**DEAR  ÉCOLE NOTRE DAME SCHOOL FAMILIES:**

As promised, I am sending you updates with information that I receive as we move forward in our re-entry process and passing it on to you as it comes. There was a meeting on Thursday, August 20th of school-based administrators and central office staff, at which we had the opportunity to find out the next steps in our district’s re-entry plan. We learned that there clearly is an appetite for online learning district wide, mainly at the high school level, but in K - 9 as well. Elementary schools have the most children coming back for in-person learning. With regard to École Notre Dame School, which had an excellent **survey** return rate (thanks to all you parents for that, as the district needs this information in order to plan), the vast majority of parents that answered the survey indicated that their child/children would be returning to school for at-school learning.

The next step in the process has been for our district to send out a second survey asking families who wish to choose online learning for their child/children, to complete a formal registration form to notify the Division of their preference by Tuesday, August 25th. From there, they will use the data, as well as other pertinent information, to determine how many teachers will be required to teach online at the district and how many will be needed to teach at each particular school, based on the numbers of students registered at each grade level at each school. Keep in mind that other larger districts have online programs in place from previous years. Our district has online programming in pre-existence only through Grades 10 – 12 (Outreach), so they are essentially having to build a virtual school for Grades K-12 within a very short time-frame.

That said, some of the staff in various schools may be re-deployed to meet whatever staffing needs come out of the most recent parent survey. Principals should know, by next Wednesday, August 26th, how many cohorts they will have in their school and what grade or grades in each cohort. Specific knowledge about which teachers will be at École Notre Dame School may not be solidified until as late as next Friday, August 28th. How our school will be impacted remains to be seen; however, I can tell you that with the vast majority of parents from the first survey opting for in-school learning, I don’t see a huge change in our current staffing. We may lose one teacher, for example, to the District’s online learning, but unless things change significantly with this latest survey, your children will see familiar faces in the building! There will, however, be more combined classes due to the fact that we are running two separate programs district-wide (online; in-school) without any additional government funding for teachers. This isn’t a complaint; it’s a fact.

So, messaging to families about the first day of school MAY come from teachers, or if that is not possible (because teachers may not know which cohort they are assigned to until Friday, August 28th), information will be sent out more generally by school administration. Please know that although Notre Dame has typically had its homeroom teachers contact families themselves, there are other elementary schools in the division that just sent out general information to parents the week before the year begins and things work out just fine. There will be changes in the way things are normally done at our school; you will still be supplied with the information you need for the first day back, whether it is from school administration, or from individual teachers themselves, but the reality is you may not receive information until next weekend due to time constraints. The information you will receive will include specific details of which cohort group your child is in (i.e. Grade One/Two combined with x number of students), what your child should bring, what entrance they should go to, what COVID-related safety measures will be in place. No guarantee, though, that you will know which teacher your child has until the first day of school, unfortunately.

I would remind you that if you have any questions related to the broader context of the district re-entry plan, please visit the document often as it is a document that gets updated often. Here is the link: [School Re-Entry Information for Parents](https://www.starcatholic.ab.ca/school-re-entry-info-for-parents)

**MOST RECENT FAQ’S FROM PARENTS - AUGUST 23RD MESSAGE:**

**Q: WILL THE PLAYGROUND BE SANITIZED AFTER EACH RECESS?**

A:  No. Students will hand sanitize before leaving and after entering the building.

Q. **IF WE CHOOSE TO GO WITH ONLINE SCHOOLING FOR OUR CHILD, WILL THE SCHOOL LEND US A CHROMEBOOK IF WE NEED IT?**

A: No. The district has made it clear in the second survey for those parents choosing online learning, that they will have to provide their own technology. However, the technology fee will be waived if you choose online learning.

Q. **WHEN WILL WE KNOW WHAT THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL WILL LOOK LIKE FOR OUR STUDENTS?**

What the first day will look like will be determined when teachers return to school next week. This planning will be made in conjunction with the teachers, as their feedback is important to a smooth first day. Ideally, you’ll hear from your child’s homeroom cohort; if not, you’ll be messaged by school administration before your child starts their staggered entry day. Messaging from school administration will be much more general than what you would get from a homeroom cohort teacher and, realistically, may not be available until the weekend before the staggered entry dates.

