



BORDEN SCHOOL
Achieving Success Together

P.O. Box 40 Borden, SK S0K 0N0
306 997-2090 www.spiritsd.ca/bordenschool

Dear Borden School Families,

I am so pleased to be reaching out to you all again today. I hope that the summer has been healthy, safe, and that you and your families have all had opportunities to experience joy and relaxation! I would like to take this opportunity to share some general information with all of you. I plan to be in touch next week as well with more information.

I would like to start off, though, by saying thank-you to you all again. I have been fortunate to have a variety of email and phone call exchanges with Borden families. The level of care and support is gratefully received. I am so proud and honoured to be on this journey alongside the Borden Community.

In this letter, I will share information regarding the following topics:

- Cohorts, Students working from home at school start, Masks, Ministry Plan, PSSD Survey, School supplies & lockers, PAA and Travel between Schools, Visitors & Extra Curr, and Next Steps

Cohorts

In various documents and news stories the term “cohort” has been used and I would like to speak to that in this letter. A cohort is a group that has sustained contact for members within the cohort, while limiting the contact with members outside of the cohort. In the school setting, a cohort is a class of students that will be exposed to one another for long stretches of the school day while their contact with members outside of the cohort will be minimized. The goal in creating cohorts in schools (or any other place where people gather on a regular basis) is to make cohorts as airtight as possible.

At Borden School, I have taken a critical look at the class combinations that we had shared in May for the 2020-2021 school year. Those class combinations were not closed off, or airtight. There were many times when classes combined, even for short blocks of time, but that disrupts the effectiveness of a cohort. I am currently working at re-structuring our timetable so that class cohorts never blend or crossover. Given the small size of our school and the contractual realities for teacher prep-time, all cohorts at Borden School will have at least 2 teachers. The higher grades will have more teachers. We are working on a school protocol and procedure for adults moving between cohorts. It is my belief that a responsible adult transitioning between cohorts is a safer choice than having cohorts of students blend and crossover at various times. I will share an updated class cohort configuration next week.

Students Working from Home

It is natural for families and children to be concerned about the return to school in September. For families whose child(ren) are not comfortable, for whatever reason, returning to school, I have this request: please register your child(ren) with Borden School and share your intention with me (via email or phone call). I have meetings this week and next week where the details for these arrangements are still being clarified and finalized. The big-picture information that I can share at this time is that all of the Borden School students are important to us, and we are working to ensure that our learners are supported to our full capacity, whether they are with us in-person or learning remotely from home. As final details and expectations are clarified, I will communicate with Borden families again.

Masks

As the situation is evolving and time advances toward school start-up, Prairie Spirit School Division has decided to move to the Level 2 of the Safe School Plan. As a result, masks will be required for students in Grades 4 through 12 where physical distancing is not possible (e.g., hallways and buses). Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3 students are encouraged to wear masks.

Prairie Spirit staff members will be expected to wear masks when social distancing is not possible.

Ministry Plan

On August 4th the Education Minister released the Safe School Plan. That document outlined 8 things that are important for a safe return to school: Safe Attendance, Safe Transportation, Safe Access, Safe Facilities, Safe Classrooms, Safe Supports, Safe Activities, and Safe Alternatives.

Borden School, like all schools in the Prairie Spirit School Division, is crafting plans and procedures in these 8 areas that will be effective and applicable within our Borden School context. This work has been ongoing in some capacity since March. I will share the Borden School plan when it is finalized and approved before September 1st.

PSSD Parent Survey

All families will be receiving a survey from the Prairie Spirit School Division (it might be distributed before this letter is sent to you). This survey is very important for our school division and decision making moving toward school start-up. Your thoughtful and honest feedback is greatly appreciated!

