



Welcome Back to School 2020

September 2020

Dear Families,

We are excited to be welcoming our students back to school after so many months away. It has and continues to be a challenging time in our world with COVID-19 and the ongoing concern for public safety.

Although we are excited to be starting school again in our building, we are very aware of how different things need to be as we move forward. It still will not be “business as usual” at Winona Elementary School. There are many processes and procedures that will be very different in this school year and will require the absolute cooperation of everyone in our Winona School Community.

Many of these rules and procedures have been put in place by the Province of Ontario, the Ministry of Education, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and by Hamilton Public Health. It is therefore essential that we all work together to keep our school community safe by following the plans outlined below no matter our personal feelings.

Restricted Access to the School Building

Due to COVID-19 safety protocols, ACCESS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING IS RESTRICTED TO ONLY STUDENTS AND STAFF at this time. Parents and visitors are not permitted into the building. This reality is a significant shift in the way Winona usually operates. However, we must follow board and public health restrictions at this time. Parents and visitors may ring the doorbell at the main entrance and we will assist you through the intercom at the office. If you are picking up your child early from school, it is therefore more important than ever to call ahead and we will do our best to have your child ready to be dismissed to you at the front door. Parents and Guardians who are scheduled for specific meetings will be briefed on safe entry protocols prior to the meeting. All other communications will occur through phone and email.

Masks

All staff and students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 will be required to wear masks. This decision was made by the Board of Trustees on Monday, August 24th.

Staggered Return to First Days of School

The Board of Trustees approved a staggered Return-to-School plan on Monday, August 24. The staggered return will be as follows:

Monday, September 7	-	Labour Day Holiday
Tuesday, September 8	-	Scheduled Visits for Students with Special Needs only
Wednesday, September 9	-	Scheduled Visits for JK Orientation and for Students with Special Needs only
Thursday, September 10	-	Scheduled Visits for JK Orientation and for Students with Special Needs only
Friday, September 11	-	Scheduled Visits for JK Orientation and for Students with Special Needs only
Monday, September 14	-	“Group A” Students Return (Last names fall in the alphabet between A and K)
Tuesday, September 15	-	“Group B” Students Return (Last names fall in the Alphabet between L and Z)
Wednesday, September 16	-	All Students Return to School

School Bus Changes

As you know, school bus transportation is not coordinated by Winona Elementary School but through the Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation System (HWSTS). HWSTS organizes the busing for the HWDSB and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board. If your child is an ELIGIBLE rider, you will have received direct contact from HWSTS either through mail or email. You will have been notified of your

child's bus stop. Due to COVID-19, we have been informed that THERE WILL BE NO COURTESY RIDERS APPROVED to ride the school bus this year. In the past, families could apply to the Principal or Vice Principal to be a "Courtesy Rider" but this option has been removed at this time. ALL STUDENTS MUST WEAR MASKS ON THE SCHOOL BUS AND WILL BE ASSIGNED SEATS.

Kiss and Drop Lane Student Drop-off in the Morning

We are STRONGLY URGING parents to use the "Kiss and Drop" Lane this year rather than parking your car as YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE SIDEWALK beside the back playground by the buses or the Kindergarten playground area. Due to COVID-19 precautions, we must restrict the number of people on those sidewalks. By using the Kiss and Drop Lane, you will help alleviate pressure in this area and it will be ultimately safer for your child.

We will have staff along the sidewalk of the Kiss and Drop Lane to receive and direct younger children. They will walk Kindergarten children directly to their fenced play area where other teachers will receive them and guide them inside. All other children will be directed around the FRONT of the building through our north side field to our back field. Once around the back, students will proceed to a designated/marked area for their grade and class cohort each day. As part of COVID-19 health precautions, they will be with their class cohort. They will not be randomly circulating and playing on the pavement as has been our normal practice in the morning.

Please pull your car up as far as you can in the lane for drop-off. YOUR CHILD NEEDS TO BE READY TO EXIT YOUR VEHICLE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE with their backpack, etc. on their laps rather than in your car trunk. Please educate your child on this process as we will need to keep cars moving. Once out of the vehicle, younger students will be escorted and guided by staff and older students will be able to walk on their own.

