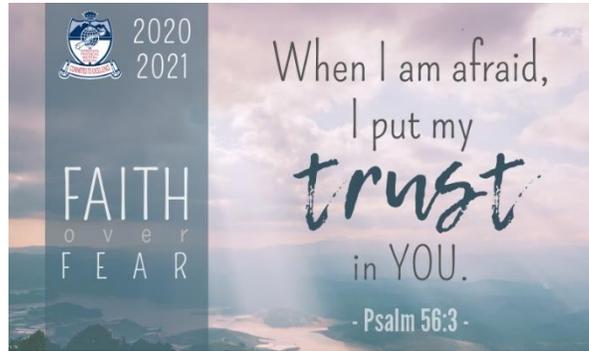


Communication to Parents and Guardians August 20, 2020



Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we get closer to the start of a new school year I am encouraged by our Student Association's theme for 2020-2021, *Faith Over Fear*. We have so many unknowns to face as we plan for the year! Psalm 56:3 is a reassuring reminder: "When I am afraid I put my trust in You, God." Together, by God's grace, we can move forward with confidence and hope.

You will have heard the media announcements from the Provincial Minister of Education directing that all elementary and high schools prepare for in-person learning this September. There is a recognition that K-12 schools support students in their learning and development, and in-class learning provides an important opportunity for peer engagement, which assists in social and emotional development as well as overall wellness for every child. Deer Lake School, as an independent school, must follow the directives of the province through the Minister of Education and the Public Health Authority. Under their guidance, we are preparing to re-open our school in the safest manner possible in September.

There are many things that will look quite different for this upcoming school year. Presently, our leadership team is preparing a detailed **Education Restart Plan** that must be submitted to the provincial government for approval through FISA (Federation of Independent School Associations). We expect to receive formal approval for that plan by the middle of next week from the Ministry of Education. In the meantime, however, we would like to share a summary of some of our anticipated plans for our September restart for your own peace of mind and understanding. Please remember that a more detailed plan will be provided to all parents and guardians before school actually begins, and that these plans may be adjusted based on updated directives from the government.

What are learning groups and how can schools manage physical distancing?

The province has outlined in the *COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings* an expectation that students and staff will remain within small cohorts or "learning groups" throughout the days and weeks ahead. This group is a collective of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term. Elementary and middle school grades are to be in groups not larger than 60, and high school students not more than 120. Members within the same learning group will have to minimize physical contact but won't be required to practice strict physical distancing.

Staying within learning groups will reduce the number of different interactions and potential exposures a student or staff member has in a day. In addition, it supports rapid contact tracing if there were ever to be

a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our school.

Here at DLS we are committed to making our learning groups even smaller than the recommended sizes. Our learning groups will be:

- K & Gr. 1
- Gr. 2 & 3
- Gr. 4 & 5
- Gr. 6 & 7
- Gr. 8 & 9
- Gr. 10-12

We believe keeping fewer students and staff inside a cohort will further minimize risk. These groups would remain together for recesses, breaks and activities outside of the classroom. Class schedules and recesses will also be strictly scheduled to avoid learning groups intercepting wherever possible. Teachers will incorporate as much outdoor learning as possible, especially in the first weeks of school while the weather is good.

Will students and staff be required to wear masks?

On Monday evening a new directive came out from the Ministry of Education indicating that masks will be required for all school staff, as well as middle and high school students when outside of their cohort or learning group in common areas such as hallways, etc. They will not be required to wear masks once they are within their learning group or cohort. K-7 students will not be required to wear masks, but they are of course welcome to be worn by students of all ages.

How will Deer Lake keep teachers within limited learning groups?

In an effort to keep teachers within their learning group we have hired some additional staff and also reassigned several teachers so that they are only teaching within their learning group as much as possible. In instances where a teacher, an administrator, or support staff needs to move outside of their group, they must wear a mask whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Will parents, guardians and visitors be allowed to enter the school?

