



# ST. THOMAS MORE COLLEGIATE

HOME OF THE KNIGHTS SINCE 1960

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Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear STMC Students & Parents,

I sincerely hope that you and all who you hold near and dear are well... and in good spirits! Thank you so much for your patience as we work through the various requirements for our September Education Restart Plan, as outlined by the Ministry of Education, the Chief Public Health Officer, and WorkSafeBC.

We are now at a stage where we can begin sharing with our wider school community the overarching principles and key features of our **STMC 2020-2021 Education Restart Plan**. The full-text of our **STMC 2020-2021 Education Restart Plan** and many of the supporting documents that we sent off for Ministry review are now available on our school website, accessible via this [link](#). Collectively, these documents make up the basis of our restart strategy. **I highly encourage our students and their families to take some time to review the full text of these documents.**

After extensive and exhaustive planning, un-planning, and then re-planning over the past three-plus weeks, we have decided to enact the following:

Our **STMC Education Restart Plan** and the design of our **Learning Groups** will be built on:

- ✓ A full 100% daily in-school return-to-learn schedule for our Grade 8s
- ✓ A 100% in-school return-to-learn for all of our identified and designated students with Diverse Learning Abilities/Disabilities
- ✓ The implementation of a Hybrid Model for our Gr. 9-12s - 50% In-School Learning & 50% Asynchronous Independent Learning at Home

### Driving Principles:

- Maintaining the health & safety of our staff, our students, our three Christian Brothers living in residence, and our wider STMC community, is paramount and must take precedence.
- We must pursue a plan that safely optimizes the teaching & learning opportunities for our entire staff and our 692 students, while working within the constraints and limitations of our physical plant, originally built in 1960 and added onto since.
- Ensuring that our faith and learning community continues to be nurtured, through what makes STMC a special place: exceptional co-curricular academics, athletics, arts, and servant leadership opportunities.

### Key features:

- ➔ Our Gr 8-12 timetables will be based on a linear Day 1/Day 2 structure. To limit contacts, it will follow a 'minimester' model where each **Minimester** accounts for 14 consecutive Day 1 rotations *OR* 14 consecutive Day 2 rotations.
  - This pattern will continue all year – accounting for FOUR minimesters per Term, totalling TWELVE over the course of the school year.
  - This structure will still fully support our students writing AP Exams in mid-May 2021.
- ➔ Our 142 incoming Gr. 8 students will be divided into **five** distinct **Learning Groups**, with whom they will take ALL of their core subjects (Career Life Education, English Language Arts, French, Mathematics, Physical & Health



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Education, Religion, Social Studies, and Science). The only exception for most Gr. 8 students will be for their Elective Rotation.

- All Gr. 8s in the ADST/Fine Arts Rotations will be assigned to one of three main learning groups and therefore will comprise of a larger learning group of 90 for the elective block, well within the established secondary school limit. All students in the Music Program rotation will be assigned to one of two main learning groups, together comprising a larger group of 60 for the elective block.
- Learning Assistance students in Grades 9-12 with identified and designated Diverse Learning Abilities/Disabilities (both Low Incidence and High Incidence) will attend school each in-session day. Our Low Incidence students will continue working on their specialized and individually tailored education programs (IEPs), as designed by our Learning Assistance teacher and supported by our Educational Assistants. Our MoE designated High Incidence students – as well as those students *without* a formal IEP but receiving support through our Learning Centre – will be scheduled into classes and supported directly by their classroom teachers and the Learning Assistance Team during their In-School learning day. They will then be supported by the Learning Assistance Team in the Learning Centre and/or in the Library- Learning Commons for their Asynchronous class the following day.
- Our students in Grades 9-12 will follow a Hybrid Model - 50% In-School Learning one day coupled with 50% Asynchronous Independent-Learning at home via Google Classroom the next.
- The double Day 1 or Day 2 rotations will allow the same in-class lesson to be taught to each of the two different Learning Groups enrolled in that class.
- Learning Groups for our Gr. 9-12s (including those with Diverse Learning Abilities/Disabilities) will be determined using our **House System**.
- Our **House System**, launched two days prior to the start of Spring Break in March of this year (March 11, 2020), originally had five Houses. We have now reshuffled the deck and have added a sixth House. This effectively breaks our school into multi-grade groupings of approximately 120 per House.
  - **Canterbury House**
  - **London House**
  - **Oxford House** \* [These 3 Houses represent our **St. Thomas MORE Family of Houses**]
  - **Dublin House**
  - **Limerick House**
  - **Waterford House** \* [These 3 Houses represent the Blessed Edmund **RICE Family of Houses**]
- **IMPORTANT TO NOTE:** Siblings at the school are assigned to the same house. This also means that families with multiple students at the school will *not* have one Gr. 9-12 daughter/son here one day and another daughter/son here the next. This should help with the daily pick up/drop-off. The exception to this is our families with a Grade 8 student, or a student with Diverse Learning Abilities/Disabilities, who will be onsite each day.
- Students in Grades 9-12 in the **MORE Family of Houses** will attend classes on one day; Grade 9-12 students in the **RICE Family of Houses** the next
  - E.G. ABCDx [**MORE Family of Houses**]      ABCDy [**RICE Family Houses**]
- While one group is at school, the other is at home accessing their next lesson and submitting any requisite work asynchronously via Google Classroom.
- Even though the creation of the Grade 8 Learning Groups is based on the number of sections we have for each of our core subjects (five), ALL of our Grade 8s will also be assigned to a House. Our House System will play an integral part of any/all community building and in faith development activities.
- Optional daily co-curricular, academic, athletic, and servant leadership activities within Learning Groups may be scheduled from 2:45-3:30+ pm for intramural sports, clubs, and groups. Activities involving students outside of established Learning Groups will need to follow all physical distancing and other COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- Facemasks are mandatory in ALL areas and ALL situations where physical distancing cannot be assured.



