

Hello parents, students, staff and community,

On Monday, June 1st is upon us and a return to face to face instruction is about to begin. I wanted to just take this chance, prior to Monday, to let you know some final little pieces and some reminders.

Hopefully, by now you are fully aware of what your school will be offering on Monday. As you know, our timelines were extremely tight, but the majority of our schools should have their timetable posted on the web for you to view.

As you know, we are following a structured timetable for elementary schools which has students in kindergarten to grade 6 on Monday and Tuesday, and children in grade K-5 and 7 on Thursday and Friday. On each of those days, the students will be broken into smaller cohorts, which are about half of their class. So students will attend on alternating days in their smaller groups. On Wednesdays, the vast majority of children will be home along with their teachers. In the end, if you are in kindergarten through grade 5, you will receive 2 days of instruction per week. If you are in grades 6 or 7, you will receive instruction one day per week.

The exception to the above rule is, children of essential support workers and children who require additional supports including children with special needs. These children have the option to attend 5 days per week which means they may be at school on Wednesdays.

In secondary schools, we are following a tutorial model. This means that your child may sign up through a set schedule of times and receive face to face support from their teachers. Over a week, they will be in-class the equivalent of one full day.

There are other new routines to get used to for all students and staff. Things like:

- Much smaller class sizes
- Sitting further apart
- New routines for regular hand washing whenever you move about the school
- Having to do health checks daily for staff and students
- Some materials will not be available (like stuffed toys, playdough)
- Everyone will be constantly learning and reminding about physical distancing in a school setting
- Adults (parents, visitors) will not be allowed into the building in the usual ways

For parents, all of these things, and the normal routines that you see in grocery stores when you are out and about, those are the types of things your children will now see in schools. All of us have a role to play and it's about all of us doing our part. This truly is the next phase in our "new normal" and many of the things you are seeing now, likely will be in place in September.

As you know, all of the direction to the district, to open, to close, to partially open, is under the guidance of the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education. I have had many people ask me why are we opening now? I hear three main reasons:

1. Because with the measures we are taking in our schools and in our community, we are making progress on battling COVID19 - the provincial health officer says schools are safe places to be;
2. Because children need us. While virtual learning has worked well for many, it has not worked well for all. Equity and access are critical issues for us and we need to be able to welcome those

students, who are most in need of support, back to our schools for the most important part of their education which is direct contact with a caring and skilled teacher.

3. Because we are, and we will continue, to live in a pandemic and we need to begin a transition to September, to walk into the halls and classrooms of our schools, and to not just hear that it's safe, but to feel and experience it as well.

It is your choice to send your child to school next week. Whether you remain at home or whether you come in, we will be here for you. In schools, it will not be perfect on day 1. We have never done this before, and this is our first opportunity to see how many children arrive and just how we will structure what is a new chapter for us.

We may have some bumps, we may need to find our way a little bit, but the bottom line is that our schools are full of caring adults and we have missed our students. No matter what, coming in and connecting again will remind us of why schools are so important and seeing students back in schools will be a nice reset for us to start to feel a little more like normal again and to come to understand new routines as we head toward the fall.

Schools are so much more to our community than literacy and numeracy. They are about care, inclusion, diversity, and coming to live, learn and play together in a way that creates a healthy and vibrant community and society. Schools matter in so many ways far beyond the curriculum.

All along we have given out the message that slowly and steadily we'll get there. Next week is no different. Monday will come, we'll count kids, we'll organize to provide support and guidance, and we'll begin to have schools once again return to a place of fun, socialization, laughter, and a chance to be with people in a safe and caring setting. If you choose to come, we will be there for you and slowly and steadily, we'll create the new normal that is welcoming and caring places in a smaller and more careful way.

Jordan Tinney

Superintendent of Surrey Schools