



Battle River School Division

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April 8, 2020

To: Parents / Guardians of BRSD students
Re: COVID-19 and our schools – it is okay to not be okay right now

Hello everyone.

Thank you so much to everyone who has taken a moment to express their gratitude for the efforts of teachers and school support staff, as they connect with students and provide learning resources. We appreciate your kindness.

We recognize that this is a really stressful time. Many families are juggling more things than they ever expected – from changing work realities and financial fears to concerns for loved ones and the need to stay distant from our usual sources of support, like friends, families and school.

I want you to know that it's okay if school work is not your family's priority at this moment. Teachers, Educational Assistants or Family School Liaison Workers will stay in touch with your children. If your child is supported by specialized aides, makes use of specialized communication devices or has other learning supports, we'll continue to make those available. But if school work doesn't get done right now, please don't worry. There is a time for everything and, when you're ready, we'll be here.

Our school division has compiled some wellness resources for parents, on family-related topics including activities for children and families; parenting and managing stress; talking to children about Covid-19; screen time, cyber safety and even tips for getting enough sleep. We'll also be adding learning resources in the days ahead, but for now, the focus is on staying well. Here's the link to that page: [Wellness and Learning Supports for Parents](#).

All schools have been offering a nutrition program this year, thanks to a government grant. Now that schools are closed, those nutrition funds are being used to support local food banks and food distribution programs, so families will be able to get what they need.

BRSD also wants you to know that we have started the process of evaluating fees and preparing for possible refunds. Transportation fees and Early Learning Program fees for April, May and June will be refunded very soon. Finance staff are going to be working with every school to determine what other fees may be able to be fully or partially reimbursed.

We'd also like to acknowledge the temporary layoff of 78 Bus Drivers, effective April 1. This was a difficult decision, made necessary by the re-direction of education / transportation dollars into the fight against Covid-19. But we continue to think of our Bus Drivers as part of the BRSD family, and we look forward to the day each of them will be back behind the wheel and bringing students to school again!

Funding reductions have been made in other areas too. We're grateful the government has given us the flexibility to make those reductions in ways that work best for our school division. We're trying hard to find solutions that will allow us to retain as many support staff as possible. As decisions are made we will be able to share more information.

For now, please remember it is okay to step back and take a breath as you figure things out. We will still be here and we will get through this together.

Rita Marler, Superintendent of Schools

April 8, – 2:00 p.m.