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- ALL of our students and our staff will be issued two facemasks by the school at the start of the school year.
- Because of the nature of our secondary block schedule it is necessary for ALL of our staff (teachers and EAs) to physically distance themselves even within a classroom/teaching area when they are teaching &/or supporting student learning as they will be working with multiple cohorts. Staff will, therefore, not be able to be part of any one Learning Group.
- Teachers will have protective Plexiglas Shields at their desks to allow for safe 1:1 interactions with students. They will also utilize a variety of other PPE items measures when teaching or in common areas where physical distancing cannot be guaranteed. Our staff will also be issued two re-usable chin-guard face-shields, as well as two full-frontal face-shields to use while they are teaching.
- In order to reduce congestion and keep people moving during transitions, Hallway Lockers will not be assigned or used until (at least) October.

PLEASE VIEW our **STMC 2020-2021 Education Start-Up Plan** and our **UPDATED STMC COVID-19 School Safety Plan (August 2020)** for full and comprehensive details regarding our restart plan, as well as the range of PPE (staff and students measures) and safety protocols we will have in place for the start of the school year. [\[link\]](#)

## Rationale

- All of our Grade levels have between 135-145 students. Even with creative cohorting, there would be multiple cohorts in a single class.
- Due to the small size of most of our classrooms/learning spaces, trying to physically distance students within multiple Learning Groups taking the same class in the same room would be near impossible and would be unsafe for staff and students.
- Reducing student numbers in each class allows for better teacher-student ratios, less crowded hallways and common spaces, etc.
- Maintaining same four classes each day for a longer period keeps staff/student exposure lower. Switching blocks every minimester avoids semester-approach pitfalls (long gaps between learning disciplines, the lack of Learning Centre supports for some students, the lack of AP prep, etc.) and still allows for our 3 reporting periods.
- Staggered start/end times, break times and lunches avoids congregating or mixing of student groups.
- Amplified Intramural Sports, Co-Curricular Clubs/Groups and Fine Arts Programs – key co-curricular programs/offering/experiences – continue to be accessible for all.
- Use of masks, enhanced cleaning protocols, mandatory hand-hygiene protocols, and teacher shields reduce the probability of infection.

## Supporting Documents:

- ✓ UPDATED STMC COVID-19 School Safety Plan
- ✓ STMC Education Restart Communication Plan
- ✓ DRAFT Regular & Adjusted Bell Schedules for Grade 8/9s & Gr. 10-12 [**Preliminary DRAFTS**]
- ✓ DRAFT 2020-2021 COVID-19 Revised Calendar (Minimester Breakdown & Block Rotations by House)



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The documents we have assembled are – to a certain degree – still working documents. Given what we are trying to plan for, they need to be. Trying to make everything come together over these next two weeks will take the bulk of our efforts, and therefore will require a certain level of flexibility as our plan is implemented.

Our third School Start-Up communique will provide students and families with more details regarding our **Learning Group set up** and the specific **House assignments** for all of our students and staff. This email will arrive in your inbox next Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Our fourth and final STMC School Start-Up Communication will provide students and families with details regarding the two **\*School Start-Up Orientation** days that we are planning for **Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020** for those students who will be assigned to the St. Thomas **MORE Family of Houses** and **Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020** for those who will be assigned to the Blessed Edmund **RICE Family of Houses**. This fourth email will go out on Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. [\*These School Start-Up Orientations will be vital to a successful start to the school year].

Students: Our **Students' Council** will be hosting a **live Q&A** session on **Instagram** on **Monday August 31, 2020**. Stay tuned to **@stmcknights** and **@stmstudentcouncil** for a chance to ask questions!

I'm extremely grateful to those on our staff that have given of their thoughts, time and talents to get us to this point. In essence, it is a plan that we began working on immediately following the Education Minister's announcement of the Provincial Government's shift to Stage 2 of the Education Restart Plan on Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

As comprehensive and wide-reaching as we believe our **STMC 2020-2021 Education Restart Plan** is, we also know that there will be a small number within our community for whom our plan may *still* fall short of meeting their specific needs. While a full opt-out online option is **not** something that we are able to provide we will do our best to examine what is possible/feasible for exceptional cases. Parents are advised to contact their respective grade level administrator – Mr. Joe Adams - Grades 8-10; Mr. KC Steele - Grades 11/12 – to discuss any exceptional concerns.

Finally, as I have asked in each of my communiques to you since the start of the pandemic, I ask that you pray for the continued good health of our Christian Brothers – Bro. Ted Bassett, Bro. Owen Cassidy, and Bro. Hugh O'Neil – as well as for **everyone** associated with our St. Thomas More family!

*Pax et Bonum!*

Yours in Christ,  
Steve Garland – Principal, STMC

**Care + Comfort + Compassion**

Continuing our work to connect Heads & Hearts...

Grounding **all** of our work in that which fills our soul and gives meaning to our work as a community...