



Principals Update: September 13, 2020

Hello SJA students and Families:

We had an amazing first week of school! Our staff has gone beyond this week to ensure a successful start. Our students were respectful and awesome at learning new routines and expectations. Thank you to our families; you have been our greatest partners. We truly are in this together and we appreciate your support as we continue to make changes to get it right for our students!

I hope our students had a positive start to the 2020-21 school year. It *always* takes some time to settle into September routines following the summer months. After six months apart, it may take a little longer this year, but we will get there. I recognize that some of families may have not had the experience with transportation that you (or we) expect. Please know that the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) is actively working with our transportation providers to address these concerns in both the short and long-term.

Within the school and routines during instructional time are exceeding our expectations for effectiveness and compliance. Again, students have been respectful and kind in following public health and school guidelines for safety for all.

Arrival seems to be going well. A few reminders for arrival –

- Students are to go to their classroom when they arrive on school property. Teachers will be in their classes at 9:05 – please do not arrive to school any earlier for there is no supervision available.
- When dropping students off or students arriving by their own car – please aim for 9:15am. First bell is at 9:20 and first class starts at 9:25am

Areas we continue to work on are lunch and dismissal. There also seems to be some confusion about wearing masks outside.

Please see message below for clarification from Cathy Montreuil - Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development.

RE: Back to School Plan and Public Health Guidance

We are seeing lots of questions on social media and through correspondence channels related to mask use.

To ensure all schools and staff are applying public health measures consistently, please share the following information with your staff and families, as needed.

Mask use at school, including outdoors

Students in grades 4 to 12 and all school staff are required to wear masks in the school, when they are unable to physically distance by 2 metres. This includes hallways and common areas. In the classroom, this means that students will wear a mask if they are unable to be seated 2 metres apart and facing in the same direction.

Masks are not required for students when outdoors doing physical activity or during outdoor learning time. ***However***, when outdoors without a mask, ***physical distancing of 2 metres, should be maintained***.

All students who ride a school bus are required to wear a mask when on the school bus, regardless of age or grade level.

We understand that families may have questions about why mask use and distancing are different when a student is in the school versus on the school grounds. We take our lead and direction from public health and medical experts. We have been advised that the evidence suggest it is less likely for COVID-19 to be transmitted outside; therefore, the use of masks is currently not required outside. ***However, it is still expected that individuals continue to maintain their physical distance of 2 metres/6 feet as per the Health Protection Act Order***. Schools and families are encouraged to speak to students and their children about safe public health measures that reduce the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. Evidence is evolving and guidance may change regarding mask use.

For more information on mask use, go to <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/>

Refusal to wear a mask

All schools must follow the guidelines in the Back to School Plan. We understand that some students, for medical reasons, are unable to wear a mask. All others are required to wear a mask as per the guidelines. Refusal to do so will be managed through the Code of Conduct policy. This means, students (and the parent/guardian, if required) will be contacted and instructed about the importance of mask wearing. If the issue continues, students may be sent home.

Face Shields and Masks

Face shields are not a replacement for masks. Masks must be worn at all times by teachers unless they can provide 2 metres of physical separation.

Changing Times

It is equally important that while abiding by the public health measures in place, our schools, principals, and teachers take a common sense approach to the needs of their students. As students adjust to mask wearing throughout their day, it's important we are flexible. For example, if students need a drink of water, they can temporarily lower their mask, take a drink, and put it back up. If students require a mask break, teachers are encouraged to be understanding and provide opportunities for students to remove masks temporarily as long as appropriate physical distancing can be maintained. Taking students outside is a great way to take a mask break.

Conclusion

We must all recognize that this school year is different than any other. The best place for children is in the school, and together we are providing the opportunity for children to benefit from a rich learning environment.

Thank you

Cathy Montreuil - Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development.

Lunch Hour

Supporting young adults to be social and safe during lunch hour is a challenge, especially when they are in community restaurants and public areas away from school. It is easy to find pictures on social media of

young people gathering in crowds and not wearing masks when they are not in school. As mentioned, our students are doing a great job of adjusting to the new practices when in school. Please know our teachers, administrators and support staff continue to reinforce expectations daily.

