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June 25, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this message is to provide you with information about the procedures and processes we are developing for re-entry to school this fall. The descriptions below are based on the guidance we have received from Alberta Education, the Ministry of Health and Pembina Hills School Division.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we move to operationalize health measures. Our efforts are designed to maintain the health and safety of our students and employees while balancing the social, emotional and educational needs of everyone involved.

A summary of the Pembina Hills re-entry plan has been posted on the Pembina Hills website here: <https://www.pembinahills.ca/school-re-entry-plan/>. It describes the principles, guidelines and resources we're considering as we develop procedures.

Please note that today's message is with respect to the guidance provided for planning for **Scenario 1; "In-school classes resume (near normal with health measures)"**.

Scenario 2 will require additional measures which will reduce the number of students allowed in the school at the same time. We expect Alberta Education to inform us on August 1st regarding re-entry scenarios for our schools.

Each of our school administration and staff will continue to refine the specific procedures for their sites.

Finally, PHSD's transportation department is working on the adjustments needed for student transportation. Information will be shared as plans are finalized.

We know that there are many more details that need to be worked out. We are continuing to identify issues, questions and solutions.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we move through this unique time. We look forward to seeing the students back in school!

Please continue to watch the Pembina Hills website for information. You can subscribe to news updates at <https://www.pembinahills.ca/subscribe/>. You can also choose to follow us on [Facebook](#).

Regional Office

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TOGETHER WE LEARN

Daily Screening for Illness - Parents and Students

All parents will be expected to use the [Screening Tool](#) **each day** prior to sending their children to school. **Do not send your child to school if they are sick.** https://bit.ly/PHSD_DailyHealthCheck

Daily Screening for Illness - Staff

All Pembina Hills staff must use the screening tool daily as well. Anyone who is sick will not be allowed at school.

Records of Pre-existing Conditions

Be prepared to provide information to the school regarding your childrens' health.

It is important for us to know if your children have pre-existing conditions, such as allergies, that are similar to the symptoms of COVID-19. We consider this baseline information. If these baseline conditions were to worsen, the students should remain at home until they are symptom free, and have a negative test result for COVID-19.

Social - Emotional Health and Mental Well-Being

We are planning processes with the intent of balancing students' growth as individuals with the need to limit the spread of the virus.

School provides students with the opportunities to grow emotionally and socially as well as academically. Students need the opportunity to play and learn together.

Our teachers and program assistants are here to help your children learn and grow together. When students require support for their mental well-being, our teachers will guide students to support services within the school or division. We commit to working together with you to help students manage the emotions and stresses caused by this and other situations. Please call if you have concerns about your children's mental well-being.

Drop-off and Pick-up, Being outside the School, Entering the School

One of the main strategies of preventing the spread is limiting contact between people.

Parents who chose to drop-off their children can do so; however, we ask that you remain in your vehicles. We will be reviewing the current traffic flow patterns and adjust as needed. Details will be posted on our websites (division and school) as they are finalized.

Parents will be allowed to come into the school if they are required.

All visitors and parents who enter the school must check in at the office. Everyone is expected to self-screen before entering. Signs will be posted.

Records of all visitors will be kept and shared with the Medical Officers if requested.

School Cleaning

The Pembina Hills Plant and Operations Facilities department has coordinated increased cleaning of all school facilities. There will be increased cleaning and disinfecting of high touch areas and equipment inside and outside of classrooms, in washrooms and in all auxiliary spaces.

Additional Hand-Sanitizer stations are being added.

Student Belongings and School Supplies

Parents and students can expect to begin a “No Sharing” policy this fall. Your teachers will provide you with a list of the resources they need for their class / grade.

We are reviewing how student belongings (back-packs, jackets, etc.) will be stored.

Lunches, Snacks and Food Services

Again, the “No Sharing” policy will be expected.

Please provide your children with lunches that minimize the use of communal microwaves.

The schools with Nutrition Programs will use the government guidance documents to develop processes for the distribution of meals.

Hygiene Etiquette: Handwashing, Coughing and Sneezing

Students will be asked to wash their hands frequently.

Hand sanitizer stations will be set up near entrances and in classrooms that don't have a sink. We are well stocked.

Washing hands often with soap and water is expected, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, going to the bathroom, and before and after eating or preparing food.

Staff and students who need to cough or sneeze will use their elbow or a tissue, and then throw out the tissue if used and wash their hands afterwards.

Students are to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth and avoid close contact with anyone who is sick.

If a Child Becomes Ill During the School Day

Parents/guardians **must** be able to pick-up their children if they become symptomatic during the day. We will of course work closely with you should this need arise.

When children begin to show symptoms that are not related to pre-existing conditions, we will contact parents/guardians immediately. The student will be isolated in our sick room until you pick them up.

The Cohort strategy

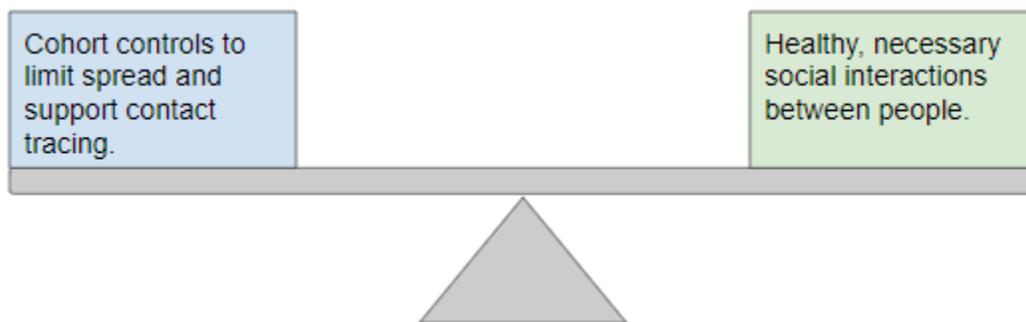
Our aim in **Scenario 1** is to be “near normal with health measures”. One health measure that helps in this situation is cohorting. A cohort is basically a group with something in common. In this case, the cohort is the group of students (and staff) with whom your child will interact each day.

