

Parents, students, staff and community,

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The end of the school year is on the horizon. It goes without saying that this has been a year like no other. As we look toward June 26th which is our official year-end for schools, all of our work really is about planning for September because while school will end next week, the pandemic certainly does not. The number one question in everyone's mind is what will September look like? This video is intended to share our planning and to help people anticipate what may come.

The first and most important reminder is that the decision about how school will look like in September is solely in the hands of government and the Ministry of Education. Our district will implement whatever decision comes our way.

The next reminder is that the Ministry of Education's plan includes 5 possible stages with each stage having different levels of students in schools from full face to face instruction, to none at all. Currently, we are in a stage where all students can receive face to face instruction part-time and it is optional. When students are receiving both face to face and online or remote instruction, we refer to this as a blended model because it is a blend of face to face and remote.

Any decision about what to do in September will most certainly be guided by the infection rate of the virus. As a result, we have to make multiple plans, one that has us returning full time which is easy, schools will simply be as normal. However, we also have to plan for the potential to be back in a blended model. As recently as the first week of June, both the Minister of Education and the Provincial Health Officer were both saying that we could be returning to a blended or hybrid model in September and so, we need to be prepared.

As a school district, we cannot wait until September to start our planning. I want to share the plans we are making now so that you too can begin to think ahead. To set the stage for September, we need to pick a model with some assumptions. We need to make decisions which prepare us for government's final call.

We are choosing to plan for returning to school in September in the model we are in now with one key exception. We are planning with the belief that if we are in this stage in the fall, that coming to school will not be optional. That means, for students in Kindergarten to Grade 5, you will be attending schools 2 days per week. For students in grades 6 and 7, you will be attending school one day per week. In our secondary schools, students will be in session one day per week. For the vast majority of students, all other days, will be online or remote learning. This is a true blended model.

Staying with the non-optional part and consistent with all models all along, children with special needs and the children of essential services workers, will be in attendance 5 days per week.

Once again, these are the assumptions we are making so that we can move ahead with our planning. The decision on a model and timing for implementation is entirely in the hands of government and we all await that announcement but it likely won't come until late August. If we are fortunate that the virus stays in check and restrictions continue to be lifted, then we may be in a place where we can resume school operations as normal in the fall with everyone back 100%. But if the decision is to remain in a blended model, then we need to make sure we are prepared to make this the best educational program possible and to capitalize on what we've learned through this spring. Government may also adjust the blended models and choose a different option in between where we are now and a full 100% return. Regardless, we need to plan and we need to declare some firm guidelines for our planning in anticipation of the call later in the summer.

Our teachers, support staff, and school administration have done remarkable work through the spring. When you think that they have redesigned an entire system twice in 3 months is an amazing feat. If we are declarative now about possibilities in September, then we give ourselves 2 months to reflect on what we've learned, to adjust as needed, and to stand by and await Government's direction. I know that whatever that final decision is, we'll be ready to adjust as needed.

We wanted to put out this message so that our community knows what we are thinking heading into summer. This way, parents too can begin to consider what September may look like as we all take the time to enjoy a rest over the summer. We've always said slowly and steadily we'll get there. Once again, we're turning our mind to September so slowly and steadily we can make sure we're ready to welcome all our students in the fall and to be able to make adjustments based on what we've all learned since spring break.

I'll send out another message next week, but in the meantime,

Take care, stay well,

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