

Thursday, Sept. 2, 2021

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

This is the fourth of four weekly communications being issued Thursdays with information/updates before school starts. We look forward to welcoming students back to class on Tuesday, Sept. 7.

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[Near North District School Board](#) (NNDSB) staff have been learning, too, in preparation for teaching and supporting your children this school year.

Three professional development (PD) days took place this week for JK to Grade 12 educators. Presentations supported continued learning regarding early reading, mathematics, [Indigenous Education](#), core French, student re-engagement, [mental health](#), resiliency, and [equity and inclusion](#). Meaningful discussions led school-based conversations to ensure school teams are prepared to implement current COVID-19 safety measures while supporting student achievement and well-being.

Approximately 40 educators participated in a Literacy Summit provided by Voyager Sopris Learning to support the implementation of the recently purchased (ministry recommended) Acadience Reading assessment materials. This universal literacy screener aligns with the ministry's Recovery and Renewal focus by supporting teachers in identifying the children at risk for reading difficulties and determining the skills to target for instructional support. With the information gathered from students' performance on these assessments, we will be able to identify baseline data for individual classrooms, schools and across our system. We will then be able to use this to inform programming decisions and effective allocation of resources moving forward.

In preparation for the de-streamed Grade 9 math course, educators are exploring resources and pedagogy to support multi-level math classrooms and "unpack" data to better understand barriers to student success. During the Sept. 1 PD day a session was held framing this learning through the lens of cultural shifts in schools and across the system to identify and dismantle systemic discrimination and structural inequities. In June, Grade 8 students participated in a "transition" survey to gather information about their learning preferences, confidence, and mindset towards mathematics as they look towards Grade 9. This survey was developed by a committee of intermediate teachers, secondary teachers, administrators and the board-based K-12 math facilitator. Despite operating in a virtual format, we had more than 400 responses from our Grade 8 cohort. Over the summer, math facilitator Melissa Peddie, and educators Jesse Gregoris and Ryan Marshall worked collaboratively to

develop units based on the new Grade 9 math curriculum. This was shared with Grade 9 teachers during the Sept. 1 PD day. This is an exciting Octomester for us. We have two sections of the new de-streamed Grade 9 math course running at West Ferris and Chippewa during Octomester 1. This means that we will be among the first boards in the province to complete the course and among the first boards in the province to participate in the Grade 9 EQAO mathematics assessment.

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NNDSB issued a [media release](#) on Tuesday, Aug. 30, in which the board announced it would be resuming intramural and inter-school sports and clubs.

NNDSB schools will resume participation in OFSAA-organized championships and festivals this fall. We are in consultation with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and our co-terminus school boards to develop consistent health and safety protocols that are in alignment with Ministry of Education and public health guidance.

Please note practices and seasons may be off to a later start as boards confer and consult, and the board may cancel sports if so advised by public health. The pandemic is causing delays in decision-making that are frustrating to everyone. Because the safety and well-being of staff and students is an NNDSB priority, the timeframe of announcements reflects the careful consideration of our decisions.

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Between Sept. 13 and 27, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit will be holding vaccination clinics at all NNDSB secondary schools for those students who would like to receive a vaccination. Individual schools will communicate specific dates for these clinics next week.

The health unit has asked us to share the following documents with Families:

[COVID-19 vaccine available for youth](#)
[Youth messaging about COVID-19 vaccine](#)
[Child and Youth vaccine fact sheet](#)

Please contact the [North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit](#) if you have any questions about school vaccination clinics.

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NNDSB's [mental health team](#) is ready and excited to support your child in the return to school. If you feel your child requires the support of the mental health team, please reach out to your principal, or email the mental health team at socialwork@nearnorthschools.ca.

To help you prepare your child for school please see this [Tip Sheet](#) for some great ideas. Remember, the most important part of getting ready for school is taking care of yourself so you can be the very best support for your child.

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Parents are reminded that all students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear properly fitted, non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes. Students in JK to Grade 12 are required to wear their masks on school transportation vehicles. More information about this and other COVID-19 protocols can be found [here](#).

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The NNDSB Early Years team has been busy working on a new initiative to welcome our [Kindergarten](#) learners and their families into our board. A welcoming process grounded in NNDSB's vision creates strong ties out of the gate between the home, school and teacher, engages parents in hands-on activities that promote a literacy-and numeracy-rich environment and one that is environmentally friendly.

Beginning students in Kindergarten will receive a Journey into Learning (JIL) bag and accompanying JIL Guide. NNDSB previously purchased Welcome to Kindergarten resource bags from the Learning Partnership. This year, the Early Years Team felt they wanted a bag more closely aligned with the visions and priorities of NNDSB, as outlined in the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#).

The Early Years Team generously received support from the Trustee Initiative Fund to purchase 1,400 copies of the book *This is What I've Been Told*, written and illustrated by Julianna Armstrong, one of NNDSB's teachers. The book has been placed in the JIL bags, and original content appears in the JIL Guide. The story provides readers with an introduction to the Anishnaabemowin language and culture. Kindergarten students will be introduced to Indigenous language and culture through interactions with this book. This is a significant commitment on the part of NNDSB; beginning the Journey into Learning with an intentional focus on Indigenous education clearly signals our values and visions to every stakeholder. The books, used at school and at home, will support the bridge that we are striving to strengthen between families and educators. This initiative supports many of the [Calls to Action](#) identified by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), specifically in the Education and Language and Culture sections, and mirrors NNDSB's commitment to achieving equity for all.

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Every person entering a school is required to self-screen prior to their arrival by using the [COVID-19 Schools and Childcare Screening tool](#).

A downloadable version of the tool can be found [here](#). Upon request, schools will provide families with printed copies of the tool enabling

them to perform daily screening of their children before arriving at school in absence of internet connectivity.

For the first two weeks of school, all teachers will confirm that students have self-screened during daily attendance.

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NNDSB follows the direction of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the public health unit when devising COVID-19 plans.

Thank you,
Near North District School Board