

May 22, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you know, restrictions have been lifted and we are preparing to move to the next phase of our education plans during the pandemic. Beginning June 1st, you will have the opportunity and choice to send your child to school for face to face instruction to better support the online/remote learning that is currently in place. This message is to provide you with a couple of key details and I will be putting out a video message next week.

First and most importantly, the decision to send your child to school is entirely voluntary. Children who remain on the pure virtual program will not be penalized in any way. This opportunity is the choice of parents and you also do not have to come in week 1 and may decide to come at a later date. We are creating the opportunity to attend and this is your choice.

Next, schools will look and feel different. There will be fewer children, smaller class sizes, and the organizations of classrooms may look slightly different. All of these changes are intended to support increased physical distancing and reducing contact. The BC Centre for Disease Control guidelines for schools state:

Physical distancing (i.e., maintaining a distance of 2 meters between two or more people) is challenging in a K-12 school setting, particularly with younger students. As such, it is reasonable to establish different expectations for varying age levels and activities. For example, younger students should be supported to have minimized physical contact with one another, while older students and adults should seek to maintain a safe physical distance whenever possible.

For instruction, if you have a child in kindergarten through grade 5, you can anticipate your child being in school the equivalent of two days per week. If you have a child in grades 6 or 7 you can anticipate the equivalent of 1 day per week. Our elementary schedules, with small variations between sites, largely will follow a very similar format that is structured the same way every week.

For students in secondary schools, the timetable will again be structured similar to the regular school day, but there will be more flexibility in the times that may be available for attending face to face. There may be staggered schedules, and we are attempting to limit movement and contact. Your child will have the equivalent of one full day of instruction on any given week and you should anticipate that it may not be the traditional block rotations that have been in place in the past.

We are currently in the process of obtaining approval for both our elementary and secondary timetables and structures. Once those plans have been approved by the Ministry, schools will communicate their specific timetables directly to their students and families. We anticipate that those timetables will be communicated out by your school on May 26th. As our schools work to adjust and prepare for the

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June 1st start up, we will be doing health and safety orientations across the district on May 28th and 29th. During these days, you can anticipate that teachers' focus is on preparing for their own health and safety and that of their students so you will not have the same level of contact for virtual learning on those days. We appreciate your understanding in this as we need the time to make our transition in a safe way for all and there are many new routines for staff so that we can be fully ready.

We also need some information from you to help us in your planning. Please look for a survey from your school to inform us if you do not intend to send your child(ren) to school. We need this information to help us plan for bus routes and for our safe arrival programs where we call home if a child does not attend.

There are also new protocols about bussing and the Ministry is asking parents to consider private transportation as one option because we are now only permitted to have one child per seat on a bus. This reduction in service may also directly impact courtesy riders on buses and so we are trying to plan ahead and to inform parents of this new information. Please watch for a survey from your school and please respond to help us in our preparations.

Finally, to all parents who have been designated Essential Services Workers, and this now includes all teachers, administrators and support staff, your child has the option to attend school for 5 days per week. This is another key change in the guidelines that we wanted to make sure we brought to your attention. Thank you to all Essential Workers for all you have done to keep our province safe and to help battle COVID-19.

In closing, you can expect more information next week on specific schedules and we again ask that you look for the coming survey. This next step of more face to face instruction is a key part of our provincial preparations for September. Hopefully, if we continue to see a reduction in COVID-19, we can soon return to life in a new normal with students in schools full time. We also need to consider that this next step is a way to prepare us for the year ahead where we may continue to see a blend of online and face to face learning for large blocks of time if required by the province and if the pandemic continues.

We have all worked together to deal with the pandemic that has impacted us all. This next phase is important and as we transition, no doubt there will be new challenges for us, but we know we will adjust and move forward. Thank you so much for your patience and support as we move toward June 1st.

Sincerely,



Jordan Tinney
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

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