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August 7, 2020

Dear Prairie Spirit families:

Hello! I have never sent a message out to parents in early August before. Well, I have never done a lot of the things that we are finding ourselves doing right now!

It's obvious that back to school is very different for all of us this year. We have not had students and many staff in our schools for many months. I want you to know that I respect and appreciate the many concerns that you have regarding a return to school this September. We continue to be committed to communicating and connecting with you as we develop a plan for a safe and caring return to school.

Earlier this week, the Minister of Education presented the provincial government's plan for a return to in-class instruction this fall. As part of the provincial government's announcement, the province's 27 school divisions also shared their plans. You can view the Prairie Spirit *Return to School* plan at the following [link](#).

In addition to the Division's comprehensive plan that has been approved by the Ministry, I would like to share with you that our Facilities, Transportation, Human Resources, and Learning Teams have been working on their own plans within the larger Division and provincial plans. Our schools will also be developing plans to share with you. One example of an area that I would like to highlight to our families is masks and face shields:

- Prairie Spirit staff are encouraged to wear a face mask at work.
- The Division will be providing for masks and face shields for staff who choose to use them.
- Students are encouraged to bring a mask from home to wear at school. If a student forgets their mask at home, a disposable mask will be made available, upon request.
- Students on Prairie Spirit buses will be encouraged to wear a mask. If a student forgets their mask at home, a disposable mask will be made available, upon request.

Learning

We are looking forward to working with our students and families in September. Prairie Spirit School Division is fully committed to supporting families with access to learning in the fall. We will continue to provide every opportunity for all students to be successful as we plan for a safe and smooth transition back to school.

We understand that many parents may have concerns or questions about the return to school. We recommend that you remain registered at your local school, even if you are considering keeping your

child at home at the start of the school year. Some distance courses will be available to students, with a focus on blended learning at our schools. Families do not need to register outside the Division to receive these services. We look forward to continuing to support our students through the local school. For more information, please contact your local school. School administrators will be available in their schools on August 24.

Each of our schools will be developing and sharing a school-specific safety plan with their learning communities. These plans will be available to parents later this month. These plans will include details like:

- Hygiene practices
- School day schedule
- Plans for limiting student movement through the school
- Drop off and pick up plans

Planning for the 2020/21 school year: Parent survey

As the school division continues to plan for the start of the new school year, it is important that we hear from our families regarding their plans for their children. We are planning to survey parents regarding their intentions for their children in the next few days.

As we plan for the return to school, the safety of our students and staff continues to be our primary concern. We will continue to closely follow the guidelines provided by the provincial government and the Chief Medical Health Officer. We will be providing more information for Prairie Spirit families throughout August.

This is a difficult time and there are no simple answers. I want you to know that you are not alone. Let's walk through this in a way that makes us proud – proud of ourselves and proud of one another. We will do it together!

Sincerely,



Sam Dyck, Chairperson
Prairie Spirit Board of Education



Lori Jeschke, Director of Education
Prairie Spirit School Division