



Park Meadows School

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August 6, 2020

Hello all parents/guardians of Park Meadows School. I want to reach out to all of you with this update, as of August 6, to give you as much information as I can as it stands now. I can understand that there are many questions as we approach the start of the school year but let me reassure you that Park Meadows School is excited to embark on this new journey and look forward to seeing your son or daughter once again. If you have any questions or concerns please know that you can phone me at the office anytime beginning August 17 as that's when I'll be back in the school. Unfortunately, parents will not be able to enter the school without an appointment at this time but you are always welcome to give me a call or arrange for an appointment to see me. Due to the incredibly high volume of email inquiries I've received over the last few days, I apologize if I have not been able to respond to everyone in a timely manner but I hope that this email update serves to help in the interim. I will do my best to individually respond when I can.

With the recent announcement that schools in Alberta will be back to “near normal” operations this fall, we are very excited to have our students back. We are also aware that the reality of the covid-19 pandemic will necessitate adjustments at school. What does “near normal” mean? I encourage you to access the School Division documents that were sent home below - Parent Re-entry Guide and Lethbridge School Division – Q and A that outline details about safety protocols, in school learning structure and at home learning options for families. <https://www.lethsd.ab.ca/download/283103> & <https://www.lethsd.ab.ca/download/283106>

Near normal operations entail classes resuming as they would in any other year with a few alterations addressing safety and wellness as our combined responsibility. Class size at Park Meadows will not necessarily allow for 2m of distance between people in all situations. This means we will rely on our staff and students to practice heightened hand hygiene, mask use, social distancing, staying home with signs of illness, and getting tested should symptoms of covid-19 appear. There will also be protocols in place for hallway travel, entrance and exit from school, recess & lunch and other routines to enhance safety and physical distancing. During the day, students and staff will work together to ensure surfaces are sanitized. Our capable and committed caretaking team will follow division cleaning protocols during the school day and each night. If covid-19 presents itself at our school, Alberta Health Services will provide direction to stop the spread and take care of affected individuals. To limit the contact of students within the school, they will be placed in cohorts (their homeroom class) that remain together during the day.

What is a **cohort**? You might have heard that Alberta schools will schedule students in cohorts when possible. A cohort is a grouping of students who stay together to limit interactions, like those in a homeroom elementary class. Scheduling at Park Meadows and all division elementary schools will ensure students are limited to one cohort that will stay together for their classes. Our music teacher, Administration, and Support Staff will come to the students in one room. Use of the gymnasium is permitted for each individual cohort but outside PE will also be encouraged when possible. The cohort model does not allow for students to mix indoors with other students. We will most likely be staggering recess and lunches so that cohorts remain self contained as much as possible. We will send home more information prior to school to help prepare students for this transition. As a school, we will make all decisions on programming, routines, activities and structures with the safety and wellness of all as our number one priority.

Please know that Park Meadows School is refining a school plan based on Lethbridge School Division guidelines. You can expect a document within the next few weeks that will outline the following protocols specific to our school:

- Meet the Teacher and Staff event – Monday, Aug. 31
- First day of school procedures – Tuesday, Sept. 1
- Staggered drop off and pick up times plus locations
- Classroom and school sanitization
- Student safety measures (ex. masks, cleanliness, distancing, cohorts, illness response)
- Staggered eating and recess times
- Parent meetings and communication
- Field trips and extra-curricular
- Student expectations and compliance with protocols
- Recyclables (juice boxes, etc) in lunch kits – “pack-in and pack-out”
- Communication in relation to your child's teacher for the upcoming school year

Our school division sent out a survey asking parents if students will opt-out of at school learning. It is imperative for parents to inform us of their choice for their child so we can begin staffing and forming cohorts for both types of learning. If you have not completed the survey, please do so at this link by August 10th: <https://www.lethsd.ab.ca/parents/survey>

If students opt out of at school learning, they will be enrolled in at home programming co-supported by division elementary schools. For example, students who learn at home will have a teacher, possibly from a different school in our division, that will instruct them in a regimented online learning environment. It is assumed students who do not opt out will attend in school at Park Meadows and will follow the heightened safety protocols directed by the government. Once it is determined where students will attend, classes and schedules will be developed, and then communicated nearer to the start of the school year. It may not be possible to add a student to an “at-home” class after the survey deadline, and after the jurisdiction has assigned staff. Please ensure you fill out the survey to allow the Division to plan and staff properly.

Please check our school’s website and the Division’s website for any more updated information as we near the start of school. I will be sure to send updates via email as well. We look forward to working together for the safety, learning, and well-being of all in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Mark Blankenstyn, Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Blankenstyn', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.