How you can help

- Practice physical distancing when outside
- Avoid large gatherings
- Wear a non-medical mask when you can't physically distance

These three things keep our school community safe. These three things reduce risk for us all. I am asking your help to reinforce your expectation with your students, especially when they are ***off school property at lunchtime or during a free period***. Your help is important and it will make a positive impact. Taking a few minutes to remind our students that they have an important role to play in keeping our communities and schools safe will go a long way. ***“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”***.

Dismissal/Student pick up

SJA DISMISSAL PLAN – Effective 10 September 2020

For Students:

Our students have been outstanding at following our new Covid protection protocols over the week. For that, we thank you. As we move through the year, we will need to make changes to things that are not working. We have identified our dismissal process as being a challenge in ensuring provincial health protocols are being followed by all students. Many of our students were congregating in large groups and removing their masks as soon as they leave the building. This is unsafe. In an attempt to fix this, we have a plan moving forward:

- When classes end at 3:25pm, any student who identifies as a walker, has a car, or is being picked up may leave the class and head home immediately. Please keep your mask on until you leave school property.
- Our bus students will be released from class when their bus arrives. They should not leave the classroom until they hear their bus number called on the PA. **Once the bus number is called, we are asking that they keep their mask on, exit the building and immediately get on their bus. Please do not remove your mask when you leave the building to go to your bus.**
- We expect that most of our bus students will be out of your class within 10-15 minutes of the end of the day. Once the routine is established, I feel we will be faster as we go. This will be a good thing when the weather is too hot or inclement. **Note:** once social distance can be achieved in the class – students are free to remove their mask until their bus is called. Once leaving the classroom students will need to put their mask back on.
- At 3:45pm, any student who still in class because their bus has yet to be called because it is late may head out to the bus loop to wait.
- Students will be informed when their bus is ready to load by an announcement on the PA or by your classroom teacher.
- This procedure will also help with the traffic at the end of the day for pick up and students with cars leaving the parking lot.

Families picking up students, please read message below from Margaret Forbrigger Administrative Assistant - St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church

“St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church, Holy Apostles Parish, recognizes that many more parents wish to pick up their students this year due to Covid-19. They are more than welcome to pull into our parking lot and wait. We respectfully ask that no one stop in any part of our driveway/fire lane. This is a huge hazard. This past week, cars parked along the driveway (even though we posted signs and put out traffic cones). This caused our driveway to be less than one car width wide. This meant that cars had to go ‘out’ the ‘in’ with blocked view and a very good potential for a head on collision with cars trying to get in. Cars in both directions at times had to drive on the gravel where the students were walking. We wish for everyone to be safe on our property and for all to have safe access. We thank everyone in advance for their consideration of this safety matter”.

Families picking up students, please consider the above in waiting for students in the parking lot. This is the safest and easiest way for traffic flow and safety for our students. Thank you St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Church for this option.

A message from our student council.

We will be having a spirit week this coming week! The days will be as follows:

- Sept 14th: Comfy day (wear your most comfortable clothes and mask)
- Sept 15th: Crayon day (dress all in one colour)
- Sept 16th: Wacky mask day (wear your funkiest mask, or decorate a plain one)
- Sept 17th: National deaf awareness day (wear grey and purple to support those with hearing difficulties)
- Sept 18th: Flames Friday (wear your John A gear)

Lastly, student council will be hosting open meeting on Wednesday's in room 1106 for those interested in getting involved with council. These meeting will last the remainder of September, and everyone who expresses not only interest but also commitment will be asked to sign commitment contracts. Our council does not yet have official roles, and anyone can be involved.

I look forward to being your student council communicant, best wishes moving forward this week!

Grace Alberts - Student Council Representative

Thank you, students, staff and families for your patience and understanding as we continue to improve and make changes were needed to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

We are off to a better then expected opening and this is due to working together, being kind and supporting each other. The best part is seeing our students back at school.

Be safe and be well,

M.s. D. Fitzgerald

Principal