



CREDO CHRISTIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Principal: Otto Bouwman

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Dear Parents,

This past August we were not sure exactly how the school year would proceed, but we shared our return-to-school plan with you. Now that we have passed the half-way point of the school year, we express our gratitude on how smoothly and safely the school has been able to operate.

This year's school theme comes from Proverbs 3:5 & 6, which instructs us: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths." Such a reminder is always timely; our natural inclination seems to be to first rely on our own understanding rather than to trust in the Lord. May God help each of us to continue to quietly model trust and confidence in our God as we live our lives in his service.

In a Nutshell

Almost all of this Health and Safety Plan is a cut and paste of the return-to-school plan previously shared. The updated version incorporates the new regulations released by the Ministry on Feb. 4.

We are still living in exceptional times, and need to acknowledge not only the physical health dangers related to COVID-19 but also the fears many people have about COVID-19. The continued restrictions are difficult for everyone.

The Ministry continues to work with the understanding that a school is a "controlled environment" in which school administration can establish protocols which ensure, as much as possible, students' continued health. The Ministry remains convinced that safe school operations are very important for the well-being of the students in the province, and we agree.

COVID-19 and Schools

The Ministry still affirms that:

- *There is limited evidence of confirmed transmission within school settings.*
- *COVID-19 is understood to spread through prolonged, close, face-to-face contact.*
- *Children do not appear to be the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in schools or in community settings.*
- *There is no evidence that the virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper, or other paper-based products.*
- *School closures have significant negative mental health and socioeconomic impacts on vulnerable children.*
- *Prevention measures and mitigation strategies involving children must be commensurate with risk.*

Learning Groups

The Ministry Guidelines released previously state:

Lowering the number of in-person, close interactions continues to be a key component of B.C.'s strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A cohort is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout a school term. The use of cohorts in schools allows for a significant reduction in the number of individual interactions, while allowing most students to receive in-person learning in a close-to-normal school environment.

Though the Ministry Guidelines distinguish different expectations for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, they also state that “the underlying intention is that the measures listed in the document are implemented throughout the school, with no differences for different grades within the same school.” Consequently, within our school and on our playground, we have similar expectations for students across all the grades.

Our cohorts (or learning groups) are composed of up to 60 people; this number includes all students and adults who normally work in the classroom setting. Within the cohort, physical distancing is maintained to the extent that it is reasonably realistic. The following learning groups have been identified at CCES:

- Kindergarten
- Grades 1 & 2
- Grade 3
- Grades 4 & 5
- Grades 6 & 7

In elementary schools, students may socialize with peers in different learning groups if they are outdoors and can minimize physical contact; there is recognition that “elementary-aged students are less able to consistently maintain physical distance” and that “outdoors is a lower-risk environment than indoors.”

The identifiable learning group structure has helped to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, and we will be maintaining this structure for now.

Students and Staff Coming to School

School administration is thankful for parental diligence in making sure that students who do not feel well remain at home. Moving forward, this remains the most effective manner in which homes can support our efforts to keep the school a physically healthy place. As always, please notify the school before the start of the school day to advise us that your child cannot attend.

At the beginning of the day, teachers inquire about and observe student health. In the event that a child arrives at school and appears unwell, the teacher informs the front office. The student is isolated, parents are informed, and the child needs to go home. The same protocols take place at any point in the day when a student becomes unwell at school.

Staff members complete a wellness check when arriving at school each morning, and verify in writing that they are in good health.

No changes of protocols for CCSTA buses are anticipated as a result of the most recent Guidelines.

School Operations

The following practices are in place:

- frequent hand-washing / sanitizing is the norm
- extra cleaning happens on high-touch surfaces in the middle of the day – in addition to the thorough janitorial cleaning every evening
- since PE / sports equipment is now also considered a “frequently touched surface” extra protocols will be put in place regarding use of PE / sports equipment
- students are encouraged to have their own water bottle for their personal use
- the water fountains in the hallway remain operational
- students are aware that they may not share food, pens, or pencils, and that sharing of other learning materials remains as minimal as possible
- classrooms are arranged to maximize distances as much as possible
- virtual classes will not be provided for students not able to attend
- almost all students enter / exit the school from the exterior door in their classroom – thus minimizing hall traffic
- all visitors to the school must sign in and wear a mask while inside the school
- we have staggered morning and lunch recess – reducing student densities on the playground
- we do not have school-wide assemblies in the gym or in the church auditorium
- the staffroom sees less use than other years; staff members also use the library as an alternate “break room” because of physical distancing expectations
- for the end of the school day, new protocols for parent pick-up and bus pick-up of students have been implemented,

Personal Protective Equipment

Though personal protective equipment is ranked considerably “less effective” than other control measures for communicable disease, masks receive substantial public attention. In our elementary school setting, masks were not recommended for elementary students use, due to the increased likelihood they would touch their face and eyes. This provision has not changed. Masks are available for student use to wear in the building if they so desire, and are also available after school as masks are required on the buses.

All K-12 staff will wear a mask at school, except when sitting or standing at their seat or desk/workstation (the front of the classroom, where a teacher is standing to teach, is considered part of the teacher’s workstation), when there is a barrier in place, when eating and drinking, and when outdoors. As per the updated regulations, exceptions are made for staff who cannot tolerate masks.

Plexiglass shields have been installed in places where we are unable to maintain other safety measures. Portable ones have been purchased and will become part of the regular furniture in most classrooms.

Communication Strategy

When somebody at CCES tests positive for COVID-19, administration informs the Ministry the same day that the administration learns of the development. The Fraser Valley Health Authority assists the school in further actions, should such actions become necessary.

Conclusion

As we move forward with staff and students, we are aware that there is a spectrum of perspectives related to COVID-19 and its accompanying restrictions. Numerous lobbying groups are making it quite a challenge for our Ministry officials to chart a way forward that satisfies everyone.

It remains my hope and prayer that our students are able to remain at school in a responsible, safe, and enjoyable way. In the event that you have concerns or questions about CCES's intentions or practices, please feel welcome to share them with Vice-Principal Jennifer Onderwater or with me.

Thank you for your continued support. May God prosper our plans and enable us to experience his continued care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Otto Bouwman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Otto Bouwman