



District Parent Advisory Council

To the Parents of SD43:

Greetings from everyone at DPAC43 amidst the return to school for 2020.

We at DPAC43 understand that there has been much confusion and an increased level of anxiety for parents across our district. We have received numerous emails, communicated with the School District and responding as best as we can to the concerns raised. Please understand that we are both parents and volunteers, with many of the concerns you share. As the return to school plan has unfolded issues of clear communication and interpretation have appeared on many sides. We have engaged with the District office to request clarification of the issues raised and hope that the information within will assist with your understanding of the planned return to school for our children. We understand that this information will not answer all the questions that arise, but we do hope that it helps you to make decisions for your family.

The Ministry of Education and The Provincial Health Authority indicated earlier this summer that schools throughout the province would return in September with a Stage 2 response to the pandemic. Our recent experience in June was based on Stage 3 requirements, which means the return will not be the same as the way we left at the end of the school year. Once the direction was received by districts across the province for a Stage 2 return (aiming for a full return to school) plans were drawn up with the goal to have all students back in the classroom. Those lobbying for a continuation of the June model are essentially calling for continuance of a Stage 3 option but this is not within the District's legal authority to implement. If you disagree with the Stage 2 return we suggest that you direct your concerns to the provincial level.

Due to lobbying from parents, the Ministry indicated on August 26 that there would be funding and authority for school boards to offer online programs for students within their districts. This was not a direction to return to Stage 3, but rather an openness to school districts working with parents that have concerns with the return to in-school learning under Stage 2. Given this, SD43 is offering 3 options for K-8.

- 1) Attend full time;
- 2) Distributed Learning;
- 3) Undecided

The Undecided option is a supported gradual transition to full attendance. The District will provide materials and essentials, guidance and teacher support but not the teacher from the child's catchment classroom. The supports are provided by another teacher who has been assigned that role. Over time, the student will be encouraged to return to full time in-school attendance. The Gradual Transition Support is provided to students and families based on their unique needs. It starts with communication with the school principal or delegate and is designed to encourage a gradual return to in-class instruction. There is no firm deadline or end-date to Gradual Transition Support.

The District is of the position that many of the comments and suggestions respecting options in other districts is based on misinformation. Other districts are doing what SD43 is doing, or following SD43's lead on these matters. Saanich for example, has a much smaller French Immersion program with an individual coordinator that is taking on the task of assisting those students choosing Option 3. Given the size of the SD43 French Immersion program, this flexibility is more difficult to accommodate. Vancouver is providing options that are "very close" to the three options provided by SD43. It is not believed that any Metro district is providing Stage 3 options.

As for Distributed Learning, this option will be funded through the additional federal dollars allocated to BC. The funds will be distributed by the province based on enrollment numbers in each district. As for waiting lists for the DL type programs, there is flexibility and SD43 will work towards accommodating all requests. For those that enter DL and later choose to return full time to in-class instruction, they will be given that option as long as the catchment school has space for the student.

As for Grades 9-12, there is no gradual transition support. The options are return to school based on the new quarter system or enrollment in Distance Learning.

SD43 has no issue with returning to Stage 3 if necessary. In fact, SD43 believes that it is very good at providing education in this manner. However, at this time, they are under direction to return to Stage 2 and are working with all parents and students to accommodate the needs of the school community.

If you are part of the K-8 group and wish to arrange for options 2 or 3, the first step is to contact your principle to discuss your family's situation.

It is clear that not all parents are satisfied with the return to Stage 2 learning. It is open for those that would prefer a return to Stage 3 learning to continue their efforts to convince the Ministry and the Health Authority to change this position. It may very well be that COVID-19 circumstances will lead to such a change in the weeks to come.

We will continue to work with parents and liaise with the district on these issues as they arise. However, each family has their own situation and will need to deal with their school directly to work out the details that best suit their family.

Finally, although our physical office remains closed, our virtual office is once again open Tuesday and Thursdays. We can be reached by email at office@dpac43.ca.

Thank you to everyone for your patience in these matters. We wish you all well and look forward to seeing you on Zoom for our DPAC meetings this fall.



Marvin Klassen
President DPAC43
president@dpac43.ca
www.dpac43.ca