

August 31, 2021

GSSD Parents/Guardians/Caregivers,

On September 1st, school staff will begin welcoming students into their buildings to start a new school year. Bus drivers are looking forward to, once again, being the first point of contact for students who require transportation. The first day of school brings a positive opportunity for children to reconnect with their friends. Division and school staff value and appreciate the outstanding parents in GSSD and look forward to continuing a trusted partnership.

The Board of Education and Division Administration are aware that some individuals are disappointed that there are masking requirements in place to begin the year however, some parents have a sense of relief knowing that measures are in place to protect their children. As a school division, we must provide the safest environment possible for students and staff.

The province's Safe School Plan, **released on August 20, 2021**, has given broad direction for the entire province. Please know that GSSD's plan was developed with considerations from the Government of Saskatchewan 2021-22 Safe Schools Plan Updated August 20, 2021, Government of Saskatchewan [Living with COVID-19](#), and also in consultation with Local Medical Health Officers, and a review of effective practices from the 2020-21 school year plan. We are specialists in education, not health, so we will follow the advice of the medical experts when making health decisions for students and staff who are returning to an indoor environment.

For clarification purposes, a couple of updates have been made to the GSSD Return to School Handbook including:

- Page 3:
 - First bullet – addition of *“except when eating and drinking. (*PPEP is the Preschool and Parent Education Program in Esterhazy)”*
 - Second bullet – addition of *“will be supported and”*
 - Addition of *“Please note that masking is not required outdoors”*
 - Sixth bullet – addition of *“when entering the school”*
 - Removal of *“Visitors to classrooms are not permitted during the instructional day in Prekindergarten/PPEP to Grade 6 classes.”* Visitors are required to wear a mask indoors.
 - Addition of *“Additional masks will be available on the bus for students, if needed.”*
- Page 7:
 - First bullet – addition of *“or during a mask break.”*
 - Second bullet – Addition of *“students and”*; addition of *“shared with PreK to Grade 6”*
 - Fifth bullet – removal of *“and activity level (moderate)”*
 - Removal of *“Although not required outdoors, students, staff members and families are welcome to wear a mask outside on school property”*. This statement was redundant.
 - Addition of *“Bus drivers will be able to remove their masks when students are not on the bus.”*
- Page 11:
 - SCC Meetings/Conferences section - *“during the school day”* was included

- Transportation section – removal of “*Students who have an approved medical accommodation are exempt from wearing masks.*”; addition of “*Transportation and the Students Services Team will work with students who have a medical accommodation to determine a plan for transportation.*”
- Page 12:
 - Field Trip section – corrected to read “*Off-site activities and field trips are permitted. Classes will be able to use busing.*”

The Division’s plan will be revisited throughout the fall, based on local context and any changes or alterations will be shared immediately with both staff and families. To access the Return to School Handbook, please visit the GSSD website at: <https://www.gssd.ca/parentresources/Pages/2021-22Covid-19.aspx#/=>.

We understand that you may not be in favor of the masking requirements therefore encourage you to address your concerns to the Government of Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Board of Education and not place your child in the difficult position of breaching school rules.

If you do not wish your child to follow the requirements, then you are welcome to register your child in the GSSD Digital Learning School or in Home Based Education by contacting the school division at 306-786-5500.

Our primary consideration has always been, and will continue to be, student and staff safety.

Sincerely,

Quintin Robertson
Director of Education/CEO