
Memorandum

To: Teachers, Support Staff, Parents and Caregivers
From: Kyle McIntyre, Director of Education
Date: June 5, 2020
Re: Reopening Chinook



Good afternoon Chinook staff and families,

With our Supplemental Learning at Home wrapping up from June 16th to 19th, many are setting their sights on summer. Staff and administration have started turning our attention to planning for the safe reopening of schools in the fall.

Thank you all for your feedback on our recent surveys. Your voice and input is greatly appreciated. As we begin to prepare for our fall learning scenarios, I want to bring you some updates from our Reopen Chinook Focus Group and from my experience working with the Response Planning Team (RPT) for the province.

Background: Reopen Chinook Focus Group

- The Reopening Chinook Focus Group has had four meetings via Google Meet.
- This committee is a cross-section of 15 employees from various positions and locations in Chinook, with the purpose of developing the basis for a plan to reopen Chinook schools.
- We have a diverse group with excellent interest and eagerness. We have reviewed research from other countries and jurisdictions, and we have reviewed research and data from the provincial education Response Planning Team (RPT).
- Additionally we have accessed survey information gathered from our Chinook parent, teacher and support staff surveys.
- Our focus group will use recommendations from the RPT and our survey responses to create a Chinook plan that ensures the health and safety of our students and staff as we return to school in the fall.

Survey Findings

- The surveys acknowledged and affirmed the extraordinary efforts of teachers, support staff and families to deliver learning opportunities in a very difficult circumstance.
- Although there have been several staff and family successes, the surveys identified many of the challenges working from and learning from home and the balance between each.
- Both students and staff members recognize and miss the many physical and psychological benefits of being at school - relationships matter.
- The majority of staff and families would be comfortable returning to school in the fall with reasonable protective and hygienic measures in place.
- If learning from home is a potential fall scenario, there are equity, access and scheduling logistics that must be addressed.

Protective Provisions

- Like the majority of our parents and staff, our Reopen Chinook Focus Group hopes we can return safely with protective provisions and heightened hygienic measures while maintaining reasonable physical distancing practices in the fall.
- We are presently researching a number of different personal protective provisions, practices and equipment for students and staff to ensure a safe transition back to school.
- We are not sure whether this will be the provincial direction or not, but it seems like with a low number of incidents we have in the southwest, we hope we will be given the authority to proceed to prepare for a reopening of schools in the fall.
- Whatever we do, we will have to be in line with Health and direction from the Chief Medical Health Officer and we will work to ensure the health and safety of students and staff.
- Throughout all future communications and once school begins in the fall, to help insure the health and safety of students and staff, we will be insisting that students and staff who are sick with cold or flu-like symptoms remain at home. If you need to speak with your employer or if you need to proactively arrange for childcare, please begin to do so.
- As the reopening of schools will be dependent on healthy communities and low infection rates, we will be asking our school office managers to record specifically why children are absent from school.

Next Steps

- Chinook is committed to continually doing all it can do in its Reopening Plan to ensure the health and safety of students and staff.
- Chinook School Division continues to take direction from the RPT and from the Province's Chief Medical Health Officer.
- Chinook has developed a draft Reopening of Schools Plan. This plan is being reviewed and revised by the Reopen Chinook Focus Group. Our final division plan must be submitted to the Ministry for approval prior to June 30th and must align with the recommendations from the RPT.
- The province (RPT) and Chinook are presently working at two potential fall learning scenarios: returning to school while implementing protective provisions; and learning from home with enhanced learning expectations and equitable access to the provincial curriculum for all students.
- During the next few weeks, our school division and our schools will be working on transition planning to ensure a smooth and safe transition for students and staff to return to school.
- We will not likely know the definitive learning option until early August. We believe our reopening options will be determined based on the available health data and the rate of infections in our communities.

This pandemic is fluid and, as such, plans and circumstances may continually change. Thank you all for your understanding, patience and flexibility.

Should you have any specific questions, please feel free to reach out to your school principal, your school superintendent or to me.