

COVID UPDATE – May 26, 2020

With the extension of school closures until the end of June, we are continuing with OCDSB LearnAtHome. Teachers continue to support students using a range of practice. It has been incredible to watch our staff work with such care and innovation in support of student learning and well-being. Over the past two weeks, I have had an opportunity to do virtual school visits with superintendents and have met teachers, educational assistants, early child educators, administrators and many other incredible educational support workers. I have been inspired by the work they are doing and the energy and enthusiasm they bring to our students. We have much to be proud of.

Special Education Services and Programs – this district has a strong commitment to supporting students with special education needs. That commitment continues through the learn at home period. I am pleased to advise you that:

- Working in partnership with SickKids and other stakeholders, we have been able to put a plan in place to restart the **Empower Reading Program**. Over the past two months we have been reinforcing and consolidating learning with Empower strategies. We will now be in a position to provide the delivery of Empower lessons online. The expectation is that any student who started Empower during the 2019-2020 school year will be provided with an opportunity to complete the program either now, or in the fall.
- We have also been able to create a new parent web based site with resources to **support students who are non-verbal or minimally-verbal**. Speech-Language Pathologists have created this compilation of robust resources to support parents during the pandemic and beyond. This complements the existing AAC website for all OCDSB staff.
- **Mental Health Supports** continue to be developed for students and staff. Since our last meeting we offered a series of staff workshops about supporting mental health and these were very well attended. Plans are underway to continue this work.

Pick Up of Student Belongings – We know that parents and students are very interested in accessing schools in order to pick up student belongings. Work is underway on the development of a comprehensive plan for this which takes into consideration the safety of students, parents and staff. There will be some tailoring of the plans to meet the unique needs of elementary and secondary students. Parents can expect an announcement on this next week with pick up scheduled for later in the month.

Graduation Celebrations – we invited grade 12 students to share their thoughts about how we might celebrate their graduation and recognize physical distancing. We had a tremendous response and lots of great ideas. A summary of their feedback is included in tonight's agenda. Using the student's ideas, as well as input from school staff, we are developing a district wide strategy for celebration of students this spring while reserving the formal ceremonies in the fall. Key criteria in the planning are developing a strategy which ensures student safety, equity of access, and celebrates all students in the district. In the next week, we will be ready to release the details to school staff, students, and parents. Stay tuned.

Also will highlight that the Ottawa Citizen and Ottawa Sun are putting together a special graduation section and are inviting students to share their grad outfits, photos and speeches online, on their social

media channels and in special Citizen print sections on June 18, 19 and 20. To be included in the print editions, the deadline for submission is June 12. We are promoting this information to all of our grade 12 students.

Leaving Ceremonies – at the elementary level, we will be holding “virtual” leaving ceremonies for students transitioning to new schools in September. This primarily involves grade 8 and grade 6 students, but we do have some additional transition points in this district. The goal is to have virtual celebrations which respect the school tradition and context, are equitable, maintain student privacy and are readily available to families to enjoy.

Planning for Re-opening of Schools and Buildings – The Ministry has announced that there will be province wide directives regarding the re-opening of schools in September. While we await provincial direction, we have initiated discussions about what re-opening could like; what safety mechanisms need to be in place; and how we manage access to buildings and services. In addition to the Ministry direction, we are working with Ottawa Public Health and with other school districts to ensure our planning is in alignment with other school districts.

DELF – There were questions about the DELF – Diplome des etudes de langue Francaise. The dates for the international administration of the DELF are established by the CIEP, the governing body for the administration of the DELF. The only dates scheduled for Canada in the spring this year were early April/May and June. All three administrations were cancelled. We are awaiting further information regarding potential future dates for Canadian administration.

As we move forward there continue to be more questions and issues for consideration. We are continuing to work to get answers to these questions. We know that both teachers and parents are looking for updates on report cards. We are awaiting a Ministry memo which will clarify some of the outstanding questions. We will provide updates to the community as soon as we can.