

Coronavirus COVID-19 Update

March 9, 2020

Dear WQSB Students, Staff, and Families,

Over the past week, there has been a significant increase in information about the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Western Québec School Board is actively monitoring this situation and continues to work with the Ministry of Education, Santé Québec, Public Health Canada, and other governmental agencies.

Fortunately, there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our region, making the immediate health risk low in our community. **At present, school closures are not recommended for the prevention of COVID-19.**

At the WQSB, we are putting in place a number of proactive measures to protect student and staff well-being. This is an evolving situation, and timely and accurate information is critical.

International Field Trips – All sponsored school field trips are being closely reviewed relative to travel advisories issued by the Government of Canada. For all other planned trips, we are monitoring daily, and additional cancellations are possible. These difficult decisions are being made to protect students and staff from unnecessary risk of exposure and the possibility of quarantine or self-isolation, either overseas or upon their return to Canada.

School Cleaning – The WQSB has been proactive in ordering additional supplies, anticipating the need for hand sanitizer, and increased use of hand soap and paper towels in support of handwashing. As part of our regular routine, enhanced cleaning practices are implemented.

Handwashing – As always, the best precautions you can take are to wash hands, avoid touching your face, and cover your mouth if you cough to reduce the spread of germs. Washing hands with plain soap and water is recommended in schools and childcare settings. We have attached information on **Hand Hygiene and Handwashing** which we believe is good information for school and home. This information by no means replaces the advice of a health professional. If you have questions regarding your health, contact **Info-Santé 811** or see a health professional.



Supporting and Talking to Children – Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events and need factual, age appropriate information. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety. The following link is a great resource to help you speak with your children: <https://www.Québec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>.

Traveling advice – Parents and staff who are traveling overseas for personal travel are encouraged to regularly monitor **Government of Canada Travel Advisories** at: travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories Please note impacted areas may change and expand as the situation continues to evolve. Please follow Québec’s Public Health advice about who should self-isolate and for how long upon returning to Canada. Continue to monitor **Québec’s Public Health site** at: www.Québec.ca/en/health/finding-a-resource/info-sante-811 .

We believe it will take a collective effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
We remain committed to monitoring this situation and keeping you informed.

With Appreciation,

George Singfield, Secretary General
Terry Kharyati, Director of Human Resources
Western Quebec School Board