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February 4, 2022

RE: Message to Parents Regarding Special Meeting Interpretation

Dear Parents and Guardians of BTPS Students:

To the many of you offering support to staff within your schools in this pandemic learning environment I offer my sincere gratitude. The past many months have taught us to expect the unexpected and reminded us of the importance of working together to foster kindness and compassion.

I would like to clarify the motion which was passed at a special board meeting on January 28, 2022. The motion discussed and passed reaffirms our commitment to the Health Order 55 - 2021. The Health Order is required to be maintained by all organizations across the province, including in our schools.

As a Board, we are not able to create or pass motions that supersede the Health Order. Health Order 55-2021 clearly outlines that anyone not wearing a mask must maintain a 2m distance from other people at all times. For students with mask exemptions the 2m distance rule will apply.

For our schools to work with a mask exemption, they need to set up an accommodation plan to outline how the 2m distance will be maintained in order to follow the Health Order. If the Health Order is not able to be followed, students are able to attend our online school where masking and distancing rules are not part of that learning environment. There are school divisions that are not able to accommodate mask exemptions because the 2m distance requirement is not possible in their school buildings, and therefore online schooling IS their accommodation. BTPS is fortunate that many of our schools can afford the space to offer a mask exemption accommodation plan as an alternative to the online school option.

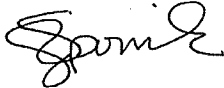
The accommodation plans may include staggered starts, staggered breaks and also distance within the classroom. The accommodation plan is needed to ensure students with mask exemptions have the space required to comply with the health order while moving within the school. A mask exemption does not exempt that student from the 2m distance rule. When it is possible and students are not required to be masked according to the health order, such as mealtime, snack time, in physical education classes, or facing forward, students with a mask exemption will be part of these activities. Each of our schools are to work with parents on the accommodation plan for anyone with a mask exemption.

The Board supports our schools in ensuring that all students and staff have a safe school environment. These are challenging situations and staff are doing their best to ensure a safe school while keeping our students learning in person. There have been many illness surges in the past

months and staff are using all recommended strategies available to them to continue in person learning. We are currently seeing many classes move to at home learning due to high rates of student absenteeism and absence of staff to deliver in person learning. BTPS staff are adjusting to rapidly changing circumstances and trying to maintain an environment that is as engaging as possible during a pandemic.

I commend our staff for their efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Spornitz", written in a cursive style.

Stephanie Spornitz
Board Chair
Buffalo Trail Public Schools