Park West School Division
Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow

Date: Wednesday, November 25 update

Topic: Planning for High School Students

Current Structure of High School in Park West

Since the beginning of the school year, the majority of Park West Grade 9-12 students have attended in a hybrid or blended model, alternating days in school with learning at home. The province expects students in Grade 9-12 to attend no less than every third day. Our students attend no less than every second day, and in some cases full time every day. Several students have already experienced extended periods of remote learning this year based upon community decisions to mitigate risk.

Schools have been permitted to increase in-class learning for Grades 9-12 up to five days per week if they can maintain physical distancing and limit interaction between different groups of students. If not, Grades 9-12 will participate in blended in-class and remote learning, with a minimum of two days in class per week. Students in some divisional high schools have been attending in-person on a daily basis because classroom numbers and space allow for appropriate physical distancing.

At-home learning has been facilitated by teachers who support students via online platforms and print-based materials. Many teachers are using technology to connect with and engage students who are working at home. Teachers have also assigned self-directed learning, practice, or individual review work for students are working from home.

Rationale for Current Structure

This current structure for divisional high school students was determined to be the safest for staff and students based upon direction from Public Health and Manitoba Education. The primary reason for hybrid learning during the pandemic is to lessen the number of students in any school building. With fewer numbers of students in class, there's more of an opportunity for physical distancing which is recommended by Public Health. Secondly, if an outbreak of the virus should occur, fewer staff and students will be exposed to it.

Public Health and Manitoba Education have both stated that two metres of physical distancing is required in schools, to the greatest extent possible. When this is not possible, students must remain within cohorts to reduce exposure to others. Cohorts are easy to implement in K-8 but much more challenging in high school because students group and regroup for multiple courses.

Feedback on Current Structure

We have had ongoing discussions with principals regarding this format for high school student attendance and learning. We have heard that with fewer students in the classroom, it allows for more personalized learning. Since teachers are working with only half of their students at a time, they can better focus on each student's needs and learning goals. Several principals reported that this results in little to no loss in curriculum coverage.

However, while students may receive extra attention while in class, they may receive less attention when working at home. Multiple parents have expressed concerns regarding the lack of engagement of students when learning at home and the potential for curricula not to be covered at a sufficient level. A parent delegation requested that the Board require all high school students to return on a daily basis. This delegation was supported by other parents, both in separate communication to the division, or during a special meeting on the topic of high school structure.

Responding to Changes in Direction from Public Health and Manitoba Education

Schools will need to be prepared to roll-back in-class learning based on public health advice:

- If schools are in Response Level Orange, all high school students will revert to alternate day format with accommodations for full-time attendance made for students with special needs.
- If schools are in Response Level Red, all high school students will be placed on full-time remote learning.

Planning for the Next Phase for High School Students

To counterbalance the multiple perspectives on our high school format, the Board has asked schools to consider how they may:

1. Use technology to further engage high school students who are learning from home.
2. Maximize attendance of high school students if it can be done safely using existing divisional and Public Health measures.

1. Use technology to further engage high school students who are learning from home.

At home, students will be expected to engage in learning activity prescribed and supported by their teachers. The exact format for individual class work for students learning at home will vary by subject and teacher. Students are expected to continue learning while at home. This includes completing assigned work and connecting to online instruction as required.

On learning at home days, students will have regular opportunities to experience live instruction, support and collaboration with peers. Many divisional teachers are already using technology to connect with students who are learning at home. It is now our goal to expand this so that teachers are regularly connecting with students at home using technology.

Many teachers are already doing fine work connecting with and engaging students who are learning at home. We want that to continue. We also want teachers to make decisions about what best works for them and their students.

Ideally, all teachers will have a plan or practices in place by the beginning of second semester to engage students when they are working at home. We recognize that this may mean little change for many teachers who are already using tools such as Google Meet and Zoom to connect with students. These may simply continue to use the frameworks and tools that they are already are using. They may also choose to try some new strategies including online tools such as webcams and Screencastify.

Types of Online Instruction

Teachers may use technology to connect with students learning at home in a variety of ways

- **Asynchronous Instruction** - Instruction or communication that is not "live" between participants, e.g., email, forums, message boards, blogs, videos or podcasts.
- **Synchronous Instruction** - Online teaching and learning in which the participants interact at the same time and in the same space. Video or web-based conferencing is an example of a tool used for synchronous instruction purposes. Web-based conferencing is a way of meeting "live" or synchronously using a web cam using software such as Google Hangout or Zoom.
- **Flipped Instruction** - A recorded lesson on a skill or concept that leads into the work the student will be engaged in during in-person learning

Options for Learning from Home

Students may have a variety of options for learning from home depending on the teacher and the class. These may include activities like:

- Independent work time for practice, homework, or learning
- Project-based activities
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer or group activities
- Small-group meetings/activities throughout the day
- Online check-ins
- Live or pre-recorded instruction and tutorials
- Recorded mini-lessons on content for the course

Challenges with Online Learning

Teaching and learning in a virtual environment are very different from the physical classroom. We simply can't expect students to sit in front of a screen for a six-hour school day on a schedule similar to the physical school day. Both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities need to be optimized for the virtual platform with short sessions, lots of breaks, and plenty of interactivity. Several hours of straight videoconferencing will probably cause fatigue, but logging into different platforms at 20-minute intervals can be equally ineffective.

Technology Requirements

Remote learning requires student access to a device with a camera and Internet. If students need to borrow a device they may request one from their local school. Currently, we are awaiting the shipment of many devices, mainly Chromebooks that have been back ordered since August.

