



## Small Schools Make a Difference

2020/11/18

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s),

I would like to begin by sending each of you my sincere thanks and appreciation for the hard work that you have done, and continue to do, to support your child(ren) in adjusting to the many changes that this school year has brought. Our students have truly demonstrated their resilience, and while we acknowledge that our situation is not ideal, it is important for us to all remember that we remain in a global pandemic, and that “school” cannot be the same. There is, however, much to celebrate, as our schools remain open for daily attendance, student safety and well-being have remained at the forefront and learning is continuing. We send our sincere thanks to you for your understanding of the adjustments to the education system, and for your ongoing support of your child(ren), the staff and the schools.

Recently, we have seen a significant increase in the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in our region; an increase which may have some implications on our school district.

Please be reminded of the following:

- The decisions to close schools or to move to 100% remote learning is made by the Ministry of Education in combination with Public Health. School boards cannot make this decision.
- There has been some discussion regarding adjusting the Holiday/Christmas Break (currently scheduled to run from December 21, 2020 to January 4, 2021). We understand that the Ministry of Education is working with Public Health to perhaps shift to 100% remote learning prior to the scheduled break and/or after the break. This strategy is seen as another protective factor to reduce the transmission of the virus. We understand that there may be an announcement in the coming weeks and will notify you as soon as we are informed.
- If the decision is made to pivot to 100% remote learning, SGDSB is prepared. Schools have been allocating devices for students to borrow, internet connectivity challenges are being addressed where possible, and staff and students are practicing accessing the various platforms, particularly Edsby (the main platform of communication for everyone), so that they are ready to learn at home, in a safer environment.
- Reminders have been sent to families to ensure that everyone has signed up for Edsby, so that we can maintain two-way communication.

- There have been some questions regarding travel restrictions that may be in place. For the most up-to-date travel information, please visit the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's website at <https://www.tbdhu.com/travel>. Note that this site is updated regularly, and changes may occur quickly.

I acknowledge that the potential for a shift to 100% at-home, remote learning may be concerning for families. Please be assured that we are committed to working alongside you to continue to provide programs and services to students, regardless of the format for learning. We know that we will be unable to provide the same experience as we are trying to provide in schools currently, however connection and maintaining a sense of belonging for everyone will continue to remain a key part of our strategy moving forward. COVID-19 continues to challenge all of us, but we can take pride in the fact that SGDSB has maintained the focus on students and their safety. We will continue to work carefully to balance the risk of direct infection and the transmission of COVID-19 in children with the impact of school closures on their physical and mental health.

In the meantime, it is vital that we all remain vigilant in maintaining the required safety precautions. Please continue to engage in the daily screening process prior to sending your child(ren) to school and keep them at home if they are not well. We encourage all students to continue to practice hand hygiene and physical distancing, limit social circles and wear a mask.

I apologize for not having answers for you at this time; however, we will endeavor to keep you informed in the coming weeks. We would encourage you to stay tuned to our Facebook page and to alerts shared through the school Edsby and School Messenger platforms.

I send you my sincere thanks and well wishes to each of you.

Yours in education,



Nicole Morden Cormier  
Director of Education