

March 24th, 2020

Dear Families,

I hope this message finds you well. This week begins Phase 1 of the government-mandated school closures (March 23-April 3) with the focus of distance learning taking place through the Ministry of Education's [Learn at Home](#) Online Portal. The portal provides opportunities for students to continue learning during this school closure. Premier Doug Ford has announced that schools will not reopen on April 6th, as originally planned. More information will be provided to you soon by the board on how we will move forward with student learning.

In the meantime, I am including some resources and suggestions in this message that you may find helpful. A social story has been shared by P. Stachiw, TCDSB Chief of Autism, that you might want to use to help your child understand this pandemic, Coronavirus: www.Littlepuddins.ie The Toronto Public Library provides digital services. Read "38 Ways to Use the Library from Home": <https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/digital-services/2020/03/38-ways-to-use-the-library-from-home.html>

You may consider developing a predictable routine for your children by creating a schedule of 15 to 30-minute blocks for reading, writing, and math. Some ideas you may want to try:

- a) Read – younger students can read the pictures and tell their own version of the story. They can read anything: a novel, a picture book, Pokemon cards, cereal boxes, etc. Reading to your child or having an older child read to a younger child is just as good!
- b) Ask you child, to draw or write about what they have read, create their own Pokemon cards or cereal box, write letters to friends and relatives (and send them!), write a silly story, create a new ending to something read, create a joke book, a flipbook of their favourite sports, singers, etc., the possibilities are endless.
- c) Work on math facts. For our younger students, practise counting, and making 5, then 10. Students who are in Grades 1 and 2 can work on addition and subtraction facts – different ways to make 10 or counting by 2s, 3s, 5s, 10s. Older students can work on learning/practising their multiplication tables. Many of our older students still need to work on this! Using playing cards can be a fun way to work on these concepts.

Lastly, I share a poem by Irish Catholic friar, Richard Hendrick.

Lockdown
*Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.
But,
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other
across the empty squares,*

*keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighbourhood
So that the elders may have someone to call on.
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting
All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
To how big we really are.
To how little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meanness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breathe.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic
The birds are singing again
The sky is clearing,
Spring is coming,
And we are always encompassed by Love.
Open the windows of your soul
And though you may not be able
to touch across the empty square,
Sing.*

It is difficult adjusting to this new reality that is void of the expected daily routine. Let's pray together that we can focus on the positives, that we are able to continue being kind and empathic to others as we face our own challenges.

I pray that you keep safe and healthy!

M. Coluccio
Principal