

Dear parents, students, staff and community

Ey Swayel, it's good to speak with you again.

This week's message is about laying the groundwork for what you will see as our direction for secondary schools. I want to take time to tell you about our communications plans, timing and what you can expect in the weeks ahead. Our top priority is to get our secondary schools configured and our messaging with details about elementary schools will come next week.

As always, a reminder about where we are. Guided by the directions of Doctor Bonnie Henry, schools will open in September with students in cohorts which can be up to 120 in secondary and 60 in elementary. This is all about managing the numbers of close contacts that students have as they attend school. This is about keeping our schools safe and getting children back to school. How has Surrey planned given Doctor Henry's directions and what will our secondary schools potentially look like?

Under the direction of our Board of Education, our management team, which includes our senior district staff and our principals and vice-principals have designed a model that has cohorts much smaller than 120. We have shared this model with our key partners, CUPE728, the Surrey Teachers' Association, and our District Parent Advisory Council. I want to thank our partners, and our principals and vice principals for all their questions, and feedback on our models. Your work has absolutely shaped our design. We are required to submit our models to the Ministry of Education on August 21st and, if approved, we will then be fully public on August 26th. WE will continue to consult, to adjust and to refine in the time ahead, but back to the model, what does it actually look like at this point in time?

I first want to explain how we have divided the students. We have juniors, in grades 8 and 9, and Graduation Program Students, in grades 10-12. This division models our curriculum in BC where our junior students are on a much more routine program and for our Graduation Program Students, they begin to select an enormous variety of courses to meet their unique needs and learning pathways.

For students on our graduation program, again these are grades 10, 11 and 12, our cohort size is 30. For junior students, those in grades 8 and 9, our cohort size is 60. We accomplish this by moving to a system that is based on longer periods of instruction in 10 week increments. All secondary students will have 2 courses at a time, and they will move through those courses over 10 weeks. This means that in a year, students will get the 8 courses that they selected when they did their course selection.

Every student will be in attendance every day and for our graduation program students, they will have one block of face to face instruction and one block in a blended model which combines face to face and online learning. For these graduation program students in the blended class, they will be online 4 days per week and face to face 1 day per week. When students meet face to face in the blended class, the class size will be reduced to ensure physical distancing. The reason for the smaller class size in the afternoon is because in the morning, they are with their natural cohort of 30 and then in the afternoon, they will mix with students in other cohorts. Consistent with the health guidelines, when students are meeting across cohorts, we need to keep these afternoon groups very small and physically distanced.

Students in grades 8 and 9 will be at school 100% of the time face to face. They will also take one block in the morning and one block in the afternoon and these will be longer blocks of time, twice that of a regular block. This means that students will be in a group of 30 in the morning and 30 more in the afternoon, this is the cohort of 60 for all grade 8 and 9 students.

Our model keeps cohorts small and takes advantage of blended learning to make sure our students on the Graduation Program get the courses that they have selected and need. This keeps them in the courses they chose and on the graduation pathway that they intended. Our final adjustment to our model is to look at start and ending times, break times, and lunch times. We have junior students arriving earlier than the graduation program students and we have staggered morning break, and lunchtimes so that we have no period where more than 40% of a school's population is at lunch at one time. When school begins and ends, we have no more than 60% of students arriving or leaving at any given time. We have numerous health and safety protocols and guidelines to help students keep physically distanced when they arrive and to get them into their cohorts quickly. Our cleaning protocols, movement lines and directions, the types of things you see in stores are the types of things our students will see in schools to help keep them on the move and into class and their cohorts in a safe way.

I know that's a bunch of numbers and a lot to digest but what we really wanted to communicate today is our actual model for secondary so parents know what to expect. Basically, to review, if a student is in grades 8 or 9, they will be in school 5 days per week for full days. If a student is in grade 10, 11 or 12, they will be face to face all morning 5 days per week and they will be face to face one other afternoon a week on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Our model also has graduation program students starting school a bit later than junior students so we accomplish our staggered entry to manage the flow and contact.

We have created a full presentation explaining our model in much more depth and we have posted this on our district website. If you are still wanting more details and want the complete walk through, please watch that video which should give you all you need to know about what we are submitting to the Ministry of Education on August 21st. When we have approval, then we will communicate fully all final details including things like start times and end times.

Our model keeps cohorts small, has every student in school every day, keeps students in the courses and on the graduation pathway that they chose, and keeps teachers teaching the courses that they normally would have taught. We also continue to follow strict health and safety guidelines and we are taking advantage of blended learning as a way for our most senior students to get the learning they need from the teachers they expect. We again thank our principals and vice-principals for their dedication and tireless work at helping us design models and to our CUPE, Surrey Teacher, and District Parent partners, we look forward to the continued conversation so that we can welcome children back in September to the courses they expect and to the caring environments that our schools create.

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