



## Update: Eastern Ontario and Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Units Chief Medical Officers of Health

Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, Medical Officer of Health for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, and Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit, joined the Board of Trustees to share a virtual presentation on COVID-19 and the complex considerations for students, families, and school communities that come with the changes under the new provincial guidelines which came into effect on March 21.

While testing is limited, current monitoring in Ontario public health units includes proxy indicators such as hospitalizations, outbreaks, and wastewater monitoring, all of which are demonstrating a general trend of decline in Eastern Ontario. Progressive lifting of restrictions in the province, which has been mirrored in schools, includes the lifting of mandatory masking, while maintaining protective measures like rapid tests, ventilation improvements, enhanced cleaning, and screening.

Communities have journeyed through two years of pandemic response, which Dr. Roumeliotis noted, has taken a toll on the mental health of some students. In this new stage of reopening, many are learning to live alongside COVID-19, and it is important to now understand the possible anxieties and fears among children, youth, and their families, that comes with this new lifting of restrictions.

“We are now in a time of transition,” explained Dr. Roumeliotis. “We have had parents reaching out to us on both sides, urging us to stop masking, and others begging us to continue masking, and so there is now some uncertainty after we have been doing this for two years. This is a significant transition, and we need to be understanding, to respect decisions, to be supportive of students and families, and to be aware of the sensitivities, individual situations and needs of members of our community.”

Dr. Stewart added that all COVID-19 vaccination clinics would now also be offering the routine immunization program for students in grades 7 and 8. As public health begins to plan for more usual programming on specific topics of concern such as mental health and drug use, feedback and support will be provided to schools.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusive Education

At the Board meeting on March 22, 2022, Norma McDonald, Superintendent of School Effectiveness, accompanied by Fr. John Whyte, CDSBEO Faith Animator, Kate Veinotte, CDSBEO Religious Education Consultant and Marian Lawson-MacDonald, CDSBEO Indigenous Consultant, presented an overview of the many Equity and Inclusion initiatives within CDSBEO



# CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Board Meeting Highlights  
From the meeting held March 22, 2022



schools. These initiatives collectively work to address anti-racism, understanding the impact of poverty, cultural awareness, and how to create safe and accepting school environments.

The CDSBEO focus on Equitable and Inclusive Education prepares students to be collaborative contributors who respect the rights of all and contribute to the common good. Through these initiatives, students have the opportunity to grow to become responsible citizens who give witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life. Many rich learning opportunities and programs are provided to students which support cultural awareness and understanding, including an inspiring virtual speaker series, celebrations and learning for Black History Month and the upcoming Asian Heritage Month, as well as an *All Colours are Beautiful* art contest. Additionally, special projects for staff and students have been delivered by the Religious and Family Life Department which support the Board spiritual theme of belonging: *I Belong Here – Together we are God's good news!*

Board administrators will also participate in three equity leadership sessions this year, continuing the work on critical consciousness in education with Dr. Nicole West-Burns. The *Building Foundations in Equity: Administrators' Series*, helps school leaders to build their knowledge and examine the critical role they play in equity work. Throughout the spring, Equity School Team Leaders will also attend five sessions to further explore Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

In the area of Indigenous Education, CDSBEO has continued its work with land-based teachings, working with community partners, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Knowledge Keepers and Elders, and supporting schools through resources, projects, Teams pages and traditional teachings.