

Hello parents, students, staff and community,

Today the premier and the Minister of Education took to the stage to bring clarity on the path forward for our students. We now have direction for the rest of this school year and the details to look ahead to the fall in September. Today's message is just to reiterate the key messages from today and to tell you how Surrey is responding in our preparations. Here is what I heard:

- Schools are open for children on June 1st.
- Beginning that day, parents will get to choose if they wish to send their child or if they wish to continue with their online/remote program that their teachers have designed for them.
- There are many new requirements of schools and districts around health and safety.
- In general, for students in Kindergarten to grade 5, the option is to attend the equivalent of 2 to 3 days a week.
- For students in grades 6-12, the option is to attend for the equivalent of 1 day per week.

For us to comply with the new health and safety guidelines, parents who choose to have their child attend school in June can expect:

- Much smaller class sizes.
- Limited movement between classes.
- Much more stringent cleaning and personal hygiene protocols like washing hands; and
- New classroom routines such as revised seating and limited sharing of supplies as we keep our distance and stay safe.

These are but a few of the many things that are new and there are many more. For our district it means that we need to begin to prepare for the next phase of the pandemic. We know that there are many questions and concerns. When people think of moving ahead, we continue hear things like:

- A struggle to grasp the practicality of social distancing in a school particularly for our very young students;
- People wondering, even with limited numbers, how will we manage all the students and their movement during a day;
- How will schools manage to clean and maintain the cleanliness of our schools to these new standards;
- Teachers are wondering how they can be expected to teach both online and face to face at the same time;
- Those with compromised immunity or caring for the elderly at home are worried about their health and health of their children and family;
- We hear many parents say that they will not send their children back to school in June because it's actually working pretty well; and
- We also hear people looking for some sort of normalcy and a chance to return is welcomed.

Education in the context of a pandemic is indeed a complicated thing. Today, we are dealing with a bunch of new information and details and now, the task is for us to figure it all out. Of course, we already have been planning and we will continue to plan and work with our partners on the fine details. Last week, we said that our plan will begin with our people and we'll do just that. In fact, you may

already know that we are currently running 4 schools across the district specifically for the children of Essential Services Workers and so we have had a good chance to see what this looks like in practice. We have already had kids in schools throughout the pandemic, screening for health every day, washing hands, and adhering to strict cleaning protocols all while having fun, playing games, and learning a lot guided by district staff, support staff and teachers.

As we take these small sites to scale, our first work is to pay close attention to the health and safety protocols, to gather our administrative teams next week and to create concrete options. We will refine those options with our partners and then communicate out to our community so that parents know exactly what schools will be offering on June 1st. That's our work. We're on it and you'll be hearing from us by May 22nd with details and more to follow. In the meantime, please keep your child exactly where they are, learning on their current program supported by their teacher at home.

Most importantly from today's announcement are two key things. First - On June 1st, our schools will be open and your children will have the opportunity to receive additional support for their education by once again being at school. Second – this is your choice to come or not to come. There is no penalty and no pressure.

Our schools have done exceptional work by designing and implementing online and remote learning for all children. We thank all our support staff, teachers and administrators for their dedication and support to helping make this work and to help deal with the pandemic.

Job #1 is to stop the spread of COVID-19 so that we can all return to a new normal. We're doing that one day at a time and we're being successful. After the long weekend, as a demonstration of our successes against the virus, you'll see many restrictions lifted. The suspension of in-class instruction has been a big part of our province's health plan and its success. Now we get to design the next phase for our schools. We have new rules, new information, and new timelines. Our district is full of amazing people, and now we'll put this new puzzle together one piece at a time, slow and steady so that on June 1st, you can make the decision that's best for you and your family.