

March 5, 2021

Dear SRB Grade 7-12 Families for the 2021-2022 School Year,

Last week, the OCDSB sent all families an [email](#) about planning for the return to school in September 2021. That message explained:

- The OCDSB is planning for the return to in-person learning for most students in September 2021;
- Virtual learning through Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) will be available for students who wish to learn in this model;
- The OCDSB will continue to offer a full range of programs and pathways, but there will be some differences in programming availability between in-person and virtual school;
- Safety precautions will continue to be in place (daily self-assessments, cohorting, masks, hand hygiene and physical distancing).
- We are working with OSTA to ensure transportation will be available with appropriate health and safety precautions.
- Over the course of the school year, we hope to be able to incrementally resume more regular activities, extra-curricular, and operations, subject to health guidelines.

Parents to Confirm Student Attendance

In order to plan for September, parents and guardians must confirm their child's attendance for the upcoming school year.

- **Please complete this form (Click this link <https://forms.gle/aSiKzDQvfcWR1rNk6>) by 11:59 p.m. on March 14th, 2021.**

A reminder that families must complete **one form per child**, using the form sent by the child's school. If you have children enrolled in different schools, please use the form sent by the school your child will attend in September 2021. **If you do not complete the form, your child will be assigned to in-person learning.**

Deciding What is Best For Your Family

While many families are keen to get back to school in-person, there are many things to consider in your decision. These [Elementary](#) & [Secondary](#) resource guides are designed to support families and explain in-person and virtual learning options and outline some of the learning, programming, safety and well-being issues that families will want to consider.

Why Now?

We know it seems early for families to make this decision, but we've already delayed the timing as much as possible. One of the things families appreciate about the OCDSB is the rich variety of program offerings, but that's also what makes the planning process even more complex. School planning starts in January and is based on enrollment projections. Once we know who will be attending by school and program, we can assign the right staff and place students into the classes and/or programs which best meet their needs. Getting things right at the planning stages reduces the chance of having to reassign classrooms, grade configurations, teaching assignments, or timetables after school starts. We all want a smooth and stable start to September.

Are Changes Possible?

Yes, change in some circumstances is possible, on request, where there is a change to your family situation. For example, medical accommodation becomes necessary, there is a change in the student's learning needs, a job change makes supervising virtual learning difficult - these

kinds of changes happen and we will work with you to find a way to best support the needs of your family. But, we're asking families to reflect on your child's needs and make the decision that best supports your child for the entire school year so that we can minimize the impact of such changes on all students.

Program Offerings

The OCDSB offers a full range of programs and all of these will be available for in-person learning. There are some limitations on program availability in virtual school. There are a few reasons for this:

- Programs with smaller enrollment or unique program offerings are more challenging to offer when the students are spread across both virtual and in-person learning. This can lead to more combined grade classes, increased need for specialized teachers, and in some cases increased class sizes in the program or in other programs;
- Our experience this year has shown that in-person learning is the best format to support students with special education needs and/or English Language Learners. For this reason, in the 2021-2022 school year specialized program classes and ESL/ELD classes will return to in-person delivery only.

Considerations for Students with Special Education Needs

For learners with special education needs, the academic and non-academic needs of students are best met in-person. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for a student with special education needs to engage in virtual learning. In assessing the appropriateness of this option, parents/guardians/caregivers should carefully consider the following:

- Specialized program classes provide an intensive level of support (teachers, education assistants, and professional supports such as speech and language pathology or occupational and physical therapy) for both academic and non-academic needs;
- Virtual learning requires considerable at-home support varying by the needs of the child and their level of independence;
- The range of accommodations available to educators to meet the needs of learners is limited. For example, educators aren't able to use proximity, hand-over-hand prompting, and provide the same level of individualized support, when needed.

Secondary Schedule

Students and parents are eager to know what the daily schedule will look like in secondary schools. This is one decision that does not have to be made immediately. Recognizing that, we will continue to monitor the COVID-19 safety precautions. We hope to start the year and/or move to two classes a day and a lunch break between classes as soon as possible.

Questions?

There is more information [on our website](#), and in the [Elementary](#) & [Secondary](#) resource guides. If you have questions, please contact the school and we will be happy to assist.

Please complete the confirmation of attendance form **by 11:59 p.m. on March 14, 2021.**

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Matt Gagnier
Principal - Sir Robert Borden HS