

March 24 - message to families (video transcription)

One more video message and then there will be fewer of them as we start to transition communication back to schools. I wanted to speak for a little bit about the fact that we were all engaged in a massive project of problem solving. You and the staff in all of our schools have been working hard to find a way to solve the problem of keeping your children connected to their learning. We aim to do this in a way that provides you with enough support so you can help your children, while not overloading you because there you have a lot going on, just as the rest of the community does. Part of that problem solving is certainly communicating with your child's teacher and letting them know how things are going, what is working for you and where you need support. Teachers will certainly have every opportunity to share those things that come back from family with their school administration and then in turn with us. We will be constantly working to try and find new ways to support your child's learning and to support you in the work you are doing with them. Please communicate regularly with your child's teacher as that feedback will make its way into changing the system. Like I said, this is a gigantic project and so we really appreciate your role as critically important.

I want to talk a little bit about fees and I will address them separately:

- 1) **Fees paid for extra curricular:** Staff are trying to figure out how much of a fee to be reimbursed. If a fee has been paid for a season that hasn't been played or an activity that hasn't been done, of course you will get a full refund. If part of the season has been played or done, or an event has been partly completed, you will get a prorated refund from your child's school.
- 2) **Programs:** In terms of options fees in courses like constructions or art or any course where you paid a fee for materials that you consumed. Staff will work out how much the refund will be based on how much of the material cost has been used. For example: if your child is in a senior level shop class and started with a large project it may be that 50% or 60% of that fee has been spent, but staff will calculate with your son or daughter's teacher what percentage of those resources have been used and prepare to send refunds home to families.

We are waiting to hear from the minister whether or not the school year will resume, and certainly we are many weeks away from knowing whether or not it will resume. We are sitting on those calculations until we hear from the minister and once we know, the refunds will be sent home. If we hear from the minister that school may resume then we will revise calculations. So bare with us while we think, calculate and wait on the minister's direction.

I want to reiterate that there can be **no students in schools**, unless they are coming with a parent to pick up resources at school. There will be no instruction at school, we are not helping students with projects at school, the minister has been really clear about that. Students may go to their school, with their parent, while respecting social distancing and other directions of the medical officer of health in order to pick up resources. Our doors are locked and there are very

few staff in our buildings, if you need to go to the school please coordinate that through your school administration and make an appointment to pick up resources you need.

**School calendar** - there are a couple of items on the calendar that we want you to be aware of for the remainder of the year.

1. **Professional development days** will remain in the calendar. Most of our teachers have never been online teachers and they're learning as they go and I'm grateful for your patience and I know they are too. As we learn, the PD days will give teachers a chance to regroup and talk about the things we've learned and find ways to shift programming.
2. **April break (April 10-19)** will continue as planned. From Good Friday through to the end of that break, please take some time with your family and ease back from the books a bit and staff will take a breath during that time as well.

We are in a really interesting space in our community as we are the second largest employer in the city and a lot of people come to our buildings everyday. We have strongly encouraged that every staff member who is able to, should work from home. We are trying to do our part to support social distancing to limit human contact and help do our part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We strongly encourage you to support us and do the same yourself.

We appreciate the fact that you have been calm and patient with the people who serve your kids. This tells us that you realize that while our staff are there to serve your kids, they are also a part of your community and struggling through some of the same challenges as you are. From maintenance and facilities through accounting to teachers, educational assistants, and early childhood educators, we are all working hard to try and find a way to continue to serve while trying to figure out what it means to be inside a pandemic. Your calm, patience and kindness has been a real blessing to us as a system and to the people who work for your community. On behalf of the Medicine Hat Public School Division, we thank you for that.