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October 8, 2020

Dear Prairie Spirit families:

Here we are at the start of a new month and about to celebrate Thanksgiving! We have completed the first month of school and we are so happy and thankful to be back together.

There are many new things to learn at the start of every school year. This is an extraordinary year and yet our students have demonstrated that they are up to the challenge. They have learned new routines in their classrooms, hallways and throughout their school and beyond. To ensure safety and well-being, they have engaged in the new practices our staff have created for them. They have demonstrated the characteristics of *Prairie Spirit Learners* in every environment they are in.



I am so proud of our staff for their commitment to student learning, safety and well-being. We all share a commitment to **Learning everywhere together!** We will continue to learn everywhere together, with care and creativity.

Return to school plan - update

When we started planning for the new school year, we created a [Return to School Plan](#) with a framework in six-week blocks. We have just completed our first six weeks of school. We have committed to re-evaluating our plan every six weeks and communicating our next steps.

At this time, the Chief Medical Health Officer and our local Medical Health Officer are directing us to continue to maintain the following layers of protection:

- mask-wearing requirements
- handwashing expectations
- social distancing practices
- limited physical contact
- cleaning guidelines
- student cohorts, to support contact tracing
- forward facing in classes
- not sharing objects
- following traffic patterns in the school to maximize social distancing
- scheduling staggered breaks to ensure social distancing

We appreciate how our families have collaborated with our schools to maintain these layers of protection. Families are ensuring that students stay at home if they have symptoms. This will become even more important as we move into cold and flu season. Because of your support, our students are able to continue to learn in their classrooms with their teachers and classmates. Thank you!

Any changes to our safety guidelines will be made in consultation with the local Medical Health Officer and under the guidance of the Chief Medical Health Officer, the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Response Planning Team.

As students or staff may be self-isolating after a positive test, we are asking that you speak with your child about empathy and understanding. Any one of us could test positive for COVID-19, despite the precautions we are taking at school and at home. When staff and students return to school after a period of self-isolation, we welcome them back in the same way that we would welcome anyone who has been away from school for a period of time. Our administrators, teachers and school counsellors will also be sharing a message of empathy and care with our students.

Extra-curricular activities

Prairie Spirit understands the value of extra-curricular activities in a balanced educational experience. **At this time**, Prairie Spirit is cautiously exploring a phasing-in process for extra-curricular activities that is safe for staff and students. We know these activities won't look like they did a year ago. However, our process will allow students to be active within a small cohort. Activities such as student clubs may be offered virtually or in person.

At this time, students and staff choosing to engage in in-person extra-curricular athletics should be aware that it is highly unlikely that fall activities would involve travelling to different schools within the school division. The Saskatchewan High School Athletics Association (SHSAA) has already determined provincial championships for fall sports will not be held this year.

Extra-curricular opportunities will be determined by the availability of teachers to serve as coaches and leaders. The primary responsibility of Prairie Spirit teachers is to ensure effective student learning within the school day. Prairie Spirit supports teachers in their professional decisions regarding extra-curricular participation.

Update to Division practices

Please note the following updates or changes **at this time**:

School item	Updates/Changes
Visitors to the school	Public Health personnel and Open Door Society personnel may visit the school when supporting a student, following all safety guidelines.
Field trips	Schools may plan field trips that include a charter bus, as long as the field trip is to an outdoor location. The field trip must maintain the cohort and include a plan in the event a student becomes ill.
Extra-curricular activities	School-based activities, including sports, are permitted with the following guidelines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain cohort • Maintain mask wearing • School staff as coach/leader • One athletic opportunity per student • Choir/Music is permitted, following Re-Open SK Plan (p.119)
Lockers	Schools may choose to have students use lockers, with social distancing measures in place.
School photos	Schools may plan for school photos, with an established safety protocol. Class photos will not be taken this year.
Driver Education	The Driver Education instructor may now conduct testing (eye test, written test) at the school.

If you have questions about how this pertains to your school, please contact your school's administration.

We appreciate your support, patience and collaboration during our transition back to school. We are thankful that we get to partner with our families and communities as we focus on learning in safe and caring places. Best wishes for a very happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lori Jeschke'. The signature is fluid and cursive, starting with a large 'L' and ending with a long horizontal stroke.

Lori Jeschke
Director of Education