



Learning for a Lifetime

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January 1, 2022

Dear SD43 Families,

Earlier this week I shared information about additional health and safety measures and the **delayed return to school for students until Monday, January 10**. Since that time, additional information has become available, and I would like to share an update with you.

On Tuesday, January 4 principals and school staff will be returning to work. Their primary goal will be to review updated health and safety protocols and plan for school start-up on Monday, January 10. While schools will be open for a limited number of students from January 4-7 for supervision, there will be no formal instruction available. Primarily in attendance will be some children with diverse abilities and students whose parents or guardians are essential health care workers. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has asked districts to try to accommodate some children of other essential workers, including teachers and school staff, as capacity and staffing levels allow. If this broadened definition of an essential worker applies to your family and you have been unable to arrange alternate care and require assistance, please contact your school principal.

For those families who regularly access childcare facilities on school district property, please connect directly with your provider. Please also note that [StrongStart](#) will not be available the week of January 4-7, though registration will be open Wednesday for sessions the following week.

We have seen the impact on society over the holidays of the more transmissible COVID-19 Omicron variant with an increase in cases and the subsequent repercussions on businesses and services due to staffing shortages. We expect there will be staffing challenges within the school district as well, including potential increases in absences due to COVID-19 infections. As schools reflect what is happening in the community, there is a possibility that at some point we will experience a 'functional closure' – a situation where there is insufficient staff to provide instruction and appropriate supervision at a particular school or schools resulting in a temporary, and hopefully short-term, closure. The implications of possible functional closures and action plans for continuation of learning are being considered now.

Evaluating the impacts on staffing, preparing for the possibility of a functional closure, and implementing strategies for additional safety measures will take time next week and I thank you in advance for your patience. I acknowledge there will be many more questions in the days to come. You can expect further communication later next week, in advance of the full return to school on Monday, January 10.

I recognize that, once again, this may mean inconvenience and sacrifice for your family, but I thank you in advance for your understanding and continued support.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent/CEO