



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Believing, Achieving, Serving

May 1, 2020

Dear Students,

We know that remote learning was not how you envisioned your last few months of the school year, and it is not what the staff in our schools or we had wished for you. But, as our communities continue to fight the coronavirus, it was not only a necessary decision but the only responsible response to keep you and your families healthy and safe from COVID-19.

Since the order to close schools was put in place your Principals, Vice-Principals, teachers and support staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that learning continues, even when schools remain closed. We know that nothing will replace your school/classroom experience and recognize the challenges of managing school from home, but we also know that if there was ever a generation of young people that could both maneuver through and master the digital learning environment, it is yours. You have shown us that the classroom isn't confined to four walls; it exists in the minds and hearts of anyone who is willing to learn.

Over the past several weeks of parent-supported and teacher-directed home learning, we have been inspired by your efforts to stay connected, with your teachers, with your school and with each other. Many of you have even used your time at home to volunteer with service organizations and support your community while keeping up with your course work. Your response has been inspiring. We know, too, that a great many others are working on the frontlines in part-time jobs in essential service areas as porters, cashiers, shelf stockers, cleaners and other important roles. Your faith and goodness are a source of light and true hope in these challenging times. We thank you and we pray for you.

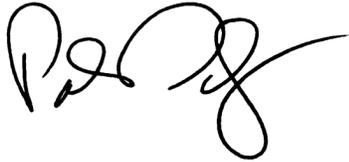
We also want to express our appreciation to parents and other family members who we know have been greatly impacted by the current circumstances and are doing everything they can to support your learning. As we near the end of the school year, we strongly encourage you to not only focus on, but put renewed efforts into your studies. Now is the time for you to work closely with your teachers and Educational Assistants to prepare for what lies ahead, be it advancement to the next grade level, post-secondary education or work.

This past week, the Education Minister announced that schools will remain closed until at least May 31, 2020. Due to uncertainty around the return to school, the HWCDSB has made the decision to cancel all school events for the remainder of the school year. This includes school athletics, clubs, school trips and most regrettably, graduations and proms. As do the staff in your schools, we feel very badly about this and we understand the disappointment you must feel, but please know that your principal and teachers are at this moment exploring the possibility of celebrating your grad at a later date, or even in a different manner.

It may be some time yet before we get back to our physical classrooms, but you have our assurance that when it is safe to do so, our return will include all those important things – sports, music, plays and clubs – that you most cherish about school.

Next week we give thanks to God for and celebrate the precious gift of publicly funded Catholic education. This year's theme of *"Igniting Hope"* is particularly important and reminds us that we are a people of hope and called to shine light in our world. In a World Youth Day Message, St. John Paul II wrote, *"Young people, do not be afraid to be holy, fly high, be among those whose goals are worthy of sons and daughters of God. Glorify your lives."* We thank you for all you do to bring Glory to God and urge you now and always to do all you can to Ignite Hope in our world.

Keep well, keep up your studies and keep safe.



Patrick J. Daly
Chairperson of the Board



David Hansen
Director of Education