

## Elementary In-Person Letter

August 18, 2020

Subject Line: Update to Elementary Families Registered for In-Person Learning

*This message is being sent to families who have elementary (JK to Grade 8) child(ren) registered for in-person learning at a DDSB school.*

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we approach the start of the school year, school principals and vice principals have returned to work early and are back in their schools to prepare for a safe and welcoming return for students. School administrators are currently working on re-timetabling and re-staffing the school to account for the students who have chosen to learn virtually from home. This is a complex process and usually takes a few months. They are working to have it completed by the end of August. They will also be working on ensuring that the building is ready for the start of the school year with the proper layout, signage, health and safety measures, and other changes so that school staff are ready to welcome your child(ren).

### **Changing from In-Person to Virtual Learning through DDSB@Home**

If you believe you made an error during the opt-out process or had intended for your child(ren) to learn virtually from home through DDSB@Home, **you will need to contact your school directly** to make this change. This process may take up to a week depending on the volume of requests. While we will do our best to try and accommodate changes before the start of the school year, requests will be examined on a case-by-case basis pending class size availability in the DDSB@Home virtual school. Once the school year starts, we will continue to respond to requests, but may have to waitlist students until the end of term 1 in January as changes in enrollment will impact staffing and class sizes.

### **Staggered Starts**

We were notified on Friday by the Ministry of Education that we are now able to offer a staggered start for all elementary students to help ease their transition back to school. We will look at doing this for the first week of school for students in grades 1-8. Smaller groups of students in each class would attend on different days during the first three days of school with all students attending school on Friday, September 11. The Board of Trustees also passed a motion last week that would allow for a staggered start for kindergarten students over the first two weeks of school. Your principal will be providing you with more information next week on what staggered starts will look like for students in grades 1-8 and kindergarten.

During this time and throughout the return to school, educators will be focusing on mental health and well-being to support students, understanding that they are adjusting to being back in an in-person learning environment with their classmates.

### **Class Sizes and Student Spacing in Classrooms**

The Board of Trustees passed a motion last week to exceed the Ministry of Education's guidance on class sizes and physical distancing of students by:

- a) Ensuring all classes allow for the distancing of students, at a minimum of one metre as recommended in the guidance documents relied upon by the government for other aspects of its reopening plan;

- b) Authorizing the Director of Education to implement any and all measures that the Director may deem necessary and appropriate to best ensure a minimum of one-metre spacing for students, including but not limited to measures such as reorganizing classes, providing portable classrooms, using common areas as classroom space, redeploying staff, hiring additional school staff, and such other measures as the Director may deem appropriate.

Staff will be reporting to the Board of Trustees by August 25<sup>th</sup> on the status of efforts to achieve this and how many classes (if any) do not meet these standards. Staff will also be presenting a plan to Trustees for their consideration that utilizes reserve funds, of up to 1% of the Boards 2020 budget (approximately \$8.1 million) to facilitate the adoption of mitigation measures to keep students and staff as safe as possible.

### **Masks**

While the Ministry of Education has made wearing a mask mandatory for students in Grades 4 to 12, the DDSB will be actively encouraging all students to wear a mask, unless they have a medical need. Specific programs will be developed to teach all students the importance of wearing a mask. All students on bus transportation are required to wear a mask to board the bus.

### **Next Steps**

Your principal will be in touch with you next week with more information about the start of the school year after they have had an opportunity to timetable and assess classroom needs.

Thank you in advance for your understanding as the DDSB works to completely change our processes and how we deliver learning to accommodate the needs of all students. We are committed to the health and safety of our students and staff and are working towards a safe return to school for all. As always, you can find out more by visiting our [Return to School website](#) and [FAQs](#) that we are updating regularly.

With thanks,

Norah Marsh  
Acting Director of Education