School Supplies & Lockers

Lockers will only be provided for Grade 9-12. I am planning to measure out distances and it is possible that lockers will be available to Grade 7-8 as well, but at this time the only group that we are sure will have locker access will be Grade 9-12. Students from K-6 (and possibly 7-8 as well) will store their personal belongings and supplies in their cohort classroom. Cohort classrooms will have areas designated for student

belongings and supplies to be stored. Also, students will remain in their cohort classroom for the duration of the school day (unless they are going to a common area like the gymnasium). Teachers will move between cohort classrooms while the students stay in their assigned learning space.

As far as transporting materials and resources back and forth between home and school, we are encouraging the "less is more" mentality. Our goal is to have the back and forth kept to a minimum of essential items and materials going back and forth between home and school. Your cooperation, understanding, and support in this area is greatly appreciated.

I also have one addition to the school supply list – students will need to have outdoor and indoor footwear. Footwear for the gym must be non-marking (avoid black soles if you aren't sure).

PAA and travel to other schools

Ministry guidelines in the Return to School Planning document state that:

"groups of students and staff members assigned to them should stay together throughout the day and not mix with other groups. Staff should remain with the same group whenever possible. Strive to minimize the number of different teachers and educational assistants that interact with groups of students throughout the day."

Therefore, we will NOT have students moving from one school to another to take programming, including PAA – **AT THIS TIME**. For Borden School students from Grade 7-12, this will mean programming changes and timetable adjustments. I am very grateful for our families' prompt responses as we built our plan through May/June, and I thank you for your patience and understanding as the plan is re-vamped. I have a series of meetings this week and will have a finalized plan to share with families by early next week.

Visitors and Extra Curr

Guests and non-essential personnel are being asked to stay outside the building for the first 6 weeks of the school year. This means that families dropping off or picking up their child(ren) will be asked to stay outside the school and at least 2 meters from any school entrance/exit. I am not happy to make this request, as it is as far from a warm, welcoming gesture as it is possible to be. I hope that our families understand that this request is based on the health and safety of the Borden School student body. I am very eager for the day to arrive when this request is dropped, and we can return to welcoming parents, families, and community members into our school again.

As far as Extra Curr is concerned, there are meetings scheduled for the week of August 24-28 to finalize plans. At this time, I would guess that competitive extra-curricular activities will be on pause. We will know more the week before school and communicate that to families at that time.

Next Steps

This letter has had plenty of general information. More specific and detailed information will come in the following days and weeks. Based on this, I think it is natural for families to think about the question, "What can I do?" As a teacher and principal at a small school heading into what is sure to be a unique year, there are a few pre-teaching topics that would be helpful if they were addressed before school start-up.

- 1) Masks – many staff and students will be wearing masks or shields. This could be unsettling and upsetting for students (especially younger students). Having conversations about what to expect and, if possible, practicing communicating at home with masks on would help to reduce the stress and discomfort that some students may experience.
- 2) Limiting Physical Contact – within our classroom cohorts there will be an awareness of physical distancing, but the focus will be on limiting physical contact as much as possible. Air hugs, air high-fives, elbow bumps, etc. will be common practice. Pre-teaching the ideas of classroom citizenship by helping students to think about giving lots of physical space to peers and adults would be a huge help.
- 3) New/Different Procedures – students in Grade 1-12 will experience changes to procedures, routines, and expectations. I will share more details on specific changes in future communications. In the meantime, front-loading our Borden students with an understanding that things will be different and that their calm cooperation and understanding will be critical. Students being flexible thinkers are great conversations to begin to have in the coming days and weeks.

I thank you for taking the time to read this letter. The whole staff at Borden School is dedicated to making the school the safest it can possibly be, and we are grateful for your support. There will be more letters and more information coming in the following weeks.

I have had several families reach out with questions over the last days and weeks. I have really enjoyed and appreciated the dialogue from these connections. If you have questions that have arisen from this letter, other things you have read or heard, or just have general questions about the school year, please reach out to me. I can be reached by email at brody.morris@spiritsd.ca or you can call or text my cell phone which is (306) 371-2888. Your gracious support and kindness are always appreciated!

Brody Morris – Borden School Principal