As the main driveway in front of the school is for "Kiss and Drop" only, vehicles are not permitted to park at any time in this lane so as not to disrupt traffic flow. The front drive lane is also a Fire Access Lane so parking in this zone at ANY TIME is actually prohibited by law.

Parking Lot Drop-off in the Morning

If you must drop off your child in the parking lot, we ask that you walk your child safely through the lot to the sidewalk BETWEEN the Parking Lot and the Bus Lane. Two areas will be designated as cross-walk areas to cross the bus lane. A rope line and signs will assist. A staff member will be on duty by the buses to assist with crossing. PARENTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CROSS ONTO THE BUS UNLOADING SIDEWALK as this increases congestion and makes social distancing much more difficult.

Student Pick-up at Dismissal Time

At the end of the day, students will be organized on the field in their class cohort groups and bus students will begin to line up (socially distanced) on the pavement area. We will be asking older siblings to assist at this time of day by picking up younger siblings from their class cohort group and walking them either to the bus line, to their parent's car or to begin to walk home. WE ASK THAT ONLY PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN WITHOUT OLDER SIBLINGS GET OUT OF THEIR CARS AND COME TO THE ASSIGNED SIDEWALK as in the morning procedures above. Please pick-up your child as quickly as possible and return to your car using the designated crosswalks.

September Enrollment and Reorganization

The Ministry of Education has offered online schooling as well as in-person schooling to families in Ontario. As people decide to move into online and out of online, classes will need to be adjusted throughout the year to ensure safe class size numbers. To prevent the chaos of building jumping in and out, there are only 3 transition times when changes can occur: October 13, after the Holiday Break in January and after the March Break. Also, as this community is always growing, there are always new student registrations at Winona with new families moving into the area as well as people moving from the area. Schools often have to reorganize at this time of year. We will be submitting our enrollment numbers throughout September to the Superintendent to determine if we have to reorganize the school classes and to determine how many classes and students that would affect. If indeed we have to move teaching assignments and classes, we will address that in a separate letter to parents at the end of September.

Life-Threatening Allergies at Winona

There are numerous students at Winona Elementary School who suffer from a severe allergy which can cause an anaphylactic reaction. An anaphylactic reaction is an allergic reaction so severe that, in some cases, it can be life threatening.

These children have severe allergies to:

- Eggs (egg salad, hard boiled eggs) or prepared food with eggs such as mayonnaise, baked goods containing eggs, candy containing egg such as nougat, creamy dressings, custard, quiche, etc.)
- Peas
- Seafood
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts (Please note: Some products claim to be peanut free but actually contain tree nuts. Please read ingredient lists carefully).

The best approach to creating a safe school environment for these children is prevention/avoidance and parents/guardians play a crucial role in this regard. While we recognize that parents are entitled to decide what goes into their child's lunches and snacks, we respectfully request your help in reducing the risk to our anaphylactic children by refraining, wherever possible, from packing the above-named foods)

Student Absences

If your child is going to be absent from school, please send a note to the office or call our 24-hour answering machine at 905-643-4141 to ensure that absences are received and recorded in our student information system. If you are picking your child up early from school, we ask that you send a note to the school in the morning. This process is helpful as we wish to minimize interruptions to classes by calling students out during instructional time.

School Council

Our School Council is an active and key part of the school community. We need your involvement to make School Council a success. It is a great group of people who care deeply about this school and its students. Please read the attached information regarding School Council self-nomination forms. We would love to have you involved this year. The first meeting of School Council will take place at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 24, 2020. The location and format will be communicated at a later time. Please be sure to hand in your self-nomination form to be a part of School Council by Tuesday, September 22 at the latest. The self-nomination forms will be coming in the days ahead.

Connecting to the School

Please subscribe to our school website so that you can receive current updates and information items. We encourage parents to keep in touch by talking to your child about what they are learning and also by being involved in the school and keeping up-to-date with school happenings. Many teachers also have a web page. Please check them out at www.hwdsb.on.ca/winona or follow us on Twitter at @WinonaElem

Please feel free to contact your child's teacher with any questions or concerns you may have.

Winona Elementary School is a great place for students, staff and the community and, although this year will be a very different school year, we are excited to be starting up again this school year.

Sincerely,
Mr. T. Illman
Principal

Mrs. J. Adler
Vice Principal