

## **Superintendent's Report for DEC**

### **September 8, 2021**

#### **ENDS #1: Provide positive, safe, healthy, and inclusive learning and working environments for children, youth, and staff.**

On Friday, August 20, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development announced the plan for students and staff returning to school, "Healthy and Safe Schools: COVID 19 and other infectious diseases guidelines for 2021-2022." Over the last two weeks there have been several meetings with Department officials and information shared with our Principals and Vice Principals about the plan and provide details and responses to questions. A power point presentation was reviewed with school administrators on Wednesday, August 25 when we met in-person. Dr. Kim Barker, Regional Medical Officer of Health also attended our meeting to respond to questions. The slides are being used this week with school staff as they return to our schools. The objective is to reduce restrictions while keeping student and staff safe, and we know that as new information becomes available this could change. We are building on lessons learned from the pandemic last year; ASD-S saw several schools with outbreaks and our schools were very well prepared to respond. We developed a check list of the steps that would be followed in the event of an out break, and these have been updated for fall 2021. We expect there will be cases.

Last year we learned the importance of accurate visitor logs for contact tracing and this will continue. Guests can enter the school, however it is by appointment. It is very important that the school have accurate contact information for families as we use School Messenger to communicate. Last year we saw fewer cases of cold and flu so this year there will again be a focus on the importance of hand sanitizer, cleaning work spaces, promoting thorough hand washing and cough and sneeze etiquette. Sanitizer will be available at the entrances, and in classrooms.

ASD-S is willing to work cooperatively with Public Health in organizing clinics in middle and high schools for those students who will turn 12 years of age by the end of this calendar year. Two weeks ago the percentage of those 12-19 years old in our Health Region 2 was 58%. A memo from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development went to all staff last week stating that proof of two vaccinations must be presented before the end of day on Friday,

September 3, 2021. We outlined a process and communicated it to our 4200 employees (permanent and casual) on Friday, August 27. Principals have taken the lead for their staff. This week there are meetings by Education Centre with bus drivers, and staff will be collecting their information. Casual and temporary staff have the option of visiting one of our offices or a designated school on two days this week to share their information. The goal is to have the spreadsheets complete for the 69 schools and three offices so we can determine the percentage of our staff not fully vaccinated. There have been many questions about this through the week as some staff are going for their first shot and must wait 28 days for their second. We are working with the ADM to operationalize the steps that must be put in place next week for testing using a "Point of Care Kit." It is important to acknowledge that this is not something we have done before, and there will be many questions. Collecting this data so quickly has been a huge undertaking and I thank all staff involved.

Class sizes will return to their regular size at K-5 and there are no "class bubbles" at K-8. High school students will attend school each day. Students and staff K-12 are to be masked in common areas of the school – hallways, entering the cafeteria, washrooms. This will change in the high schools when their student vaccination rates reach 90% in our health region. Masking applies to partners who are in the school as well. (Example: Teacher Coaches, EAL Mentors, Early Learning/FACE staff, after-school programs, APSEA staff, IT, Community School Coordinators, Subject Coordinators, Facilities, Career Workrooms etc.)

The guidelines state that those with two or more symptoms should stay home and be tested. If a student/staff has one symptom they are being asked to wear a mask while at school. It will be important for schools to have an isolation area for symptomatic students awaiting pick up by their families.

Bussing will return to full capacity of around 60-70 students per bus and the drivers will use the curtain as they load and unload students. Drivers without two vaccinations will always wear their mask at all times. As much as possible drivers will have assigned student seats.

Music and sports activities will continue, however no fans will be permitted inside the school. Coaches must present their proof of vaccination to Principals. Rentals/community use of schools is limited to youth-oriented activities only and will begin at the end of September. Arrows are not required on the floors, however schools are encouraged to limit interactions where possible – this

may include designating certain stair wells or hallways as one way traffic. This will depend on the size of the school and the lay-out. At K-8 there are to be no assemblies or large group presentations. At grades 9-12 the group size for an assembly will be limited and depends very much on the size of the venue. Outside will be best for the fall.