Q. **ARE WE STILL STICKING WITH THE ORIGINAL RE-ENTRY DATES AND GRADES OF SEPTEMBER 1ST AND 2ND?**

At this time, yes, the dates remain the same. However, due to the fact that it will be very likely that classes will be combined in order to accommodate district online learning programming, the original Gr. 2, 4, 6 on September 1st and Gr 1, 3, 5 on September 2nd will **not** be the same. ECS cohorts may also look different. These are unknowns until the process I described in my introductory information takes place. School administrators will inform parents of what the cohort configurations and which teachers are assigned to which cohorts when we have all of that information finalized.

**Q: HOW MANY MASKS SHOULD KIDS LEAVE HOME WITH EACH DAY?**

A: Two. As you are aware, the province is supplying two masks per student. More specific information will follow closer to the start date, either by administration, or by the cohort teacher your child is assigned to.

Q: **WHAT ABOUT THE CLASSROOM REQUEST FORMS WE FILLED OUT LAST SPRING? WILL THAT STILL BE CONSIDERED?**

A: If possible, with the understanding that this is an administrative decision that must be respected. Not all classroom requests can be accommodated, and especially now that some cohorts will have combined grade levels. Please refrain from calling to ask that your child be in another class, once you know which cohort they will be in, as there are always several factors in place that affect where children are placed. Thanks in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

Q: **AREN’T COMBINED CLASSES WITH TWO GRADES LEVELS IN THEM LOWERING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION?**

**A:** Here is an interesting article on that topic: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201505/why-children-might-benefit-combination-classroom#:~:text=Research%20has%20shown%20there's%20no,split%20classes%20versus%20straight%20grades.&text=Some%20children%20will%20benefit%20by,This%20is%20called%20%E2%80%9Clooping.%E2%80%9D> The article may ease a parent's mind on the topic. There is evidence either way, but our reality is there will likely be combined classes. We already had combined classes going into next year with two of our French Immersion classes. As an administrator, I couldn’t be more comfortable with the folks that were assigned to those classes. Remember, we are controlling what we can, and we have excellent teachers in our division that serve our district well and will do their very best with whichever cohort they are assigned. Also, please be reminded that any new cohort configurations are as a result of COVID re-entry planning that is being done at the Division level.

**Q**. **STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOL ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS IN THE HALLWAY AND AT TIMES CAN HAVE BREAKS WITHOUT MASKS AT THE TEACHERS DISCRETION IN THE CLASSROOMS. WON’T TAKING THE MASKS ON AND OFF CONSTANTLY BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM AND HALLWAYS LEAD TO STUDENTS TOUCHING THEIR FACE MORE OFTEN?**

A: Having teachers with their cohort will allow better monitoring and supervision of mask wearing and physical distancing. Students will be taught the proper protocol in handling masks by cleaning their hands before and after taking a mask on or off as well as proper removal and storage of masks.

**Q**: **ARE STUDENTS EXPECTED TO WEAR MASKS ON THE PLAYGROUND AND OUTSIDE IN OTHER AREAS AT RECESS?**

A: Recess will be in cohorts either by time or by area of the field/playground. More specific mask information is available on the STAR Catholic website [here](https://www.starcatholic.ab.ca/school-re-entry-info-for-parents)

**Q: WON’T TAKING MASKS ON AND OFF CONSTANTLY BETWEEN THE CLASSROOM AND HALLWAYS LEAD TO TOUCHING THE FACE OVER AND OVER?**

It is much easier for a teacher to monitor physical distancing in the classroom compared to the hallway. When students have to leave the classroom for some reason (i.e. to go to the washroom; to get something from their bag on their hook in the hallway), teachers cannot monitor them as closely, or at all in some cases. Thus, students will be asked to wear their mask when in the hallway.

As for how masks should be handled between transitions, the cleaning of hands before and after taking a mask on or off will be taught and staff will remind students of it often. We will do our best, but everyone must take into consideration that we can’t see all things at all times everywhere.

**Q:**  **WHAT WILL STUDENT ENTRY WAYS LOOK LIKE? WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MORNING ENTRANCE AND END OF THE DAY?**

A: With regard to entering and exiting the school, students will hand-sanitize on their own at the station. It will take more time at the beginning as students may just be learning, so the supervisors will assist with showing them what to do. It will become a part of their daily routine.

