

PUBLIC BOARD URGES VIGILANCE IN KEEPING SCHOOLS SAFE

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As the countdown to the reopening of schools continues, it's time to tighten your social circles.

That was one of the significant take-aways from a meeting of the Halton District School Board on Sept. 2 - a reminder that families are as much a part of the solution to a successful reopening as educators.

"All of us need to be a part of this solution, in that preventing the spread (of the virus) is a community-wide effort," said Burlington trustee Leah Reynolds.

The single most important piece of the process is parents' commitment to completing the daily self-assessment every morning to ensure their child doesn't show a single one of the COVID-19 symptoms, said superintendent of education Colette Ruddock.

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- HDSB superintendent of education Colette Ruddock

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This is the time to be vigilant again, said Reynolds.

Public Health Ontario's messaging is that this is the time families should be tightening social circles and new circles become classmates, added Ruddock.

"We want to make sure that that class remains safe and protected in the classroom environment, that families really should be thinking of reducing the



Torstar file photo

HDSB announces reduced class sizes and urges vigilance as schools get set to reopen.

number of close contacts outside of school and home," said Ruddock.

The same holds true of teachers, said Oakville trustee Joanna Oliver.

"Students need to be socially responsible and our staff need to be encouraged to take a sick day. We know that many people go to work sick, but in the time of pandemic, that's not what we can do or tolerate.

"We have to really deliver that message and let them know it's OK. If they are sick, they're not to

come in, and substitute teachers will be found."

Until a vaccine is developed, "we as a society, and we as a school board, have to learn to live with this virus," said director of education Stuart Miller.

"If we don't, we'll be shut down again," he added.

With the staffing of schools completed to date, average class sizes have been reduced at the elementary level, said executive officer of human resources Debra McFadden.

• 24 teachers and 14 des-

ignated early childhood educators have been added to kindergarten classrooms, reducing average class sizes in the 244 kindergarten classes to 20, with none over the funded average class size of 26 students.

• In Grades 1-3, only 16 of 450 primary classes have more than 20 students, while the average class size is 18.5.

• In Grades 4-8, of 809 classes, 50 classes are between 25 and 26 students, but the current class size average is 22.6 students.

"As our enrolment stabilizes, when students actually return to school and we see what our traditional schools look like, not just intent but actuality, we will likely have a September reorganization process as we normally do, and that will be our opportunity to further address some pressures of class size where we can," said McFadden.

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