

York Region District School Board offers staggered start, hires more staff

By Mark Pavilons

The York Region District School Board is ready to provide a safe learning environment for students returning to school. The board is offering a staggered start for elementary and secondary students to assist students and staff in the return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow students to practice and understand new health and safety practices in smaller groups. "Welcoming students back in smaller groups enables teachers to better help students transition back to school and to new school routines," said Director of Education Louise Sirisko. "It also gives school staff additional time to prepare schools and classrooms for a safe return." The Ministry of Education is allowing school boards to stagger the return to school during the first week of school. The supported entry applies to both face-to-face and online students. Under the supported entry model, students will begin returning to school on Thursday, Sept. 10, although the start date may differ depending on their grade and cohort. Consideration has been given to siblings, transportation, and before and after programming. The regular school schedule for all students, both face-to-face and virtual, will begin on Monday, Sept. 14. The board is also allocating extra funds to hire additional classroom staff. The board will spend more than \$15 million to hire 150 teachers and educational assistants to support students and lower class sizes in elementary schools. "As we plan for a September reopening, student and staff safety is a priority," said Sirisko. "Expenditures such as these will help reduce in-school class sizes wherever possible." "COVID-19 has required boards to re-examine spending for the 2020-21 school year," added board chair, Juanita Nathan. "York Region District School Board is prioritizing classroom support for students with the health and safety of staff and students." "The Ministry of Education has provided some funding to assist with costs associated with COVID-19 and re-opening," said Vidyia Maharaj, board CFO. "Re-opening costs include personal protective equipment, additional training costs, additional staffing costs, student transportation costs, technology and other costs." York Region District School Board is the third largest school district in Ontario with over 128,000 students in 180 elementary schools and 33 secondary schools. York Region students consistently perform above average in provincial testing and the Board is one of the top achievers in Ontario. For more information about the York Region District School Board, please visit the Board website and follow YRDSB on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn.