



Cathcart Boulevard Public School

1219 Cathcart Blvd, Sarnia, ON N7S 2H7
Office: 519.542.5651 Fax: 519.542.3774

Principal: Ms. Anita Sabatini

Vice-Principal: Mme Randi McDonald

Secretary: Mrs. Deanna McLaughlin

May 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Can you believe it's already May? The birds are chirping, the flowers are starting to creep up, the trees are blossoming with new buds. How exciting! The days are getting a little longer, the weather is getting a little warmer. Routines are being developed in our "new normal" and everyday tasks, although not as easy as they once were, are becoming simpler with each day. Does this all sound a little too cheery? At Cathcart, we believe in finding the silver linings in each situation. In fact, our Cooped-Up Cougars video from this first week of May showed that off beautifully! Some silver linings that students have found are that they can customize their own schedule to suit their family's needs, they can enjoy a hot lunch if they choose, and they can do their schoolwork in the comfort of their own space. Staff members, who of course wish they could be at school, are learning new teaching techniques and new technologies that will no doubt find their way into the regular classroom once we are able to return to school. What are some silver linings that you are experiencing during this global pandemic?

CHARACTER TRAIT: Cathcart's Character Trait for May is responsibility. Responsibility is a big word, but students of all ages can show responsibility. Maybe a younger student is responsible for feeding the dog each day, or maybe an older student is responsible for ensuring their remote learning tasks are done on time. When we show responsibility, we are showing others that we can do what is necessary and that we can be relied upon. "If you take responsibility for yourself, you will develop a hunger to accomplish your dreams." – Les Brown

TWITTER: We are back on Twitter! Please follow @cathcartblvd for some school information. Other great accounts to follow during this time are @lkdsb, @LKelempro, as well as the many reliable news outlets.

LEARN AT HOME: Please access the following two links for Learn at Home resources supplied by the Ministry of Ontario and the Lambton Kent District School Board: www.lkdsb.net/elementary and www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home. Our Learn at Home program is continuing throughout the month of May. Please continue to check the www.lkdsb.net website for updated information. Our teachers are working hard to provide rich and meaningful tasks for our students. Many classes are having online meeting times, some are using new technology, and all are finding new ways to connect with each other and the world. This way of learning is not easy, and we want to be in the schools, where learning can take place face to face. Until that time, we thank you for your patience and continued support.

SCHOOL COUNCIL: School Council meetings are suspended until further notice. Please contact Chair, Shanane Eady at shishay99@yahoo.ca for further information.

SCHOOL LUNCH DAYS: Our School Lunch dates are currently suspended until further notice.

SCHOOL MESSENGER: The Lambton Kent District School Board sends out important notices via School Messenger. If you are not already receiving these messages via email, please contact Ms. Sabatini



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(anita.sabatini@lkdsb.net) or Mrs. McLaughlin (Deanna.mclaughlin@lkdsb.net) to **update your email address**. Please note that this update could take some time. We appreciate your patience.

KIDS HELP PHONE: Call the Kids Help Phone at 1-888-668-6868, the Distress Line at 1-888-347-3747, or call 911 if you require immediate assistance or in case of an emergency.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY: All playground equipment on Lambton Kent District School Board property remains closed until further notice. The playground equipment is not sanitized and has also not undergone spring season inspection.

FIELD TRIPS: All field trips that were to take place in May or June have been cancelled due to the uncertainty of the times.

GRADE 8 GRADUATION: All Grade 8 graduation recognition nights have been cancelled due to the uncertainty of the times.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS: We are in a time of pandemic and it is certainly unprecedented. Students and families may be feeling a mix of emotions from anxiety, to confusion, to uncertainty of what the future holds. If you need support, please reach out. St. Clair Child and Youth is now offering telephone counselling services and more information can be found at www.stclairchild.ca. You can also follow @lkdsbwellness on Twitter for more resources.

MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS TIPS FOR QUARANTINE: (A list so great, we couldn't narrow them down!)

