



PRAIRIE SPIRIT
SCHOOL DIVISION

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August 31, 2021

Dear Prairie Spirit families:

I trust you and your children have been able to enjoy the beautiful weather we've had as August comes to an end. Although we savour summer in Saskatchewan, we also look forward with great anticipation and excitement to the start of a new school year.

As the situation with COVID-19 in our province continues to evolve and change, it is clear that this is going to be another unique school year for our students and staff in Prairie Spirit and in the province. The purpose of this letter is to provide an update to all Prairie Spirit families as we look forward to the first day of school.

Staff masking

Our local Medical Health Officer (MHO) recommends starting the school year with preparation and prevention in mind. In response to the current COVID-19 situation in the province, **all Prairie Spirit staff members will be required to wear a mask in schools and offices.**

This masking requirement for staff will:

- Provide additional protection for staff at the start of the new school year.
- Support in-person learning for students and help to avoid COVID-19 interruptions, as much as possible.

Our MHO says the control measures that were in place in schools last year – including masking – contributed to a relatively low level of in-school transmission.

Masking for students born in 2010 and later

I would like to thank those parents who have reached out to the Division to engage in respectful dialogue regarding masking for our youngest students, whether you are in favour of this safety measure or not. My message to parents is that school divisions are held to a high level of responsibility in caring for students while at school.

There are rules imposed in schools that are stricter than what parents might require in their own homes. For example, parents might take their children swimming without a lifeguard or go curling without a helmet. School divisions are required to make risk assessments with a high duty of responsibility to both students and staff. Requiring the wearing of a mask is not a violation of an individual's human rights. It is a safety measure similar to the requirement to wear safety equipment when playing certain school sports.

The spread of the Delta variant is of particular concern for our youngest students who are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. Our MHO has advised that the Delta variant is more transmissible and appears

to be causing more serious illness in younger people, along with a resurgence in cases. Our masking requirement for these students provides a layer of protection to prevent transmission and infection.

It has come to our attention that some individuals are encouraging students to defy the rules and come to school without a mask or plan to try to disrupt the school day with a protest. I trust we will keep student safety and well-being as our top priority and not risk having our students experience something uncomfortable or unsettling, especially on their first day of school. We want to ensure a smooth start to the school year for all students and staff. Schools have plans in place to avoid disruptions to the school day.

Thursday, September 30 – National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

The federal government recently passed legislation to make **Thursday, September 30**, a federal statutory holiday called the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day is designed to recognize and commemorate the legacy of residential schools through activities such as a day of quiet reflection or participation in a community event.

This federal holiday was not officially declared when our 2021/22 school year calendar was developed. However, it is our desire to provide all Prairie Spirit students and staff with the opportunity to fully participate in the day in meaningful ways.

To allow staff and students to mark this special day, a day in lieu provided to school staff for parent teacher interviews will be moved to September 30. **As a result, there will be no school for students on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Thursday, September 30.**

The Division's school year [calendar](#) has now been updated to reflect this change. Schools will update their school calendars and communicate with their school communities.

Provincial Students' Day

The first day of school – Provincial Students' Day – is an exciting day for everyone, students and school staff alike! The Minister of Education designates Provincial Students' Day each year to acknowledge the importance of all students and to alert drivers that students are back in school. This special day to recognize students was proposed by the Prairie Spirit Board of Education in 2009 and has been proclaimed throughout the province at the start of the school year ever since.

Let's continue to work together as partners to support all students as "learners for life."

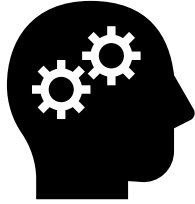
Sincerely,



Darryl Bazylak
Director of Education

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RETURN TO SCHOOL 2021/22



LEARNING EVERYWHERE TOGETHER

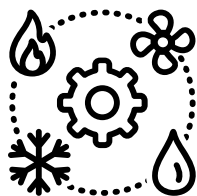
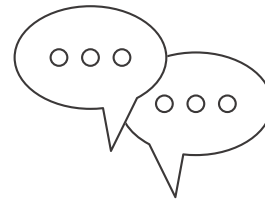
In Prairie Spirit, we are excited to return to school, with a continued focus on the safety and well-being of students and staff members.

The Division is planning for a safe and smooth return to school, following the Ministry of Education's guidelines and advice from the local Medical Health Officer.

COMMUNICATION

Prairie Spirit is committed to providing regular updates to families.

Prairie Spirit schools will also provide the information that parents and students need as they plan to return to school this year.



VENTILATION

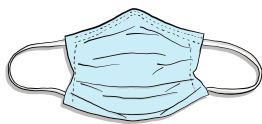
Prairie Spirit has consulted with industry experts to ensure our systems maximize outside fresh air into the buildings. In addition to opening windows whenever possible, the Division has focused on increasing fresh air through mechanical ductwork. The Division uses filters with the maximum filtration possible in each school.

Several schools in the Division are currently receiving significant mechanical upgrades as a result of provincial stimulus funding.

CLEANING + HAND HYGIENE

We will continue to follow the required cleaning and sanitization practices in all Prairie Spirit facilities.

All students, staff and visitors will be expected to follow established hand hygiene practices, with hand sanitizer available throughout schools and offices.



MASKING

At this time, masks will be required for elementary students born in 2010 and later.

Students on buses will be required to wear a mask.

All Prairie Spirit staff will wear masks in schools and offices.

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

If students or staff members have COVID-19 symptoms, they are expected to stay home. Although this has been emphasized during the pandemic, it has always been a strong practice and expectation.

Students and staff can return to school 24 hours after they are symptom-free, even if a COVID-19 test is negative prior to the 24 hours.



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Learners for Life