The cohort strategy is useful in two ways:

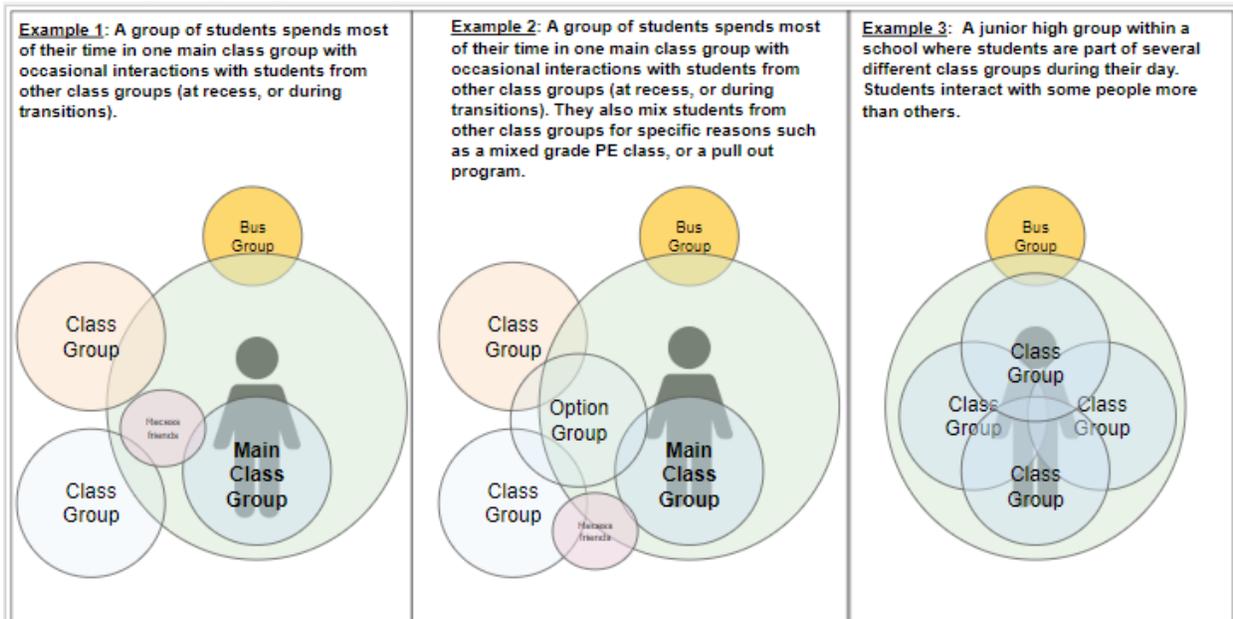
1. Cohorting is used to support physical distancing to reduce spread
 - a. Our goal would be to reasonably limit the size (number of people) in a group, and the degree of interaction between groups.
2. Cohorting simplifies contact tracing if required

An accurate record of the people in a cohort will be very helpful if we need to support Alberta Health with contact tracing data.

In a **Scenario 1** plan, we seek to provide a reasonable “near normal” **balance**:



These diagrams show how a cohort strategy could look. These are not precise depictions nor directions for cohorting; they are just examples of how to think about cohorts.



If we need to move to Scenario 2: We can put more stringent structures and controls in place to reduce cohort size and interactions.

Hallway Traffic

During the summer we will mark our floors to show the direction of traffic flow. In September, we will teach students to abide by the pathways. In general, we will keep to the right. We will also develop routines to limit the number of students in certain spaces such as boot rooms.

Recesses, Lunch Breaks and Transitions

We are working on ways to limit physical distance during the many transitions that occur during the school day. Specific plans will vary from group to group depending on the need for students to move from room to room.

According to what we've been told, there is less risk of spread between people when they are outdoors. In consideration of the need for students to play and socialize with one another we expect to allow students to play outside.

Our schools are exploring and discussing solutions to resolve the congestion that occurs in the bathrooms and hallways during transitions and during breaks and lunch.

When Face-to-Face Interactions are Necessary

There are times during the day when some students work closely with specialists or others and face-to-face interactions are necessary. (For example, Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Therapy) Division staff who work with our students will use portable physical barriers and or face masks when they need to work closely with students. They will sanitize and disinfect objects that need to be handled by more than one student. Students too can choose to wear face masks in these situations.

In the Classroom

We are examining the arrangement of furniture in our classrooms.

We will be removing area rugs where possible. Soft covered furnishings may be removed as well.

Desks will be arranged to maximize physical distancing while maintaining opportunities for collaboration.

We will limit situations where students sit directly across from one another. For instance we might arrange desks in a horseshoe shape to allow for interaction without being too close.

Communications

We will continue to post news and updates on the division website: <https://www.pembinahills.ca/> under the tab **Schools and Programs** → **COVID-19 Information**.

Subscribe to news updates at <https://www.pembinahills.ca/subscribe/>

Following us on the [Pembina Hills Facebook page](#) is another way to receive notifications of updates.

In the fall, Pembina Hills will be rolling out the SchoolMessenger application. SchoolMessenger is a means by which we can reach out directly to parents of a class group, a school group or the entire division.