



August 10, 2020

Dear Seine River School Division families:

Re: COVID-19 Welcoming Our Students Back: Restoring Safe Schools

We are writing to update you about the Government of Manitoba's announcement for September 2020 school re-opening. Our staff have been busy working to make appropriate plans to allow the safe return of students in response to this next phase. The Chief Provincial Public Health Officer has provided direction and guidelines in order to have students return safely to school. We want to assure everyone that Seine River School Division is making plans based upon the recommendations from Manitoba Health and feedback that we received from parents and staff with our *ThoughtExchange* survey that was completed this past June. This information has proven to be vital in our divisional planning.

Our school teams and staff are planning for the gradual return of students to the school with the priority remaining the safety and well-being of staff and students. We deeply appreciate the patience, cooperation and support that families have provided as we navigate these changing conditions.

1. K – 8 Students

- a. All K – 8 students will be able to attend school on a daily basis.
- b. Classrooms will be configured to support physical distancing within classroom and bus cohorts meeting Manitoba Health's 1 metre spacing.
- c. Entry and exits to school will be communicated clearly to students and school staff will manage student traffic in the school.
- d. Parents and caregivers will be expected to screen their children before boarding the bus and coming to school. Students and staff who are ill are expected to stay home if experiencing any symptoms.
- e. Student entry to school the week of September 8 – 11 will be staggered with every student attending two days in the first week. The staggered start is to provide staff and students with the opportunity to learn new safety protocols in a safe and proactive manner. Schools will notify families of their child's schedule later in August.
- f. There will be enhanced cleaning protocols in all of our schools and students and staff are expected to cooperate and follow health guidelines appropriately.

2. High School Students

- a. All students with special needs will be able to attend school up to five days per week.
- b. September 8 will be a transition day for grade 9 students and students with exceptional needs.
- c. Our high school teams are currently developing plans where all high school students will attend at least two days per week and will work with students to develop "blended



- learning” plans which is a combination of in-class and remote learning. Your son/daughter’s individual schedule will be provided to you by the school later in August.
- d. Each school will have designated areas for student cohorts and physical distancing and cooperation is required and essential for the safe return of school.
 - e. Enhanced cleaning protocols will be implemented daily with any shared spaces cleaned prior to different cohorts using shared spaces.
 - f. High School students will need to maintain 2 meters social distancing outside of their cohort and will not be allowed to congregate in large close groups.

Note: Cohorts involve keeping groups of students (e.g. classes) together and avoiding interactions with other groups. The maximum number of students in a cohort is 75 and students can belong to more than one cohort, a school cohort and a transportation cohort. K-8 students will be in their class cohort and will be able to maintain smaller groups. High school students will be placed in cohorts according to grades and programs. Cohorts are used for transportation, recess and other allotted times. Seine River strives to have smaller cohorts and minimize the comingling of students.

3. Transportation:

We recognize that transportation is a critical component of having students arrive safely and regularly to school and are very proud of the service we have been able to provide for our families. To meet the provincial health guidelines for the safe transportation of students we have to temporarily change the level of service we have provided in the past. Our buses typically transport 50 to 65 students per bus and with the new guidelines will be reduced to between 18 and 25 students. The following is a summary of the temporary changes:

- K-4 students within 0.8 and 1.6 km from the school will not be provided bus transportation.
- All school buses will be “double-routed” meaning that they will drop off students at the school and then go back out to pick up another cohort of students.
- Students not eligible for transportation will only be provided transportation if we have available space on a bus.
- All school buses will be cleaned in between bus cohorts and at the end of the day.
- Schools will be provided additional supervision for students arriving before the beginning of the day and departing after the end of the school day.
- **Transportation services could be disrupted with increased absenteeism due to illness.**

4. General Information:

Schools will be providing families with information regarding specific instructions that are site specific prior to students attending school in September. The division is providing an increase in



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custodial staff, classroom supports and planning to maintain cohorts. The school division will be following Public Health's guidance for the use of PPE (personal protective equipment) including the use of individual face masks. All staff and students should feel comfortable wearing face masks if they so choose. We will make any necessary adjustments as advised by public health.

We also wanted to thank families for their patience, consideration and cooperation as we continue to navigate these difficult circumstances. It is important that all of us work together to follow the guidelines of Manitoba Health. We appreciate the challenges, anxiety, caution and excitement that many people are experiencing at this time. We will continue to take all precautions and are extremely grateful for the dedication, perseverance and innovation of our staff during these times. More information regarding educational programming will be forthcoming in the coming days from your respective schools. We will continue to update our website and share information as things continue to change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Borgfjord".

Michael Borgfjord
Superintendent