



August 28, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Our recently-returned teachers have been hard at work this week preparing our building for the safe return of students. I am grateful for the energy, creativity and care that this team is putting into planning for the year. We would like to share an important update with you since our last communication of August 20 where we shared highlights of our draft Restart Plan for September.

Wednesday's announcement from Minister Fleming indicating that public schools are planning to provide optional forms of learning outside of a full in-class return was a complete departure from the information independent schools were given with respect to September restart plans. Any mention of independent schools was noticeably absent during his press briefing, except for a casual acknowledgment that independent school plans would be reviewed later next week. Our plans, like all other independent schools, were made under the very clear directive that we did *not*, in fact, have "flexibility" or "authority" to serve our community with the diverse learning delivery options Minister Fleming now indicates public school districts may choose to offer.

The Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA) has been advocating on our behalf since Wednesday's announcement so that independent schools can also choose to provide an option to families who are reluctant to return. The goal of the Ministry of Education is still to return as many students as possible to the building, but they are now indicating that we may consider temporary, transitional remote learning programs for students. This option would be a temporary fix for families who feel uneasy, not a long-term alternative to our on-campus program. (It would not resemble our Stage 3 fully remote delivery from last spring, nor would it equate to a traditional distributed learning program.) Students would be able to learn from home for a predetermined short period of time in a student-directed, parent-assisted program with support from a DLS teacher, and be able to connect with their peers and teachers periodically. Our goal would be to prioritize connection to the DLS family and allow families to remain part of our school community without losing their spot.

DLS will of course continue to fully support all students who, for medical reasons, are unable to return to the classroom as directed by their doctor or specialist.

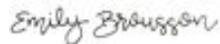
*excellence    service    family    belief*

Given the last-minute change in direction from the Ministry, we do not know what we feasibly can do with less than two weeks until school starts. We do know, however, that we are committed to providing a holistic learning environment where every student can learn and feel safe, and we want you as parents to feel at ease as you entrust your children's learning to us this school year.

Like Habit #1 of our Leader in Me curriculum states, we want to "be proactive" here at Deer Lake School despite not having a clear picture from the Ministry as to the limits of this transitional programming option. We want to survey our school community as quickly as possible to determine what all families are intending to do this fall. We ask that you complete [this important survey](#) before Tuesday morning at 9 am. This information will help us understand which families are committing to returning to in-class learning in September, and those who might consider a short-term transitional learning program, if offered. With this knowledge, we will work with individual families to develop options to continue their child's education.

We know that this time of uncertainty has been challenging. Thank you for your continuing patience and understanding.

Gratefully,



Emily Brousson