

September 4, 2020

Dear families,

Earlier this week our Educational Psychologist, Michelle Flannery, led a session for the teachers on mental health support during a pandemic. Her workshop centered us all on what matters most at this time.

While we have been busy preparing an instructional design that supports all children - in-person or remote - we know that our number one priority is to start the year with attending to the social, emotional well-being of our kids. Michelle reminded us that while we are doing the complex work of school design for an abnormal year, we should not lose sight of a few key things:

- When entering a new school year, especially this year, not everything will be perfect. Children, parents and staff will be called upon to practice grace with each other as we learn new information, adapt, revise and seek to improve.
- Children are resilient! I was reminded of this during the kindergarten check-ins earlier this week. Every single one emerged from the teacher check in time with joyful expressions and an attitude of “hey, so this what school is this year, can’t wait!” We will nurture the joy they bring!
- Parents can help set our children up for success. For example, talk to your children about how school might look a little different this year. Help them understand that following the new rules, staying within groups might be different and sometimes hard, but helps us keep school a healthy and safe place. Practice hand washing routines with your child.
- We’ll all be better staff and parents if we take care of our own well-being and mental health. Michelle reviewed a few basics: avoid social media that feeds anxiety; exercise regularly; make time for sleep.

Now, with your well-being attended to, here are a few more nuts and bolts reminders!

Goal - Setting Conferences - Sept 8/9

Teachers are looking forward to having time to visit with every family next Tuesday and Wednesday. If you have not yet scheduled your virtual conference, or have questions, please email your child’s classroom teacher.

Device Pick Up - Sept 8 (3pm - 5pm)

On Tuesday, we will be distributing iPads and Chromebooks to families who have requested a device. This is only for Green Cohort and Distance Learning Only students. Children in the Blue Cohort will get their device on Thursday, September 10 when they are at school. Please email tech@prairiecreek.org if you need to schedule an alternate time for pick up.

Arrival / Dismissal Times

We have been told to expect that the bus will arrive at and depart from PCCS at close to the usual times this year on in-person days (8:10am and 2:30pm). Families arriving by car should also follow our usual plan.

Arrival window: 8:00am - 8:10am

Departure window: 2:30pm - 2:40pm

As always, staff will be on hand at the beginning of the day to welcome children in the morning and help load them into cars at days' end.

Masks

Children and adults are expected to wear masks in our building. Staff will support children with socially distanced mask breaks in accordance with MDH guidelines. We will provide a cloth mask for each child on their first day and will always have additional masks available. We have also purchased lanyards for each child to help with mask management. Please send your child to school with a clean mask each day.

Please check in with your child about masks. Help them practice wearing them for gradually longer periods of time. Encouragingly, schools that have already opened report that not only are children able to manage mask wearing, they often do so way more successfully than most adults!

Updated COVID - 19 Decision Tree

A few days ago, the Department of Health released a new and revised decision tree for children, families and staff to follow if experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. As a reminder, Nurse Connie is our Covid Coordinator and can be contacted at cmenssen@prairiecreek.org or 507 645 9640 with questions. The revised Decision Tree can be found [here](#) on our website.

I encourage you to do your best to support community efforts for a year where children can go to school. We desperately want to be in person with your children. The responsibility for enabling this to happen rests with all of us. Mask up, maintain social distancing, engage in handwashing best practices (twenty seconds or more) and stay home when not feeling well.

I wish you a relaxing Labor Day weekend.

Best

Simon