Q: **SOME STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOL PARTICIPATE IN READING INTERVENTIONS. AS WELL, SOME STUDENTS RECEIVE HELP FROM OUTSIDE THERAPISTS (I.E. SPEECH, OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, ETC.) WHAT ABOUT THE STUDENTS WITH SEVERE NEEDS? HOW IS THIS BEING HANDLED?**

Our school will continue to assist students one-to-one with reading interventions. The district has provided two plexi-glass shields to each school for use by staff providing these interventions. However, parents should know that if they choose on-line learning for their child, that child will not participate in our reading interventions program. If they come back to our school (at the appropriate entry points of mid-November and mid-year), they may enter our reading interventions program if it is deemed that they could benefit from the program (i.e. they qualify for it) as long as there is room in the program. The program, as per usual, is quite fluid, with students entering and exiting dependent upon how they are progressing.

Programming in which students may need extra speech and language help, etc. will continue. It is imperative that parents with children receiving these services know that if they have chosen online learning, the therapist will not be making home visits. Parents will have to come to the school for these services. The person to contact from our school who oversees these services is Mrs. Diane Pichonsky (Learning Support Facilitator) so she is the best person to ask for school-based special needs and reading interventions questions. Specific in-school programming for Mental Health is facilitated by Mrs. Suzi Neurauter (Family-School Liaison worker), so she’s the go-to person for information related to that.

Programming for severe needs students that are registered to take in-person learning at school will continue. If parents have chosen on-line learning and are wondering about how their child’s needs may be met, the contact person in place at the district-level is Mrs. Chris Piro.

**Q:** **WHEN WILL I KNOW SPECIFICS ABOUT OUR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS, AND THE KINDERCARE PROGRAM?**

A: Mrs. Kathy Dunlop will send information out to all registered families in advance of the first day of school, keeping in mind that the re-entry to our before and after school programs will mean changes in how things are done; there will be more safety restrictions in place due to COVID-19. Also, be aware that the school re-entry plan is closely tied into the care re-entry plan.

With regard to Kindercare, although Mrs. Dunlop is our coordinator for Care programs, the person instructing Kindercare is Mrs. Nancy Foley. She will be letting parents know specific details about the program. Also, our ECS teachers work closely with Mrs. Foley to ensure that parents have all of the information they will need to know.

**Q:** **CAN MY CHILD BRING A SMALL BOTTLE OF HAND SANITIZER FOR DESKS, AS LONG AS IT MEETS REGULATIONS (i.e. 60% alcohol, etc.)?**

A: Parents may choose to send individual bottles if they’d like, but they are not required. Each classroom will have a wall hand sanitizer unit.

**Q:** **WHEN IS INFORMATION ABOUT BUSSING BEING SENT TO PARENTS? WHAT WILL STAGGERED ENTRY LOOK LIKE IN RELATION TO BUSING?**

A:  Central Office sends out information to parents, as busing is run by the district, not by individual schools. Busing information will be made available in advance of the first day of school by Central Office. Please call 780-986-2500 if you have any questions. The latest information we have is the Division is targeting an 8:20 drop off time for the first bus arriving at our school. We are still awaiting exact times for after school, but it still looks to be at around 3:00, as it has been in the past.

A:  Our official start time to the day is 8:37 am and our official end is 3:10 pm.  We have turned off the bells to reduce pressure and allow for a flex start and end time.  We will have supervisors inside each of our entryways to ensure that all students who enter have used the hand sanitizer and are wearing masks.

**MORNING:**

Our **buses** start dropping off at 8:20 approximately and our school day officially begins at 8:37. We are asking all bus drivers to delay dropping off our students until the previous bus has completely unloaded and passengers are near our entrances.  **Parents who have their child walk or get dropped off,** please consider dropping off your child between 8:37 and 8:52 am.  This allows for a large amount of time for drop off which should alleviate congestions. All entrances will be labelled and you will know exactly what door your child should enter based on specific information you will receive, which could be as late as the weekend prior to the first day or school for your child.