1. Stick to a routine. Go to sleep and wake up at a reasonable time, write a schedule that is varied and includes time for work/ school as well as self-care.
2. Dress for the social life you want, not the social life you have. Get showered and dressed in comfortable clothes, wash your face, brush your teeth. Put on some bright colors. It is amazing how our dress can impact our mood.
3. Go outside at least once a day, for at least thirty minutes. If you are concerned about contact with others, try first thing in the morning, or later in the evening, and try less traveled streets and avenues. If you are high risk or living with those who are high risk, open the windows and blast the fan. It is amazing how much fresh air can do for spirits.
4. Find some time to move each day. If you don't feel comfortable going outside, there are many YouTube videos that offer free movement/ exercise classes, and if all else fails, turn on the music and have a dance party!



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5. Reach out to others, at least once daily for thirty minutes. Try to do FaceTime, Skype, phone calls, texting—connect with other people to seek and provide support. Don't forget to do this for your children as well. Set up virtual playdates with friends—your kids miss their friends, too!

6. Stay hydrated and eat well. This one may seem obvious, but stress and eating often don't mix well, and we may find ourselves over-indulging, forgetting to eat, and avoiding food. Drink plenty of water, eat some good and nutritious foods, and challenge yourself to learn how to cook something new!

7. Develop a self-care toolkit. This can look different for everyone. A lot of successful self-care strategies involve a sensory component (seven senses: touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell, vestibular (movement)). Sensory ideas include: a soft blanket or stuffed animal, hot chocolate, photos of vacations, comforting music, lavender or eucalyptus oil, a small swing or rocking chair. Other ideas: a journal, an inspirational book, a mandala coloring book, bubbles to blow or blowing watercolor on paper through a straw. Help children to create their own self-care comfort box (often a shoebox or bin they can decorate) that they can use when feeling overwhelmed.

8. Spend extra time playing with children. Children will rarely communicate how they are feeling but will often make a bid for attention and communication through play. Don't be surprised to see therapeutic themes of illness, doctor visits, and isolation. Understand that play is cathartic and helpful for children—it is how they process their world and problem solve.

9. Give everyone the benefit of the doubt, and a wide berth. A lot of cooped up time can bring out the worst in everyone. Each person will have moments when they will not be at their best. It is important to move with grace through blow-ups, to not show up to every argument you are invited to, and to not hold grudges and continue disagreements. Everyone is doing the best they can to make it through this.

10. Everyone needs to find their own retreat space. It is important that people think through their own separate space for work and for relaxation. For children, help them identify a place where they can go to retreat when stressed. You can make this place cozy by using blankets, pillows, cushions, scarves, beanbags, tents, and "forts". It is good to know that even when we are on top of each other, we have our own special place to go to be alone.

11. Expect behavioral issues in children and respond gently. We are all struggling with disruption in routine, none more than children, who rely on routines constructed by others to make them feel safe and to know what comes next. Expect increased anxiety, worries and fears, nightmares, difficulty separating or sleeping, testing limits, and meltdowns. Do not introduce major behavioral plans or consequences at this time—hold stable and focus on emotional connection.

12. Focus on safety and attachment. We are going to be living for a bit with the unprecedented demand of



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meeting all work deadlines, homeschooling children, running a household, and entertaining others while in confinement. We can get wrapped up in meeting these many expectations, forgetting that these are scary and unpredictable times for children. Focus on strengthening the connection through time spent following their lead, through physical touch, through play, through books, and via verbal reassurances that you will be there for them.

14. Limit social media and COVID conversation, especially around children. Find a few trusted sources that you can check in with consistently, limit it to a few times a day, and set a time limit for yourself on how much you consume. Keep news and alarming conversations out of earshot from children—they see and hear everything and can become very frightened by what they hear.

15. Notice the good in the world, the helpers. There is a lot of scary, negative, and overwhelming information to take in regarding this pandemic. There are also a lot of stories of people sacrificing, donating, and supporting one another in miraculous ways. It is important to counterbalance the heavy information, with the hopeful information.

16. Help others. Find ways, big and small, to give back to others. Support restaurants, offer to grocery shop, check in with elderly neighbours, helping others gives us a sense of agency when things seem out of control.

