating children protects them from getting sick and reduces virus spread within their household and the community.

To help your child and your family to make an informed decision, the Government of Ontario has developed a fact sheet (attached) based on expert medical advice and scientific information. Various details, including how to book and prepare for your child’s vaccination appointment, may be found at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-youth>. Please speak with your health care provider or [contact your local public health](#) unit if you have questions about the vaccine.

Supporting your child to be vaccinated against COVID-19 is an important step in the fight against this disease. It will be a key factor in helping your child’s school community return to a sense of normalcy and will benefit overall physical and mental health for children, youth and their families.

Choices for the 2021-22 School Year

We recognize that the recent progress made on the vaccine front might affect your registration choices for the 2021-22 school year. If you wish to change your mind about where your child will attend school next year (e.g., virtual academy or in-person learning), please contact your child's current school principal with your decision by no later than **Wednesday, June 2, 2021**. Our board will be finalizing staffing arrangements in June based on the information you provide, and we want to ensure that all supports are in place to meet the needs of your child(ren).

Graduations

Understanding how important graduations are to students, families, employees, and communities, the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board has sought to have the most current information in hand before making its decision about these celebrations.

As you know, a stay-at-home order is currently in effect and all schools are closed. Our current health restrictions prevent us from celebrating graduations in person. Unfortunately, we cannot predict when such orders will be lifted and/or when schools will reopen. **Therefore, our board has made the difficult decision to celebrate all Grade 8 and 12 graduations virtually this June.**

This decision was made after a great deal of deliberation and consultation with our health units. Virtual graduations will permit all students and staff, particularly those leaving their schools, our school system, and/or their community to experience some closure. Making this decision now allows all schools to continue planning meaningful, dignified, and personalized graduation masses and ceremonies for all students.

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

Please note that, should circumstances in the province change within the very near future, our board is committed to exploring whether students might be able to receive their diplomas in person in a safe way that honours the public health guidance in place at that time.

In the meantime and in closing, please rest assured that the health, safety, and instruction of your child(ren) remain our board's top priorities. We urge everyone to remain vigilant and observe all public health measures, particularly those related to in-person gatherings. Equally, we encourage everyone to continue to exercise great caution, remain focused on student achievement, make wise and informed decisions about vaccinations, and pray for everyone's continued protection.

Nurturing hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rose Burton Spohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Rose Burton Spohn
Director of Education

