



École Peter Greer Elementary

NEWSLETTER



May 2020

Message from your Admin Team

It's been awhile since we published a newsletter due to this unprecedented time in history. The Ministry of Education announced today that a voluntary, part-time return to in-class instruction will commence on June 1, 2020. I bet there will be a lot of smiles from both students, parents, and staff on this day.

We want to thank each and every one of you for your patience, flexibility, and understanding as we moved to virtual learning opportunities for your children during this time. Zooming, Google Classrooms, SeeSaw, Dojo, and the other sea of online dashboards that we have quickly come to know as household names are filling our screens!

Learning to use and access these technologies have been incredibly beneficial to continue the learning journey as well as some traditional worksheets, board games, and cards to keep us all busy. Our school is not the same without your children and our staff in it! We miss the laughter and excitement that breathes life into PGE!

As we sit at our desks in our offices on May 15, 2020, the hallways are silent and dark, except for the sound of shuffling feet from our caretakers who are wiping down touch points twice daily using a hospital grade sanitizer. The voices of a few students of front-line, crucially needed healthcare workers can be heard off in the distance of our hallways. It's great to hear them giggling. We are thankful we have staff who volunteered to do this important work. And we are thankful to all the teachers who had to build a new 'online' curriculum from scratch, with little to no formal training. Nobody expected this would happen. It seems like it was not long ago that our students were in the building, laughing and enjoying their time learning and collaborating in a face to face environment.

Even though we are proud of our students, staff and parents for being brave and resilient in the midst of all this uncertainty, we are saddened that most of the traditional events we have in the Spring have been cancelled or reimagined to allow for physical distancing. Despite our worries, it's a warm and reassuring feeling to know that we have your confidence that we are all doing the best we can under the circumstances. We are optimistic that this too shall pass, and we will become stronger as a result of COVID – 19.



Respectfully Yours,
Mr. J. Minkus and Dr. J. Sanbrooks

Classroom Placement in September

We are currently holding student placement meetings to arrange classes for September. Your child's current teacher plays a significant role in making these decisions as does next year's teachers, Administration, and in some cases, staff from support services (i.e. Learning Assistance Teacher, Counselor, Resource Teacher etc.). The development of class lists is given a great deal of time, careful thought and understanding with the knowledge teachers have of each student and what will be in the child's best interest. Since teachers see how students function in a classroom every day, they are confident that they can make a suitable placement for your child. Every year, we have a small number of parents wishing to make placement requests for their children and we ask that those requests come before we start the process of creating classes. We do recommend that you have a conversation with your child's current classroom teacher prior to making a request. **Parents requesting a specific class configuration/division, should place their request in writing to their current classroom teacher and copy to the office.** Requests for placements are considered during the class building process, but not all can be accommodated for a variety of factors and we are not in a position to accommodate parent requests for students to be 'switched' from one class to another once classes have been set.

There are many factors that are considered in the process:

- Academic achievement
- Class size, composition and balance between boys and girls
- Student special needs
- Learning and teaching styles
- Social groupings
- Teacher and School Based Team recommendations
- Previous placement history



It should be noted that there are a number of additional factors, including changing enrolments, Provincial class size and composition legislation, and budget restrictions, that sometimes makes the placement of students a very complex issue. Therefore, parent requests will be accepted as input, but should not be considered as the driving force behind placement decisions. Our goal in creating each classroom composition is to provide the best possible educational placement for the students within the various constraints of the system within which we function. We appreciate your understanding of this very important issue.

We will re-assess the class and school organization after the August registration period as we become aware of any enrolment changes that have taken place over the summer. As is the case every year in all schools, teaching assignments and class organizations are subject to change in the fall. Class lists will be posted on our website on the Friday before the first day of school in September and again on the morning of the first day of school. In this process, the Principal has the ultimate responsibility under the *School Act* for the final decision regarding placements of students.

School Organization

As of May 2020, our projected enrolment is 470 students. The **tentative** teaching staff and class configuration is as follows. We are just starting the staffing process.

