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NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD?

A TEMPERATURE CHECK ON THE #ESSENTIALSERVICES THAT KEEP THE REGION GOING

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THE SITUATION

All school and offices of the Halton Catholic District School Board are closed and students are at home as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As of today, schools are set to reopen on May 4. However, that return date is widely expected to be extended.

SO WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THE SCHOOLS RIGHT NOW?

Not a whole lot. While the buildings themselves are closed, safety and security checks are conducted very few days by staff. In addition, emergency and preventive maintenance are continuing — but even that is limited. Playgrounds and fields on the properties are also closed. A deep clean was done when the buildings first closed and another one is planned when the reopening occurs.

IF NEED BE, IS THE BOARD READY TO RETURN TO NORMAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME?

Board officials we spoke to say absolutely yes. The board will take its directions on reopening from the ministry and Halton health services but they say staff and facilities are ready and able to be back in operation on short notice. The big challenge is anticipated to be around potential gaps in student learning as a result of the closure. They are currently in the process of providing students with continuity learning to address

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- Pat Daly

those gaps.

WHAT ABOUT THE OPPOSITE SITUATION WHERE SCHOOLS DON'T REOPEN UNTIL SEPTEMBER? WILL CHILDREN NEED TO RETAKE THE GRADE?

No. The ministry has been clear that students will not lose this year. The board has said that ensuring students successfully complete the year is its No. 1 priority. Secondary students are still gaining credits and elementary students will still be advancing to the next grade. In the event the schools don't return until September, the board will be looking at how to go back and fill in any learning gaps as a result of the closures.

WHAT ARE STUDENTS DOING NOW?

The board has launched distance learning programming that permits some instruction for students online. It varies class-to-class, but does not always require online access and requires minimal parent or guardian involvement. Teachers have been encouraged to foster an online community.

HAS SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BEEN AFFECTED?

Yes. The government direction has halted school

construction. It's not clear yet what effect it will have on completion timelines.

CAN MY CHILD STILL BE REGISTERED FOR KINDERGARTEN NEXT YEAR?

Mostly. There are two parts to the kindergarten registration process — one online and one in person. The online portion, which can be done at www.hcdsb.org, is still very much open. The in-person part, which requires presenting documentation at the school, is on hold.

HOW HAVE BOARD STAFF, TEACHERS AND SUPPORT WORKERS HANDLED THIS?

Very well, according to Pat Daly, Halton Catholic District School Board's director of education.

"It's not surprising to us but certainly heartening that the amount of work they have put in. We are certainly trying to support them in every way we can, but we've got all kinds of different teacher and professional groups that have really arisen on their own. Teachers are reaching out to teachers or social workers and CYC are working together virtually to try to virtually support our students and families," said Daly.

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