



September 17, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We know this has been a school year beginning like no other. Like you, we are trying to navigate a situation that changes almost daily. In this environment, our schools are doing their very best to make sure every student receives an education, while we protect health and safety. As we do so, we want to provide you with specific notice on how the school district staff will use specific platforms to support remote synchronous learning and how we ensure privacy and security of participants.

Last spring, we shared our remote learning guidelines. You may wish to visit our website to review the [UCDSB Remote Learning Guidelines](#). There, you can read more information on how the UCDSB is supporting privacy and security best practices for virtual learners, in any of our remote learning programs.

Today, we want to provide you with some specific information about how remote learning will happen, and the steps we have taken to ensure the safest possible environment. Specifically, we want to provide notice that this school year, your child's teacher will be using MS Teams or D2L-Virtual Classroom to provide instruction for students who are participating in remote synchronous learning, and to help you understand why that decision has been made.

Teachers will only use teaching tools that have been approved by the UCDSB for remote synchronous learning. MS Teams and D2L-Virtual Classroom have been chosen because they are secure online platforms that enable two-way live voice/video/text chat communication. These platforms have robust privacy policies as well as safety features for classroom use. Through these platforms, educators are able to create a secure virtual space for educators and students only, that are present in the classroom to communicate and collaborate with students assigned to the same class, who are participating remotely. This is the very best way to help create a comfortable learning environment for students in the class, and for those learning at home.

We understand and share your concern about the protection of privacy. That's why we want to assure you that our excellent UCDSB educators have received training to use the Board approved platforms with instructional practices that will respect the privacy of learners, both in the classroom setting and while participating remotely.

We know there are some who may want more or additional security measures in place. At this point however, we know that we have done all that is possible. Some have asked if formal consent is required for a student to attend and participate. We have not requested this from parents in the past, nor is that required now. Instead, this letter clarifies what students and parents should expect when we use MS Teams and D2L-Virtual Classroom in our schools or virtual learning environments. .../2



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We are required to provide formal notice, to comply with privacy legislation, that the UCDSB uses the MS Teams and D2L-Virtual Classroom platform solely to facilitate the collection and sharing of student information for the purpose of instruction, assessment and evaluation of students who are participating remotely in the secure virtual classroom environment. This type of activity is authorized under the Education Act and is in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) s.28(2).

This is also a partnership, and just as you count on us to protect the safety and security of our students, it is our expectation that the parents/guardians who support remote learners, use devices securely connected outside of the in-person classroom and will abide by the [UCDSB's Appropriate Use of Technology Policy](#) and the [UCDSB Code of Conduct](#). This requires respect for the privacy and confidentiality of all students in the class.

Like you, we look forward to a time when all students can be present in class without having to think about the additional steps that are now part of our school day. We know the current options may be imperfect—yet they remain the very best solutions we have at this unpredictable time. It should be encouraging to know that as of yesterday, our exceptional staff will have supported the return of nearly 23,000 learners to our local schools. Quite an achievement! And a sign of things to come.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. If you have any concerns about your child's privacy while participating in our learning programs, including remote teaching as described above, please contact your school's principal immediately to discuss your concerns.

Sincerely,

Stephen Sliwa,  
Director of Education.