English Program

Kindergarten	Cheryl Maze	Grade 3/4	Sarah Letourneau
Kindergarten	Kim Payne	Grade 3/4	Alex Chan
Kindergarten/1	TBA	Grade 4	Clint Maltais
Grade 1/2	Audra Britton	Grade 5	Kristen Dion
Grade 1/2	Whitney Martin	Grade 5/6	Matt Olson
Grade 1/2	Marijke Albrecht	Grade 5/6	TBA
Grade 2/3	Louise Caillaud	Grade 5/6	TBA (Krstel Mat Leave)

French Program

Kindergarten	Robyn Cassan	Grade 3/4	Jennifer Dewolf
Kindergarten/1	TBA (Starling Mat Leave)	Grade 4/5	Christy Catton
Grade 1	Kelly Tait	Grade 5/6	Renee Eagleton
Grade 2/3	Cassie Jones		

James Minkus	Principal	Jeremy Sanbrooks	Vice Principal
Sherri Savage	Teacher-Librarian / ELL	Cheryl Elsworth	Speech & Language Pathologist
Dana Guthrie	PE/Prep/Support	Sandie Lavigne	Indigenous Advocate
Rose Alexis	Indigenous Advocate	Natasha Jaswal	Counsellor
Danielle Petryshyn	Learning Assistance/Support	September Smith	Administration Assistant
Lenora Flato	Resource Teacher	TBA	Classroom Support (0.5)
Emma Sarbit	Prep/Support	Susan Elliott	LAT French Immersion
Brittany Nickel	ARC Support Worker	Helga Helgason	Strong Start Facilitator

Blended Classes

As the school year draws to a close, some parents may find that in the coming school year, their child will be placed in a "mixed-age, split or blended" classroom. There is a great deal of research showing both pros and cons, but the reality is, blended classes are in every school and at every grade level across Canada.

Here are some considerations of blended classes:

- Achievement is the same as, or better than, the academic achievement of children in same-grade classrooms. Mixed-age classrooms do not negatively affect student achievement, and students in these classrooms have significantly more positive attitudes toward school, themselves, and others (Stone,1998; Veenman,1996).
- There is a wide range of academic, social and emotional abilities within any grade grouping.

- Currently, students are assigned to a classroom based on their age and not based on academic achievement, ability or social/emotional factors. In every classroom, there are students who may be reading at one, two, even three grade levels higher or lower than the grade they are assigned. Blended classes can often have less of a range of abilities because students are sometimes grouped homogenously. If you were to ask any Primary teacher in a straight classroom with one grade level, how many reading levels they have in the classroom at any given time during the year, they will probably say they have at least 3-4 different reading levels. This is why all Primary classrooms have leveled reading resources from levels 4 – 17. This allows teachers to match each student's needs to an appropriate level. If you were to ask a teacher in a 'split' or 'blended' class the same question, they will probably say they have a smaller range of reading levels because students are grouped more closely together when building classes so that it is easier to facilitate both grades.
- The newly revised curriculum focuses on each student's needs and skills as opposed to grade level content. In fact, the new curriculum has 30% less content than in the past and focuses on 6 core competencies that are built in to every grade. With the focus on skills and core competencies, grade configuration is not a significant factor in student achievement. Engaging students in personalized, deep learning is our goal and blended classes lend themselves to this approach.

Other Considerations of Blended Classrooms

Instead of looking at a classroom of students 'assigned' to a specific grade due to their birthdate, think of the classroom as simply a group of students, all at different levels of ability, needs and strengths.

Children develop a sense of family with their classmates. They become a "family of learners" who support and care for each other. Older children have the opportunity to serve as mentors and to take leadership roles.

Children are more likely to cooperate than compete. The spirit of cooperation and caring makes it possible for children to help each other as individuals, not see each other as competitors. This is consistent with our school's Play is the Way program designed to help student develop strong decision-making skills and be well-adjusted individuals.

Older children model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, and younger children are able to accomplish tasks they could not do without the assistance of older children. This dynamic increases the older child's level of independence and competence.

Blended classrooms promote a positive school culture because the older students have learned the routines of the school and they are in a position, through daily classroom experiences, to model, mentor and help support the younger students. They "show them the ropes" so to speak (a very powerful influence, more so than adults).