**AFTER SCHOOL:**

We are working with our bus coordinator for the division and we are planning on a staggered dismissal based on bus cohort groupings (students assigned seats in the back dismissed first, and so on).  We will start earlier for our bus students (3:00 pm) and dismiss cohort groups in 2 minute intervals to prevent large groups in the hallway.  All bus students will be on buses by our 3:10 whole school dismissal.

All remaining students will be dismissed after the 3:10 bell (order to be determined after the survey and we know our numbers).  We have supervisors at each exit ensuring that students hand sanitize upon exit.

**Q:** **WILL THERE BE FLOOR MARKINGS TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN THE HALLWAY? WILL THERE BE MARKINGS ON THE GROUND AT ENTRANCES TO INDICATE THE NEED FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING?**

A**:** Principals are working with Central Office facilities staff on this one. There will be some floor markings to remind students to walk on the right side of the hallway.

There will be limited markings outside the entrances, more so as reminders to the children to start their line up physically distanced. We will be placing three markings to show where line ups should start for each cohort. They will be two meters apart, to show where students should start forming a line. These will be at each student entrance. More specific information to follow once we know how many cohorts we have, which will help us to know exactly which doors each cohort will be entering. Parents can assist by preparing their children, in advance of the first day of school, to distance themselves from the person in front of them in line. Masks on when approaching the school in the morning will be an expectation for at least the first few days until we see how things are going with physical distancing. Same thing for when students leave at the end of the day. Students will be taught physical distancing protocols, too, on the first day of school and will be reminded of these often until routines settle in, but pre-teaching your children about these things in advance of the first day will help us immensely.

**Q:**  **WHERE DO STUDENTS PUT THEIR MASKS WHEN THEY GO OUTSIDE, IF THEY DON’T HAVE TO WEAR THEM? THEY WILL STILL NEED THEM IN THE HALLWAY.**

A**:** Ideally, they would be placed in a plastic bag, when the child is outside. Their cohort teacher will give more specific information in this regard, though, as teachers will have the autonomy to do what makes sense for their class.

**Q: STUDENTS TAKE OFF THEIR MASKS TO EAT LUNCH. DOES THIS DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF WEARING IT FULL TIME FOR THE REST OF THE DAY?**

A**:** During the lunch hour when masks are removed, we will try to minimize talking when social distancing can’t be maintained.

**Q:**  **CAN STAFF MEMBERS GIVE OUT TREATS AND PRIZES?**

A**:**  Yes, if it is prepackaged and distributed by the staff member.

**Q:IF I CHOOSE TO HAVE MY CHILD DO SCHOOLING ON-LINE, WILL I HAVE TO PAY THE TECHNOLOGY FEE?**

A: Due to the fact that parents at home are responsible for providing the technology required for online learning, the technology fee will **not** be assessed to those families.

**Q:  WILL YOU BE GIVING MORE INFORMATION TO US?**

A:  Yes.  Please watch for emails BOTH from the Division and from our school. The teachers are not scheduled to return until August 26th and I am honouring their time to rejuvenate and prepare for the new school year.  You will receive more information during the week of August 25th. We will be posting this re-entry plan, which is subject to change slightly based on the most current information provided to school administration by the Division, on our school website.

Administration is very open and willing to answer any more questions you may have regarding school related issues, if they were not addressed in the above FAQs or the division’s FAQs. Please note that all decisions are subject to change based on recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer and Education Minister.

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**SELECT FAQ’S FROM THE AUGUST 11TH MESSAGE EMAILED TO PARENTS. ANYTHING THAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN IS NOW IN THE MOST RECENT FAQ’S (SECTION ABOVE)**

**Q:  IN PREVIOUS YEARS, THE OPEN HOUSE TOOK PLACE BEFORE SCHOOL STARTED. WILL WE STILL HAVE AN OPEN HOUSE?**

A:  No, our traditional Open House will not take place this year.  We are working to develop a zoom meeting with your child’s teacher(s) for introductory purposes and more information will be provided later in August.  Your child can bring their school supplies on the staggered entry days.  If you feel this is too much for your child to carry, please select key items to send on the first day and remaining supplies can come over a period of days.  If the teacher would like certain items, they will contact you via email.  If you do not hear from the teacher, it is your discretion.