Unfortunately, Back to School and Open House events cannot be held – many schools at this time of year have family corn boils, BBQ's and an opportunity for students to deliver and unpack their book bag and meet the teachers. All students K-12 will again enter school on a staggered entry plan – this was seen by educators as very positive last school year. Some schools will use two days, and others three with all students in class on Friday September 3, 2021.

**ENDS #2: Demonstrate continuous improvement by increasing engagement through innovative teaching and assessment practices, promoting mental fitness through social-emotional learning.**

All school and district leaders had the opportunity on Friday, August 27 to participate in a one-hour virtual meeting with Kevin Cameron of the North American Centre for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response in Lethbridge Alberta. Our District has a connection with Kevin and we have been fortunate enough to have him visit us 4-5 times through the pandemic virtually.

On Wednesday, September 1 all teachers participated in a virtual PD session led by George Couros. He is an instructor with the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. He is an author, and speaker on Innovative Teaching and Learning. This was jointly sponsored by ASD-S and the local branches of the NB Teacher's Association. The original plan had been to host Geroge in person for start-up but moved to virtual.

Thursday, September 2 is a PD Day for all teachers led by the Department – again this will be virtual with a number of sessions offered for specific levels and subject areas.

At our opening meeting with all Principals and Vice Principals, much of the afternoon was spent focused on School Improvement Planning. The needs of schools inform our District plan – groups worked collaboratively to identify their needs for 2021-2022 and how the district teacher coaches, coordinators and our management teams can best support them. Typically, our District

Improvement Plan is a longer-term plan, however we know given the pandemic this has needed to be flexible.

**ENDS #4: Maximize the engagement of families and the community through effective communication and outreach.**

We were approached in the summer by Bee Me Kidz about a “Stuff the Bus,” initiative to happen at East Point in Saint John for three weekends. ASD-S provided the bus and after two weekends the initiative has been very successful in collecting school supplies and non-perishable breakfast food. The supplies will be sorted and distributed to schools around the district in coming weeks. In past years PALS organized a similar initiative and this year their partners contributed to the bus! We are fortunate to have many generous volunteers and partners who despite the pandemic and the limitations to being inside the school have continued to help.

Bee Me Kidz will be expanding this year to include Milltown Elementary School – there will be a Saturday morning program for families and an in-school curriculum to be used during the school week.

Rothsay Elementary School was featured on CBC recently sharing their geo-thermal greenhouse project. This is under the leadership of Community School Coordinator Becky MacKay with professional support from Belleisle Farms. The school received a \$25K grant and have collected another \$10 in donations and fundraising monies. The purpose of the space is to connect students, families and community members in a calming educational environment. It will be used by teachers with their students with opportunities for community involvement. They continue to accept donations and are asking the parent community to get involved in the necessary on-going fundraising. Work crews have been at the school all summer, some paid and others are volunteers. Facilities staff from the District have been involved as well.

In spring 2021 we were approached by Mr. Irving and PALS (Partners Assisting Local Schools) about expanding the “Enroute to Success Program” currently at St. Malachy’s and Saint John High School. Michael Whelton, a guidance counsellor at the school will be changing roles and leading the program at his school. We are grateful for this generous support.

In SJEC, the “Hub Kitchen” has relocated to St. Mary and St. Bartholomew’s church on Westmorland Road. They will supply approximately 600 lunches daily to six schools: Glen Falls, Saint John the Baptist/King Edward, Hazen-White/St. Francis, Centennial and Princess Elizabeth Schools. Forest Hills will be new to the program this year. Funds have been made possible through the Brewer Foundation. Many volunteers are involved daily.

## OTHER

We celebrate Kennebecasis Valley High School and their Renaissance team, who recently received international recognition for their work in the community. KVHS was the only Canadian school to receive this award. The program asked students to engage with their school community in a variety of ways to improve and enhance it. This is led by teacher Melissa Wright who is also a leader with the NB Student Leadership Association.

Kindergarten Registration will take place for fall 2022 the week of October 12-15, 2022. Part of the process can be completed online, some information does have to be taken into the school.