**St. Alphonsus School COVID- 19 Planning Update – April 20, 2020**

The Province of Manitoba recently released its COVID-19 Response Plan for K-12, which provides some direction and guidelines for schools across the province. Our staff has reviewed the document and compared them to our current practice in remote learning and wanted to update parents in a few areas.

**Guiding Principles**

Students are expected to continue learning from home with teacher input, delivery and support. Parents/guardians will support a learning from home environment. When regular classes resume, teachers and the school team (administration, resource, etc.) will work together to determine the next steps in learning for each child to ensure each child continues to progress.

This has been a significant change for children and adults. Many parents have also shifted to working from home. You may be experiencing considerable stress from attempting to balance competing priorities at home, along with worry, concern and care for family and friends. **Please remember that while learning should continue for children, everyone’s mental health and well-being are a priority. Parents can and should determine, with teacher guidance, what activities are realistic and reasonable for their family.**

**Priority Leaning and Supplemental Activities**

Priority areas for learning are literacy (English Language Arts) and numeracy (Math), as these are foundational to future learning. Opportunities for Social Studies, Science, PE/Health, Art, French, Music and Religion will also be incorporated.

Teachers will identify which activities they consider integral to ongoing learning, as well as in determining students understanding of concepts. Other activities will be offered as supplementary for students to complete. When planning for your child’s learning, please attend to the integral activities as a priority and make choices regarding the activities that are considered supplementary. Teachers will be using the integral assignments as part of their assessments leading into June report cards.

**Time Commitments/Expectations**

In looking at planning for remote learning, we recognize that it isn’t sustainable for parents, particularly those with younger children, to maintain a school day schedule. With that in mind, the province has set minimum expectations for learning time as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| Grade | Academic Time |
| Kindergarten-Grade 4 | 5 hours/week |
| Grade 5-8 | 10 hours/ week |

This learning time will be a combination of on-line opportunities (whole group, small group or individual conferences), independent assignments and parent supported work.

These times are the minimum expectation. Our staff want to ensure that our students continue to receive the best standard of academic programming possible, which would extend these times. Please bear in mind that teachers are trying to find a balance for all families, some of whom desire more learning activities and some who are feeling overwhelmed. It is difficult to judge how long each student will take to complete assignments, as there are many factors that are different at home compared to a classroom environment. Any feedback in regard to assignments is welcomed.

**Communication**

Teachers continue to keep normal school hours (9:00-4:00) and are available to answer questions that arise for students and parents. You can email the teacher or contact them by telephone. If you are having any difficulty reaching the teacher, please contact me via email [cmcinnis@stals.ca](mailto:cmcinnis@stals.ca).

Please be sure to communicate with the teacher if you are finding it difficult to get our child engaged in learning, If you need clarification about instructions or if you have concerns about the assignments and workload. Teachers will help parents set priorities and address engagement, providing additional support if needed.

**Learning Platforms**

Teachers are using a variety of different methods to deliver learning activities including prepared packages and on-line learning, dependent on the age of the children and the activity.

Teachers who are using packages will continue to provide opportunities for drop-off and pick-up of new materials.

Office 365 is being used by many of the upper grade teachers, both for assignment management and video conferencing. Although students have been using aspects of this during regular school lessons, there can be a bit of a learning curve for the newer applications being used during remote learning. If you or your child is experiencing difficulty navigating Office 365, please contact your child’s teacher and he/she will work in conjunction with our IT person to get things on track.

Teachers are also using Zoom as a platform for lessons, individual conferences and as an opportunity to maintain social relationships. There were some concerns about the safety of this platform, but updates to the platform have addressed the majority of these issues. In addition, teachers have been taught how to use the safety features in the program, including utilizing a wait room, controlling screen sharing and chat, locking a meeting and ensuring the meeting is kept private to the class group.

We are investigating other platforms, too, but are aware that each new initiative means additional work for parents. As a result, we are being careful with our choices to minimize the burden on families. Please be sure to let us know if you are finding it difficult to schedule on-line time or if your family needs to borrow a device for learning. Additionally, as indicated, we can provide supports to troubleshoot different platforms and assignment return methods as needed.

**Next Year**

The Province has set the expectation that no student should be adversely impacted by COVID-19. All students will proceed to the next grade in September. However, this is predicated on the assumption that students were on track to advance and that they will continue to engage in learning over this spring term. As indicated, our school team will assess any gaps in learning and address these upon the resumption of regular classes.

If teachers do not see evidence of student learning, they can be designated as in need of recovery learning at the beginning of the next school year, and this will be indicated on the report card. Any students at risk academically and/or those who choose not participate in remote learning will proceed to the next grade level, but will have to undertake this recovery learning to ensure that they have the foundation necessary to engage in learning at that grade level. As the spring progresses, our school team will be in touch with parents of these students.

**Summary**

Thank you, again, for your support as we navigate this new reality together. Our teachers have commented on the many messages of encouragement they have received. We are blessed to have a community that cares deeply about its children. We look forward to the time when we can be physically together as a school community, hopefully soon.