**Q: WILL OUR BEFORE SCHOOL CARE, AFTER SCHOOL CARE, AND KINDERCARE PROGRAMS BE RUNNING?**

A:  Yes, as per licensing requirements, including COVID regulations for care programs.  Our Care Coordinator, Kathy Dunlop, and school principal, are working to establish guidelines for these programs.  This program will be available for the first day of school for registered children.  Before and After School Care will take place in the gym, common area (formerly known as library), and chapel to allow for safe distancing.  Our staff to student ratio is 15:1 and allows for ease of separation.  All staff will be wearing masks and students will need to follow in person guidelines outlined by the education minister (masks when in close contact, hand sanitizer, etc.).

**Q: WILL THERE BE PRESCHOOL?**

A: Yes. The Preschool program as well as our Care Programs are licensed under Childrens’ Services, who sets out and monitors health and safety regulations to ensure quality programs.  Information specific to preschool will be sent out by Kathy Dunlop in the coming weeks.

**Q: WILL THERE BE ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE? (Gr 4 - 6 optional program)**

A: Athletic Excellence cannot be run in a cohort group; therefore, it will not be running until cohorts are no longer required as per government direction.  If and when cohorts are no longer required, the program would start up again at a prorated rate. Due to this uncertainty, payments will not be required at this time, but if you wish to hold your child’s spot, deposits will be retained for the time being to hold your child’s spot for next school year. Those children in the program that are currently in Grade 6 would be eligible to receive a refund later, if the program doesn’t run at all this school year. Please let the office know by September 1st if you wish to be refunded, but be aware that your spot will be offered to students on the waiting list and you will lose your spot in line for next year if your child is currently enrolled as a Gr 4 or 5 Athletic Excellence student.

**Q: WILL THERE BE CTF PROGRAMMING (Career and Technology Foundations for Grades 4 - 6)**

A: Yes, but only within classroom cohort groups, subject content as per the discretion of the homeroom teacher. If and when cohort groups are not required, we would switch back to normal programming whereby students would be in mixed groups and in CTF as per the selection forms that were sent out last spring. Students in AE who normally don’t participate in CTF which takes place while they are at AE will participate in cohort-based CTF until such time as AE is up and running again.

**Q:  WHAT WILL RECESS LOOK LIKE?**

A:  Students will be assigned recess locations based on their cohort grouping (homeroom).  We are not closing off the playgrounds, but assigning only one cohort group at a time.  Students will be dismissed to go to their cohort break location at different times to reduce hallway traffic flow.  For example, if a cohort group is assigned to the soccer field, they will be dismissed first, followed by the playground group.  They will also be brought back into the school in cohort groups at staggered times (avoiding the crowded door entry).  Teachers have been given the opportunity to sign out the playground during the school day if their class did not receive the outdoor recess break during a specific day.  This schedule is on a 6 day cycle that teachers will follow.

**Q:  WILL THERE BE A CHRISTMAS CONCERT AND HALLOWEEN PARADE THIS YEAR?**

A:  At this point, we have cancelled our Christmas Concert and Halloween parade.  If the situation arises to permit these events, we will keep you informed.  It is our hope that we can consider a Spring Concert; however, this is subject to the Chief Medical Officer’s recommendations. We will still have a music program, but the teacher will be moving to the classrooms rather than students coming to her music room.

**Q:  WHAT WILL GYM CLASS LOOK LIKE?**

A: Only one cohort group in the gym at the same time. All classes have four PEd time slots throughout the week.

**Q:  NORMALLY YOU HAVE MONTHLY ASSEMBLIES AS WELL AS MASSES WITH FATHER SILVICHAN. WILL YOU STILL HAVE MASS AS A WHOLE SCHOOL?**

A:  No, we are unable to gather in assemblies or masses currently; therefore, we are working with Father Silvichan to provide other opportunities for our students in this area.  Assemblies will be virtual utilizing google hangouts and zoom.

**Q: WILL THERE BE HOT LUNCH?**

A: At this point, we are putting a hold on hot lunch for safety reasons (many volunteer parents and students help to make this program successful, but that means a lot of different bodies in various spaces in the school on hot lunch days, which could be unsafe). If we come up with a plan that looks to be safe, we will let families know and resume the program.