

Message to Families: School Reopening Update

September 4, 2020

Dear Families,

Welcome back to school! The 2020-2021 school year is about to begin and we are excited to welcome your children back into schools across the school division with a gradual start on September 8 and 9. Staff have been working intensely to prepare for the return of students in the new environment. We know schools will be safe, supportive and caring places for students to learn, but we also know there will be uncertainty and anxiety as we begin the school year. Thank you for your understanding, patience and support for teachers and staff as we all learn how to be in school together in some new ways.

Knowing our staff's strong desire to reconnect with students and families, I would invite you to be thoughtful about the demands you place on their time in these first few days of school. Teachers, school secretaries, caretaking staff, educational assistants and administrators want to answer all your questions and to re-connect in positive ways, but the demands on their time and energy is enormous. If you can find answers to your questions by looking at the school plan, division plan or the Ministry information on our website (www.srsd119.ca) please check that source. However, do not feel you need to remain unsure or unclear about questions you have; bring forward any questions that remain.

The pace and volume of information about school start-up is significant, but here are a few updates:

1. **Distance Learning Centre is operational.** Most (but not all) families who completed the expression of interest have been contacted, but that process will continue next week. All schools have a gradual entry and so will the SRPSD Distance Learning Centre as they continue to connect with families next week. As in a physical school, much of the first time in school is about connecting, establishing routines and expectations while the work on subject-specific curricular outcomes will follow.
2. **SRPSD is partnering with the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) to begin COVID-19 testing in schools.** It is an honour to be chosen by the SHA as partner which has structures and systems in place to ensure an effective testing program to support student safety and public health in the broader community. We will arrange and provide for voluntary testing of any Carlton Public High School Students who wish to participate. Forms will be provided next week to students who choose to participate and testing will occur on Sept. 17 & 18. More details will be provided to Carlton students and families by the CCPHS team.
3. **Extra-curricular programs are suspended for the start of school.** We know the value of the wide variety of activities and clubs our staff and community volunteers provide for students. We also know the importance of pacing the demands on students and staff to ensure that we establish safe and effective practices in schools. We will review this decision to suspend all extra-curricular programs after the second week of school and on an ongoing basis. You can be sure that when there is a change to that decision, we will share that change with you.

4. **Please ensure to screen your child for COVID-19 symptoms before sending them to school.** Procedures are in place for students who are ill in school. Details are in Appendix B of our School Re-Entry Plan and Admin Procedure 326, both of which are on our website. Students with new, unexplained or worsening symptoms will be moved to an isolated area and parents will be contacted to pick them up, take them home and call 811 for direction. Please be sure arrangements are in place so your children can be picked up on short notice. In the long term, it is far safer for the community, and perhaps less disruptive for families, to have a child stay home for a morning or day and have symptoms resolve than it is to send the child to school then be required to pick them in mid-day and potentially miss more school or possibly transmit the virus in school. We know children staying home from school is a significant difficulty for students and families. We will be as judicious as we can in determining when to isolate a student and request parents to pick up a child from school. Please be prepared for that possibility and be patient with school staff as we implement the directives from Health.

Thank you for your continued support, encouragement and feedback. Our schools are ready and able to welcome students back and to care for their mental wellness, physical health and their individual learning needs. An updated version of our division plan is posted to our website and we will continue to update our plans as new information and guidance is available from the Ministry of Health, Education or other sources.

If you have any questions, please take a look at the school plans or the division plans on the website. If you have further questions, please connect with your child's teacher, local school principal or contact us at the Education Centre. We appreciate the opportunity to work together.

Yours in Education,

Barry Hollick, Board Chair and Robert Bratvold, Director of Education