Visitor access during school hours will be prioritized to those entering to support activities that benefit student learning and well-being. Unfortunately, parents will not be able to access the school during the school day under the new Restart Plan. We have plans to adjust some of our practices so that typical activities that would require parents to enter can be conducted virtually, whether that be speaking with a teacher, the completion of a form, or the payment of a fee.

When will Deer Lake School open in September?

The Ministry has indicated that public schools will reopen on Thursday, September 10, but there has been some flexibility in the actual start-up. Independent schools like DLS have the freedom to create a gradual return that allows for greater safety and wellbeing of students if they are prepared to do so. At DLS our intention is to bring various learning groups back to the school on Tuesday, September 8 and Wednesday, September 9 at scheduled times, so that we can orientate students to their new environment and familiarize them with procedures. We will share details of days and times for each grade as soon as we are able to release our approved restart plan.

What if I need childcare for my child because I will be required to be at work?

Our licensed childcare centre will be available for any essential service workers or families who need childcare during these two days.

How will the school manage morning drop-off and after school pick-up?

We are creating new procedures for morning drop-off and after school pick-up. To limit large groups of students arriving/passing through the hallways at the same time students will be streamed through various

entrance doors around the school building that are nearest their classrooms. We will have a full schedule of arrival doors by learning group beginning at 8:15 am.

Unfortunately, parents will not be able to come into the school with their students under the Ministry of Education restart protocols.

For after school pick-up we are exploring the use of an efficient school dismissal app that allows parents to simply drive into the school parking lot one behind the other and school staff will escort children from the lobby to your car using an assigned number system. We will share more details before school starts, but we feel this could be an extremely efficient and safe way to have students exit the building quickly without inconveniencing parents.

How will the school be ensuring the school is properly cleaned and sanitized every day?

We have committed to increased cleaning and disinfecting practices. Each evening the school will undergo a thorough deep cleaning using CDC-approved products. All high-touch areas such as desk surfaces, chairs, doorknobs, light switches, bathroom stall knobs and sink taps will be disinfected with an electrostatic spray machine with a 60 second COVID-19 germ kill rate. This latest state-of-the-art process will add an extra layer of disinfecting to help ensure cleanliness. The same electromagnetic spray disinfectant process will be used mid-day in each classroom when students leave for breaks. Times of cleaning will be recorded daily.

If the province was to direct a return to remote learning, would Deer Lake School be ready?

We believe our school has learned valuable lessons from our time providing remote learning this past spring. Because we have experience delivering a fully remote program as well as a hybrid, we feel fully prepared for a relatively seamless transition to whatever delivery of learning we may be asked to provide. To this end, we will be utilizing Google Classroom as a learning management system that will easily help us make any transition necessary.

Will we have access to hot lunches this fall?

You will be happy to know that we have submitted a plan to the Ministry to restart our hot lunch program in mid-September! If approved, we will be providing lunches daily, but with a slightly modified menu that would incorporate meals that can be served safely with less volunteers. Meals will be delivered to K-3 classrooms and older grades will have supervised, scheduled pick up times outside the school kitchen area. Orders for hot lunch will be collected using an online form.

How will we be able to make payments if parents and guardians cannot attend at the school?

All parents have completed their Pre-authorized Payment Form to allow monthly tuition to be paid without physically attending at the school. We will add the option of using this pre-authorization form for hot lunch charges also. Additionally, we will be adding PayPal to our website for other incidental costs that may occur throughout the year to help eliminate the need for coming into the school or sending cash/cheques with your student.

We truly hope this short overview will begin to provide understanding and reassurance about our restart plans for September. We promise at Deer Lake School to do everything in our power to ensure the safety and well being of every student and staff member. We encourage parents to email or call the school office with any suggestions, questions or concerns. We will be engaging a focus group of parents to review our plans before they are sent out. Once our full plan has been approved, we will be forwarding many more details about our return-to-school procedures. Please know that we are in this together.

Best regards,

Emily Brousson

Emily Brousson
Principal