17. Find something you can control and control the heck out of it. In moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that furniture, group your toys. It helps to anchor and ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.

18. Find a long-term project to dive into. Now is the time to learn how to play the keyboard, put together a huge jigsaw puzzle, start a 15 hour game of Risk, paint a picture, read the Harry Potter series, binge watch an 8-season show, crochet a blanket, solve a Rubix cube, or develop a new town in Animal Crossing. Find something that will keep you busy, distracted, and engaged to take breaks from what is going on in the outside world.

20. Find an expressive art and go for it. Our emotional brain is very receptive to the creative arts, and it is a direct portal for release of feeling. Find something that is creative (sculpting, drawing, dancing, music, singing, playing) and give it your all. See how relieved you can feel. It is a very effective way of helping kids to emote and communicate as well!

21. Find lightness and humor in each day. There is a lot to be worried about, and with good reason. Counterbalance this heaviness with something funny each day: cat videos on YouTube, a stand-up show on Netflix, a funny movie—we all need a little comedic relief in our day, every day.

REMINDER: Dogs are not permitted on school property, on or off leash at any time for the safety of our school community.



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CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION FOR 2020-21: In the remaining months of the school year, a significant amount of time and energy will be exerted in order to organize classes for next year. Several important factors to maximize each student's school success will be considered.

1. BALANCE: Each class needs to be balanced in terms of strengths, needs and gender. No classes are "streamed" with only strong or only weak students in any of the grades. Research has demonstrated that heterogeneous groupings, where strong, average and weak students working together, provides the best learning opportunities for all involved.

2. LEARNING & TEACHING STYLES: Children learn in a variety of ways compatible with the way they make sense of their work. Teachers teach students using a multiple of teaching approaches and classroom management styles. It is our belief that a variety of teachers is beneficial to students as they proceed through their elementary years.

3. PEER RELATIONSHIPS & GROUP DYNAMICS: While feeling included in peer relationships is important, sometimes being with friends is not a productive experience that enhances learning. Who gets along with whom? Who should be separated? What kind of individuals could best come together as a group and develop? Who needs a new situation to extend and grow themselves in social relationships? We attempt to answer these questions as we construct a class.

4. STRAIGHT vs. COMBINED CLASSES: As usual, combined or split grades will be part of the Cathcart organization for next year. Sometimes parents feel that straight grades are better than split grades. However, in fact, all classes are in effect "blended" because the teacher will be addressing the needs of the students in each class at varying instructional levels. A handout entitled, "An Introduction to Combined Grades" can be downloaded from the Ministry of Education website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>.

At a series of upcoming conversations which involve the classroom teachers, resource teacher and administration and careful consideration of each child's placement will occur. If you have special concerns related to placement that directly relate to the needs of your child, please send an email or letter to Ms. Sabatini before MAY 29, 2020. Any request will be shared with the teachers and considered along with the many other factors listed above. If you are moving during the summer, we would appreciate knowing this information.

Please note that Cathcart Blvd. Public School is proudly accepting students who live in our area. Proof of residence is mandatory (a utility bill, a rental agreement or proof of sale that is within 2 months of registration) as well as proof of date of birth (birth certificate or passport) and must be presented when a student registers at Cathcart Blvd School.



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KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION: If you haven't done so yet, please call to let us know if you have a child who will be registering for Kindergarten for the fall. Children, four years of age on or before December 31, 2020 may be registered for classes beginning September 2020. It is important that parents register their children as soon as possible to allow the Cathcart team to plan class sizes for September. To register, contact Mrs. Deanna McLaughlin, email: Deanna.McLaughlin@lkdsb.net. The registration package may also be picked up at the main office when school is in session. Proof of residency is required, please bring the following items, a utility bill, a rental agreement or proof of sale that is within 2 months of registration. Proof of birth date is also required and can be shown with a birth certificate or passport.

You are considered a part of our extended family, we miss you! We will return to school, and we can't wait to welcome you back.

Until that day comes, stay well.

Mme McDonald
Vice Principal

Ms. Sabatini
Principal