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October 19, 2020 - Principal's Message, Mrs. Kathy McTaggart

This issue of the principal's message is heavily focused on information for our families who have students in Grade 12 so if you have a child in grade 12 please read to the end of the message.

Today we have all of our students officially able to be back in the building following the two rounds of 14 day isolations. We have not had any transmission of covid within the school. This is great news and indicates to us that our safety measures are doing their job.

Class Changes coming in Quarter 2 for Junior High Students

As you know, this year in response to the Alberta Health guidelines for school re-entry Ponoka Secondary Campus adopted a quarter system in an effort to cohort students and limit the number of contacts that students and staff would come in contact with during the school year. As this was a new process for PSC we feel that this has been very successful and we continue to make every effort to support student and staff health. Starting in August this year PSC cleaning staff have been working to ensure enhanced cleaning occurs daily throughout the school and we continue to look for more effective ways to help students learn in a safe environment.

As we enter quarter 2 we now have a better sense of the student population who are attending in person classes and in an effort to best support student learning and health we will be making a few adjustments to student cohort groups after our November Break which runs from Nov. 7th to the 15th. When students return on Monday the 16th junior high student will return to a new cohort. These new cohorts will have students interacting with fewer staff, which limits their daily contacts, and in addition this will create more opportunities for staff to provide online support for students who are away due to illness or isolation protocols.

Our vice principal, Mr. Quance is currently working with the staff to create these new groupings, and information will be communicated to the students and parents by November 6th so that students know their new cohort, classroom space and class schedule before their break.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact one of our administrative team.

Update of Other Events

Fall Awards - PLEASE NOTE - DATE CHANGE!

Our Fall Awards and Athletic awards from the 2019-2020 school year is happening this Thursday October 22.

School Photos

Photo retakes are scheduled for Wednesday October 21.

Halloween Activities

Our planning team is hard at work thinking of ways we can have a Halloween celebration here at school on Friday October 30th while adhering to our Alberta Health Guidelines. We will be communicating the plan via our social media outlets and students once it is finalized. Students WILL be permitted to dress up and we WILL be having our costume contest as usual but there will NOT be a school assembly or dance this year.

Grade 12 News

November Diploma Exams

On October 13th, 2020, Alberta Education announced that the November writing of diploma exams would become optional for any student currently enrolled in a diploma level course scheduled to write a diploma this November. Alberta Education has also communicated that the decision to write a diploma exam this November resides solely with the student and their parents. Students who choose not to write will receive their school awarded mark as their final grade and will receive an automatic exemption from the diploma exam.

Students can choose to not write a diploma exam at any time up to the start of the exam. However if a student starts to write a diploma exam, they must complete the test and their mark will be counted towards their final grade. If a student chooses to write and is dissatisfied with their mark, they cannot choose to have this exam “not count” as a part of their final grade. Any diploma exam a student chooses to write will be combined with their school mark and count as 30% of their final grade.

Our school will still continue to provide these writing opportunities for any students choosing to write. In an effort to plan for appropriate spaces for diploma writing it would be useful to know if your child is writing the diploma exam or not. Again, please note: Students can choose to not write a diploma exam at any time up to the start of the exam, but if you do know now, please complete the attached [survey](#).

Alberta Education has not provided any additional information regarding any other writing session for this school year but they have provided a [Question and Answers Document](#) to provide more information to families.

The school has reached out to several post secondary institutions to determine if a choice one way or the other will affect their chances of acceptance. The 3 institutions we have heard back from so far have assured us that they will be accepting final grades regardless of whether it includes a diploma grade or not. We recommend that you reach out to your school of choice to confirm admission requirements.

At Ponoka Secondary Campus, if your child chooses not to write the diploma exam there will be no alternative final exam written. Students final marks will be based on unit exams and other assessments throughout the quarter.

Grad 2021

Our school had a fall, outdoor, socially distanced grad last Friday for our Grad 2020 students. It went really good and the staff was very pleased that we got to celebrate and acknowledge the students who were able to attend.

Now we turn our thoughts toward our Grad 2021. As we begin the planning process please understand that we are most likely going to be planning for a socially distanced, covid safe grad once again. We are committed to having that celebration in June and are going to start talking with grade 12 students and parents about how that celebration will look.

As always, if you have any questions throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact us at: 403-783-4411

Sincerely,

Kathy