

Hello Eagle Mountain Community,

Although it feels like I have sent a number of emails home already in 2021 (gym roof, FSA, grade 9 information etc...) I am not sure I have wished everyone a happy new year.

Happy New Year!

I know my calendar says we have only been back in school for 8 days, but it sure feels like longer. I think we all came back refreshed from the holiday break but quickly realized the hope and optimism a new year brings (and news of vaccines!) was a little squashed by the reality that safety protocols need to stay in place for a while more, and some of the things that make EM such a vibrant and fun community are still on hold. I know middle school is more than just the work in the classroom – it is joining clubs and trying out sports and fine arts opportunities, it is team activities and celebrations as well as meeting and mingling with new people (let's not forget that a locker is a big deal for an adolescent!). The bottom line though, as much as our teachers are trying to make things 'normal', things just aren't. As much as I enjoy saying good morning to students every day at the door...I would much rather do it without spraying their hands with hand sanitizer!

All that said, I am very excited about a few initiatives we are undertaking at the school. As we speak, our EM Ambassadors are in the process of designing our very own EM Pink Shirt for Pink Shirt day in late February. We will be selling these soon and hope to fill the school with pink. The message behind Pink Shirt Day is about acceptance and community and February and March will see us focus in on these ideas in several ways. Being nice to each other shouldn't only be for one day...but having a focus lets us talk about the community we want to belong to in many ways.

Our outdoor classroom initiative is also taking shape. We will be sharing more in the coming weeks, but our classes (and outdoor club) have been doing amazing work clearing the areas that will soon be used daily by our students. A fabulous initiative that will connect our kids to nature, in a non-virtual way!

It would not be a 2020-2021 school message if I didn't remind you to do the daily health checks with your children. Staying home when ill is the best way we can minimize exposures at the school. Today though I want to encourage you to do daily 'mental-wellness check-in with your children' (and yourself).

A mental wellness check-in for me is not just asking your child how they are doing emotionally and acknowledging the challenges and uncomfortable feelings they might have, it is also helping them see the positives and brainstorming the strategies that they can use to shift challenging experiences into something more positive. A great strategy I find is to actually start by asking your children 'what happened that was good today' and focus on the positive first. There is certainly enough negative in the world, a gratitude exercise can do wonders for confidence, optimism and happiness which all make the negatives and challenges a little more bearable.

Darren

**Upcoming Events:**

Tuesday, Jan 19: PAC Zoom Meeting 7pm (Zoom details will be sent in a separate email)

Monday, Feb 1: Pro-D Day. No school.

**Updates:**

**Gym roof:** Engineers have been on site and we are awaiting a plan to fix the ceiling tiles. We will not be using the gym / m.p.r. until it is safe. I will provide info as I receive it. We are all hoping for sunny weather while we wait.

**School supplies:** Please check to make sure your children have their proper supplies for school. This is usually the time paper and pencil supplies dwindle. The office supplies extra's in an emergency but is not equipped to provide supplies to the entire school!

**Math Contest:** Mr. Kwok has registered our school for a Math contest at the end of February. This is a voluntary 'club' type of activity. If students are interested in challenging themselves in math, ask them to contact Mr. Kwok for more info!

**FSA / MDI:** The Ministry of Education has recently shifted the schedule for the grade 7 FSA tests. We will be providing grade 7 parents with a schedule in the coming weeks, but we plan to start the paper parts at the start of February, with the computer components taking place in mid-February (when they are available to us). The grade 8 MDI will be completed at a similar time (start of February).