École Élémentaire Devon Gardens Elementary
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Action required: Return to in-class instruction

May 22, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Last week, it was announced that parents will have the choice of bringing their child(ren) back to class on a part-time basis in June, as part of BC's Restart Plan. The decision by the Ministry of Education and Provincial Health Officer to restart schools is based on the science that shows it is safe to bring children back to schools on a gradual and part-time basis.

The objective of this letter is to:

1. provide you with an overview of our proposed plan to resume in-class instruction *(subject to approval by the Ministry of Education)*
2. ask you to complete a survey (https://forms.gle/rDnVsLGcUYf6yW6A6) indicating whether at this point in time* you intend to send your child(ren) back to school in June so that we can create a schedule for students returning to class
3. inform you that you will hear more specific information regarding your child(ren)'s return to in-class instruction before Friday, May 29.

The transition to in-class instruction is a voluntary option for families. Remote/online learning will continue however, it will be at a reduced level as teachers balance in-class instruction with remote teaching.

**The survey is intended as a starting point to help us plan for the number of students that may return for in-class instruction. We recognize that your decision may change over time and we will try our best to accommodate any changes.*

1. Overview of proposed plan to resume in-class instruction

The Ministry of Education has a five-stage approach for resuming in-class instruction in a measured way. Each stage is guided by health and safety guidelines, measures, protocols and orders, as well as the four guiding principles developed for continuity of learning during the pandemic, listed below in order of priority:

a) Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and employees.
b) Provide the services needed to support children of our essential workers.
c) Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance.
d) Provide continuity of educational opportunities for all students.

The province has created these five stages in order to be able to direct schools to deliver learning in the safest and most appropriate manner depending on the current level of risk posed by COVID-19 in BC.

Currently, we are in Stage 4, which means the majority of students are learning through online instruction. On June 1, as part of BC's Restart Plan which has given careful thought and consideration to ensure the health and safety of British Columbians comes first, we will move to Stage 3.

As mentioned previously, all school districts are required to send a plan outlining their approach to the Ministry of Education for review and approval before they can welcome children back into their schools. The information shared below is our proposed approach but is subject to ministry approval. In addition, all of our teaching and support staff will be returning to school next week. They know their learning spaces best and so we will be asking them to add any other measures specific to our school they feel are necessary to ensure a safe return for students. As a result, the plans outlined below may change.

School Density Targets

Each stage has school density targets to ensure the number of students in schools is manageable and maintains a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and employees.

For K – 5, we cannot exceed more than 50% of the school's capacity. Remote/online learning will continue, however it may be at a reduced level as teachers balance in-class instruction with remote teaching. For Grades 6 – 12, we cannot exceed more than 20% of the school's capacity. As a result, remote learning will remain the predominant model for the majority of Grade 6 – 12 students.

At Devon Gardens, the maximum number of students in attendance on any given day would be 159. The number of students in any particular classroom or learning space may vary to ensure that it is managed safely with appropriate physical distancing.

Schedule for in-class instruction

Children of Essential Service Workers, students with disabilities, diverse abilities and those who require additional support may receive in-class learning opportunities up to five days a week, if they wish.

Subject to the density targets outlined by the Ministry, for all other learners:

- K-5 students can expect to receive two days of in-class instruction a week, either on Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday.
- Students in Grades 6 – 7 and secondary school can expect to receive up to one day of in-class support a week.

We will share a more detailed schedule for in-class instruction with you next week once our plan has received approval from the Ministry of Education.

Health and Safety Measures

In addition to the density targets, increased health and safety measures, as defined by the *Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings,* will be put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Next week, as mentioned already, we will be welcoming many of our teaching and support staff back to the school for the first time since spring break. We know they will be able to suggest additional measures specific to their learning spaces. As a result, the measures we plan to implement include, but are not limited to, the following:

- students will have designated desks and will need to use their own supplies
- desks will be separated to maintain two metres physical distance
- the flow of people in hallways and bathrooms will be managed to minimize contact and maintain physical distance
- staggered start and end times may be introduced
- recess and lunch times may be changed to allow for physical distancing
- students will be prevented from gathering in hallways or other common areas
- cleaning of high-touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet seats, keyboards and desks will occur regularly, and school buildings will be cleaned at least once a day
- students, educators and staff will be required to wash their hands upon entering school and throughout the day
- the school is well-stocked with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies
- there will be increased outside time but no physical contact sports
- school and city playground equipment remains closed for the moment. As soon as that changes, we will advise the community
- children will not be permitted to share food or personal items like phones, pens or pencils
- water fountains will be shut off, so please ensure your children bring sufficient water for the day
- there will be regular verbal reminders for children to minimize physical contact with their friends
- health and safety signage to remind children and staff to wash their hands, maintain physical distancing and practice appropriate respiratory etiquette will be displayed throughout the school
- staff will be required to stay home if they have symptoms of a common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or any other infectious disease
- parents will be asked to assess their children daily and to keep them home if they feel ill or have any symptoms of a common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or any other infectious disease
- if any student or staff member has even mild symptoms, arrangements will be made for that person to be returned home
- consistent with direction from the Provincial Health Officer, access to the school is restricted to staff and students only. Parents will be required to remain outside the school.
- only one student per seat will be permitted on school buses, unless children are from the same household
- as per the Provincial Health Officer's guidance, there is no need for staff or students to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). For those who choose to wear their own equipment, such as masks, their choice will be respected

Please note: School districts follow the direction of the Provincial Health Officer. If new guidance is issued in the coming days and weeks, there may be additions or changes to the above measures.

2. Survey for Parents/Guardians

To help us plan for in-class instruction, we need to know how many children will be returning to school in June and their priority for in-class instruction (e.g. ESWs, designations, disabilities and diverse abilities).

Please complete this survey https://forms.gle/rDnVsLGcUYf6yW6A6 ***no later than 10am on Monday, May 25.***

We will use the survey results and density targets to finalize schedules for a return to in-class instruction. Please note, based on the survey results, the proposed approach outlined in this letter may change. Children may not have their regular classroom teacher or classmates. While we will do our best to ensure that siblings at the same school are scheduled to attend school on the same days, we cannot guarantee this will be possible. Finally, as already mentioned, the survey is a starting point to help us plan for the number of students that may return for in-class instruction. We recognize that your decision may change over time and we will try our best to accommodate any changes.

3. Schedule for returning children

As I'm sure you can appreciate, this is a complex logistical process that will take a few days to complete once we have a better idea of the number of children returning for in-class instruction. We will share the schedule for your child(ren) with you before **Friday, May 29.**

Please visit the school district's website (https://www.deltasd.bc.ca/news-events/news/information-for-parents-guardians-novel-coronavirus/) for COVID-related information and resources, including the latest updates and guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Provincial Health Officer. The school district's plan as provided to the Ministry of Education will be available here.

If you have specific questions relating to your child(ren)'s situation, please call the school to speak to me or the Vice Principal directly.

While we look forward to welcoming your child(ren) back into our school, we recognize this partial return to schools may be causing some anxiety and stress. Some of you may be fearful of sending your child(ren) back to school. We understand your concerns and will support whatever decision you make. Please know that the option to send your child(ren) back to school will be there when your family is ready.

In the meantime, thank you for your continued understanding, patience and support. I know we keep saying it, but these are truly unprecedented times, and together we will get through them.

Sincerely,

Mme E. Greenhalgh,
Principal