



# Matthews Hall

Established 1918

Friday, May 8, 2020

Dear Parents:

What's that big yellow object in the distance? No, it is not a pack of Team Sydenham members. It is our long-awaited new addition (Phase 1) currently underway at Matthews Hall. If you approach the school from the west, it is an impressive edifice clearly visible from Oxford Street. If you approach from the east, same thing. But what is all of that yellow stuff cladding the exterior of the building? Surely not a tribute to the illustrious golden team (!). It is the spray foam insulation that will soon be concealed by masonry and siding. Happily, our project is "back in action" after the Government's recent announcement lifting some restrictions across the province. You no doubt heard that construction projects at schools and other listed sites have been given the green light to resume activity. At Matthews Hall, our exciting new building site "came back to life again" on Monday morning and – while there have been unexpected delays – onward we go!

Where does this leave our usual operations?

As you know, all private schools and licensed day care centres were required to close under an order issued on March 17, 2020 under section 7.0.2(4) of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. This week we learned that this order has been extended **until May 19, 2020**. The regulation [can be viewed here](#).

All CAIS and CIS Ontario schools are in regular contact, several times a week, as we plan, anticipate, and prepare for a safe return to regular school life. When will this be? Like you, we do not know yet; however, once we have clarity, you can be sure that we will not hesitate to update our entire school community. We are watching the government announcements very carefully each week and planning for every possibility.

Part of such planning involves how we are going to approach the coming reporting period. With an uncertain end to the school year looming, we are currently finalizing the format of June report cards for all students. Not surprisingly, our upcoming year-end reports will not be the same as in a normal year.

What can you and your child expect? To begin with, we will not be assigning numeric grades for any student. And secondly, children in Lower School will receive a report card that looks different than those in Middle School.

If your child is in **Lower School (JK to Grade 5)**, teachers will be completing a report card that provides personalized anecdotal comments, along with the promotional status for September. If your child is in **Middle School (Grades 6, 7 and 8)**, teachers will be completing a report card that includes a subject letter grade (e.g., A, B, C, D, etc.,), along with a comment and final

promotional status. No attendance records will be included and the reports will be a simplified version of our usual format.

All teachers will be preparing reports that consider the full year's experience for each child. While students who participated in the "Learning at Home" program may see improvements reflected in their grades, no student will see final grades negatively affected by our school closure.

Rest assured that summative reports for the "COVID-19 Spring" will be similar throughout the province, across the country, and around the world. Moreover, a similar approach to assessment will be reflected in the final evaluations for the vast majority of post-secondary students in colleges and universities. As the mantra goes, "We are all in this together!"

And speaking of being in this together, "Learning At Home", takes thought, care, patience, and mutual respect. If any of us were *choosing* to home-school our kids, we'd likely have set some time aside to learn about the methods, curriculum, and workable home-school schedules. It's what we'd do if any of us leapt into any new, meaningful project – we would prepare!

But in our COVID world, no one got enough advance notice to do that. So parents and teachers can't expect to leap in and nail it from the get-go. There's a learning curve involved — for new home schooling "parent teachers" and their "new pupils" (i.e., their own kids!), AND for the classroom teachers who have had to convert lessons and content into new distance-learning formats in a matter of days (...with many suggestions from frustrated parents about how to do it better – ahem)!

As we all know, it is not an exact science. Actually, it's more of an art. Just like peace and diplomacy.

Still, we are doing it and, with some trial, error, and feedback, we are moving forward and we are going to get through this together thanks to everyone's good old-fashioned grit!

In the words of Queen Victoria's prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, "There is no education like adversity!"

Who knew you could earn an adversity diploma in Kindergarten?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ric Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "R" and "A" being particularly large and stylized.

Ric Anderson  
Head of School