We have a large number of high school students that currently have limited Internet connectivity at home. This creates challenges for synchronous at home learning. Many of these students are unable to livestream video. If Internet access is not possible, then teachers may provide direction for students for at home learning. This could include print-based options being sent home for asynchronous learning. Another low tech option that may be considered is using USB thumb drives to record instruction for use during at home learning.

Introduction of Webcams

The Division would like all high school teachers to have access to webcams to either stream live lessons or to record instruction for students to access while at home. The webcams may either be stand-alone devices or webcams integrated into laptops.

Webcams are seen as another optional tool for teachers to use while engaging at home learners. Teacher may use them to either connect with students synchronously or to record lessons and instruction.

- Professional development / training on the use of webcams as a tool for remote learning will be provided during the December 7 PD day.
- By December 18, all of our high school classrooms will be equipped with webcams so that teachers can may connect with students in person and online.
- Interested teachers will begin using webcams to connect with students who are learning at home as soon as possible. It is recommended that interested teachers consider integrating web cams into instruction in a single class prior to the beginning of second semester.
- Teachers may choose to use webcams only for the direct instruction portion of their class or the full class.
- Synchronous connection with students could involve direct instruction, meeting with individual students or small groups, or facilitating group.

Use of Screencastify

Screencastify is an online tool that enables users to record, edit, and share videos.
- Teachers may choose to use Screencastify to supplement their use of webcams by recording lessons or to record short lessons in advance for students to access while learning at home.
- Professional development / training on the use of webcams as a tool for remote learning will be provided during the December 7 PD day.
- By January 4, all interested high school teachers will be given a Screencastify license which will enable them to record and archive lessons.
- Interested teachers may choose to implement Screencastify in their instruction as soon as they feel ready to do so. It is recommended that teachers take some time to explore this tool in January if they are planning on using it for second semester.

Recommendations for Use of Webcams / Video Devices in the Classroom

- Allow students to participate with chat, video, or just audio.
- Do not require students to share their video if they are not comfortable doing so. Allow students the option of blocking their camera or turning the screen away so that just their voice is audible.
- Have students keep their microphone on mute until it is their turn to talk.
- Find ways to build in breaks with the camera off, asking students to work independently off-camera and then return to small group or whole-class work with active participation.

Key considerations for the use of technology for at home learners:

It is recommended that when planning for use of technology to connect with students learning at home that you don't overload yourself or your students. For example, it may not be feasible or ideal for teachers to stream their classrooms full time. Similarly, it is not ideal to expect students to connect all day when they are learning at home.

Additionally, it may not be useful or worthwhile for teachers to utilize technology to connect with students learning at home in all subjects. Teachers may find that some courses lend themselves to this more readily while others may not. For example, livestreaming physical education or vocational courses would not be recommended. Perhaps the focus for some teachers will be core courses or subjects with heavier curriculum content. Other teachers may prioritize courses based upon student needs or classroom demographics. Basically, teachers should implement online strategies in courses that need it and where it makes sense.

2. Maximize attendance of high school students if it can be done safely using existing divisional measures.

High schools should continue to assess their ability to increase in-class learning for Grades 9-12 up to five days per week, if they can maintain physical distancing and limit interaction between different groups of students.

This assessment may include but not be limited to:
- Considering additional attendance options for students that the school deems to be at-risk, provided that these students may be accommodated within existing safety protocols.
- Using additional available spaces within the school or community to accommodate additional students.
- Accessing technology and possibly hiring additional non-teaching staff to allow larger classes to be split in multiple locations.
- Continuing to prioritize students with special needs for in-class learning five days per week to ensure that those who cannot manage remote learning independently receive the supports that they need.
- Exploring the possible development of single-class cohorts for students in high school. This would require that the individual class cohorts remain together for the full instructional day.
- Determining whether particular groups of students or classes would benefit from additional in-person instruction, and then bringing these students back if it is safe and reasonable to do so. For example, some schools have brought Grade 12's back already. Schools might consider prioritizing courses leading to university entrance or core courses with significant content. Others may target students who are at-risk due to learning needs or lack of Internet connectivity.
- Reviewing current and future enrolment of classes to see if additional daily attendance may be accommodated.
- Examining timetabling / scheduling options and possibly adding flexible time for additional in-person instruction in core courses. For example, a school might consider making the fifth block of the day an open block for additional instruction in core courses.

<u>Guidelines for Video/Webcam Use in Schools</u>

The use of this technology for remote learning must be balanced between the benefits of the technology and individual privacy rights. These guidelines will provide direction to ensure that the use of video/webcam equipment in classrooms will not interfere with an individual's right to privacy.

Rationale and Objectives for Implementing Video/Webcam Use in Classrooms
Video/webcam equipment in classrooms will be used as a communication channel to assist with the delivery of remote learning.

Use and Guidelines of Video/Webcam in Classrooms
- Video/webcams are considered to be privacy-intrusive. Video/webcams should only be used as a channel to distribute classroom content when other channels and communication tools would not be appropriate or feasible.
- The video/webcam equipment should be installed in such a way that it only captures the whiteboard and/or teacher and minimizes capturing other students and/or individuals that may be present within the classroom space.
- The use of video/webcam equipment should be restricted to time-specified periods of instructional teaching only.
- Access to streamed or recorded content is limited to those authorized to access the information (students, staff and student parents or guardians).
- Video/webcam equipment monitors should never be in a position that enables public viewing.
- All recordings should be kept on systems controlled by Park West School Division.
- Video/webcam equipment must only be operated by authorized personnel of the Division, which includes teachers, student teachers (under the direction of the teacher), school administration, or divisional ICT staff.
- The guidelines for usage of video/webcam equipment are subject to periodic audit to ensure compliance with operational policies and procedures.