

Hello parents, staff and students,

Next week, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, families across our district and province will get the choice to return to school. This week's message is designed to lay the final pieces before next week's return to in-class instruction. I want to begin this week's message with a reminder of where we have been over the past several weeks.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, to fight COVID-19, our government suspended in-class instruction and beginning March 30<sup>th</sup>, for the vast majority of students, you've been learning from home. Schools were open, but primarily for the children of Essential Services Workers and for all but a few students with special needs.

Beginning that day, our system completely re-invented itself and students, parents, teachers, and families transformed their learning to virtual or remote learning. Then, on May 15<sup>th</sup> the government announced that we were ready to lift restrictions and it was time to return to school in a limited form and on June 1<sup>st</sup> we would begin seeing more children in schools. This next stage is a chance to open our schools and to look toward September when we would hope to again see an even further increase in the numbers of students in buildings.

What does this next phase look like? Our schools and their organizations will very much reflect that we are still in a pandemic and are attempting to minimize contact. So if you choose to return to school you can expect to see decreased class size, fewer students in buildings, and dramatically increased cleaning and hygiene protocols. All of this is designed to stop the spread of COVID19.

The first and most important message is that teachers have designed a virtual or remote program for all learners. In this partial return to instruction, the virtual program remains the main program. Students will only be in schools for small blocks of time so at-home learning is here to stay for June.

In the provincial guidelines, our elementary schools are permitted to have 50% of their total enrolment in school in any given day. That mean that if you are in kindergarten to grade 5, you can expect to be with half your class for 2 days per week. If you are in grades 6 or 7, you will be with half your class for one day per week.

In our secondary schools, we are permitted to have up to 20% of our students in school on any given day. For those students in grades 8-12, you will be able to meet with your teachers in small group settings to get additional support for your virtual program. You may not attend school for a full day, but over a week, you will receive the equivalent of a full day of instruction.

At this time, what we have submitted to government for approval is that in both our elementary and our secondary schools across the district, we are looking to have Wednesdays as a day dedicated to cleaning the school. So we will have 2 consecutive days in session, then a cleaning day, then returning to instruction for the remainder of the week.

Throughout the pandemic response, one of government's top priorities has been the children of Essential Services Workers and children who require additional supports including children with special needs. The definition of Essential Services Workers has been expanded to include all employees of the school district and children with special needs covers children with an enormous range of abilities. The definition of those children requiring additional support is very wide. For these children, special needs, requiring additional support or a child of an employee of the district or Essential Services Worker, your child may attend school 5 days per week. These children will be with smaller groups during the regular

instructional days, and they will receive additional support on Wednesdays when teachers are not available for face to face instruction. In the coming days, schools will be providing these families with more details on your schedules and the support you can expect. But again, children with special needs, children who require additional support, and children of Surrey School District employees may attend 5 days per week if you choose.

What can you expect in the coming days? Likely two things:

- First - A timetable for your school, likely with alternating days Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday for elementary and, for secondary, a schedule where your child can receive direct support from their teacher on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Second – a survey asking you if you are certain that your child will not be attending school. We need to know this information because we are planning for all children and if students don't arrive at school, we will be phoning home as part of our safe arrival programs and we don't want to make unnecessary calls. We also need to know how many students will be attending so we can plan for bussing.

You will have many questions and there will be more information in the coming days.

All along we've been talking about slowly and steadily, we'll get there. This week, teachers are preparing and doing their orientations to a whole new look and feel to school for them. Next week, when parents arrive, you'll also encounter new routines and we will need your patience and support. We have never done this before, and so we're all learning together. We are treating June 1<sup>st</sup> like a September start up in that we need to establish new routines, we need to find out just how many students arrive in this optional phase, and we need to get started on a new normal.

We look forward to once again seeing students in large numbers in our buildings. It's important to be able to see how we can adapt as we look toward September. We're still in a pandemic, we're still learning, but we're in this together and together we'll get there.

Once again, look for more information from your schools this week. Take care and stay well.