

August 17, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As September approaches, I would like to begin with another opportunity to say thank you. Thank you for your partnership, your support, and your willingness to make the best of the circumstances we have found ourselves in these last few months. Thank you for pulling together alongside your children, our teachers, and schools to implement distance learning opportunities in homes across our division. On behalf of our superintendent's team, I will say we continue to have an incredible amount of pride for our division staff, our students, and you—our parents and guardians—for all the work that you've done despite the challenges of the past few months.

We now look forward to the opportunity to welcome our students back and resume learning, while prioritizing a safe school environment and the health and well-being of students and staff. We acknowledge that for many parents, students, and staff, there are feelings of trepidation, anxiety and many questions unanswered. Manitobans will be living with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future. As a school community, we must adapt and learn to live and study safely amidst the pandemic. As noted by Manitoba Education and the Chief Provincial Health Officer, it is in the best interest of children to be in school. Therefore we must mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on students and families to ensure that learning and assessment continue for all.

Working in partnership, we pledge to do all that we can to implement public health measures to significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering and being transmitted in our schools and on our buses. Despite our best efforts, we must acknowledge that we will never be able to reduce the risk to zero.

Resuming In-Class Learning: Hanover School Division is endeavouring to provide a complete and comprehensive plan that ensures the safety and well-being of students in September. The [HSD Divisional Plan for Resuming In-Class Learning](#) will evolve as we continue to learn how to navigate school safely and as we receive new guidance and directives from Manitoba Education and the Chief Provincial Health Officer. The plan reflects the importance of safety, health and well-being while ensuring reasonable measures are in place to minimize the risk of transmission and exposure to the virus in schools. Our guiding principles are as follows:

- Safety, health and well-being for all students, staff and families is a priority.
- High-quality learning and assessment continues for all students.
- Accessible, trauma-informed resources and supports are available for students, parents and caregivers, and staff.
- Consistent, reliable and appropriate connection to school learning and belonging, for every student, regardless of location, barriers, special needs or challenges.
- System-wide communication and collaboration.

Components of the full plan address each of the following four sections:

Section 1: School Day Structure/Learning Plans

Section 2: Mental Health and Well-Being of the School Community

Section 3: Communication

Section 4: Public Health Orders and Guidance

You are encouraged to read the [full detail of the plan](#). Some key highlights are provided here.

School Attendance and Participation: School attendance is mandatory for children aged 7 to 18 in Manitoba. All students are expected to participate fully in learning, even if remote learning becomes a future requirement. Remote learning is no longer an option for students during Manitoba Education's Level 1: In-Class Learning.

Divisional remote learning will be in place for students who have been [medically advised](#) not to return to in-class learning due to COVID related risk factors. Please contact your child's school principal if this pertains to your child. Please notify your child's school if your child will not be attending school for any reason. School offices will officially reopen on August 26. In Manitoba, you must be registered in public school, independent school or with the Independent Education Unit, Homeschooling Office through Manitoba Education.

School staff and classroom teachers will support the development and provision of at-home learning packages for students who are required by public health to self-isolate or quarantine. In these cases, parents may be required to pick up work packages from the school.

Decisions regarding appropriate responses in the event of a positive case of COVID-19 will be made on a case by case basis with Public Health leading the response and providing guidance. Public Health will advise staff and students/families if they have been in close contact and if they need to self-isolate or self-monitor, including when they can return to school.

Self-Screening: Students and staff must be in good health to attend school and work. Students (with assistance from parents/guardians where required) and staff are required to self-screen using the [Manitoba COVID-19 Screening Tool](#).

If a student or staff shows any cold or flu-like symptoms (cough, fever, sore throat, runny nose, muscle ache, headache, nausea, fatigue) they should remain at home.

If a person in the household has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or is in close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19, they are required to consult with Health Links prior to attending school and follow their directions. Currently, the state of emergency allows travel west of Manitoba and east to Terrace Bay, Ontario without any self-isolation or quarantine. If anyone in the household has travelled beyond those regions, they are required to consult with Health Links prior to attending school and follow their directions.

Masks: On August 13, 2020, Dr. Brent Roussin and Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen provided an update regarding Manitoba's back-to-school plan. Non-medical masks are now strongly recommended in situations where any person cannot maintain a two-metre distance for extended periods of time and is in close proximity to a person outside of their regular contacts, such as in school hallways and in some classroom settings.

All students in Grades 5 through 12, as well as teachers, staff, visitors and volunteers, are strongly recommended to wear non-medical masks in areas where two-metre physical distancing is not possible. Students in Grades K-4 can elect to wear non-medical masks according to personal preference.

Bus drivers and all school bus passengers in Grades 5 through 12 are required to wear a non-medical mask on the bus. Masks should be put on before getting onto the school bus and taken off after disembarking, if appropriate for the environment.

Students and staff can elect to provide their own non-medical mask according to preference and comfort. A stock of non-medical masks will be provided on school busses and in schools for students or staff who require one.

2020-2021 School Calendar: Manitoba Education has announced that schools will open for teaching staff on September 2, and students will return after the long weekend. For the Hanover School Division, that means a start date of September 9, for most students. As a result of continued restrictions regarding visitor access and events in public spaces, we are unable to host an open house/meet your teacher event in the usual format. Individual schools will communicate with families regarding their welcome back plans. The [Hanover School Division 2020-21 calendar](#) is published on our website.

School Specific Information: School Offices are scheduled to open on August 26. Additional communication regarding school-specific details and plans will be provided to you by your child's school on August 28.

Bus Transportation: Wherever possible, alternative transportation to school is encouraged. Parents/caregivers/students may provide their own transportation to avoid possible virus exposure on the bus. Where school bus transportation is required, we will follow the [Guidelines for Transportation to Schools](#).

To assist us in our planning and scheduling, bus eligible families will receive an additional email requesting confirmation of their need for transportation. Please ensure you respond to the link in that email by August 21. Once we have received the information, bus routes including pick-up/drop-off times will be finalized, and parents will be notified prior to September 9.



Communication: Hanover School Division will continue to work closely with Manitoba Education, Public Health, parents/guardians, caregivers, staff, and students as plans evolve for the coming year. Updates will be communicated via email/website/social media as new information becomes available. We understand that parents/guardians and caregivers are increasingly focused on the safety and well-being of their children while in other settings. As questions arise about your child and how the school implements public health guidance, school division staff will strive to provide clear, accurate, and transparent communication.

We encourage the use of <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html> as the official source for the most up-to-date and accurate information regarding Covid-19 in Manitoba.

Thank you again for your continued partnership and your patience as we welcome our students back and engage in the resumption of learning and prioritization of safe school environments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Shelley Amos'.

Shelley Amos, Interim Superintendent/CEO
Hanover School Division