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Re: Information for Parents/Guardians – Working with Schools and School Systems

Dear Parents/Guardians of Buffalo Trail Public School Students:

We are so pleased to be sharing a new school year with our students, staff, and families. We look forward to working together as a team to support the learning that is happening in our BTPS schools. I have the honour of being in all our schools throughout the year and to be able to witness the learning taking place. Buffalo Trail Public Schools is committed to “Maximizing student learning in a safe and caring environment supported by a highly effective team”. This mission statement is much more than something posted on our walls, it is the basis upon which we make decisions about the work we do every day!

I am certain that there will be many opportunities to celebrate the achievements of our schools and our students over the course of the 2023-2024 school year. As well, I know there will be times when we must address challenges that may surface. Serving the learning needs of close to 4000 students requires the cooperative efforts of many. As with all organizations, there are roles and responsibilities that are assigned to different members of our team. Clearly understanding these roles and responsibilities will most certainly assist us all in making sure that information is shared appropriately and that concerns are addressed in the most efficient and best manner possible.

School Trustees play a vital role in our organization. They provide a voice for their constituents with respect to the overall direction of the jurisdiction and set policy that reflects the learning needs of students. It is this important policy that drives the practices and procedures that are in place. Nine trustees form the BTPS Board. While individual trustees voice the perspective of their constituents at the Board table, it is this collective group that sets policy through formal Board motions. These changes to policy at the Board table are reflected in change in practice and procedure across the jurisdiction. While trustees are in a position to propose change in policy, they are not in a position to take individual action on issues that are brought to them by their constituents. Concerns of this nature need to be taken through the correct process and may eventually end up before the Board and prompt a change in policy when supported by a majority of the Board.

The Superintendent is charged by the Board of Trustees to take the action necessary to implement the policies of the Board. The Superintendent is responsible for the overall operations of the school jurisdiction. It is the role of the Superintendent to put practices and procedures in place at the jurisdictional level that will support the policies of the Board. The Superintendent is responsible to monitor the operations of the schools in the jurisdiction to ensure that they are meeting the expectations as set out by the Board of Trustees in policy. While the Superintendent is in a position to make change to practice and procedure that is jurisdictional in nature, she is not in a position to overturn practices at the school level unless they are in conflict with the overall direction of the division. Concerns at the school level must be taken through the correct process and may eventually end up before the Superintendent to prompt a change in practice or procedure.

The principal is charged by the Superintendent to implement the practice and procedures reflected by Board policy. The principal is responsible for the overall operations of the school. It is the role of the principal to align the school practices and procedures to those of the jurisdiction. Where necessary, the principal develops practices and procedures that are specific to the operation of the school. Concerns at the classroom level must be taken through the correct process and if not resolved may eventually end up before the principal to prompt a change in school practice and procedure.

The teacher is charged by the principal to implement the practices and procedures of both the jurisdiction and the school that reflects Board policy. When necessary, the teacher develops practices and procedures that are specific to the operation of the classroom. It is the responsibility of the teacher to align their classroom practices and procedures with those of the school and the jurisdiction. Concerns at the classroom level must be taken to the teacher to prompt a change in practice or procedure.

Most often the best solutions are found as close to the concern as possible. By addressing the concerns at the source first, we can often avoid the escalation of a problem. Typically, at the root of these types of issues is the lack of clear communication between the home and the school. Ensuring that concerns are communicated to the correct person as early as possible is essential. All too often, these types of situations escalate when assumptions are made or only a part of the information is communicated. I encourage all parents to build a relationship with their child's teacher through regular communication early in the school year. Should a concern arise, this relationship will provide a vehicle to address it at the early stages. Whether or not you have been able to establish this relationship prior to a concern, I strongly encourage you to take your concerns to your child's teacher immediately and begin to work with them toward a solution. All too often a concern that could have been quite easily addressed through open communication evolves into a crisis if left unattended. It is not in the best interests of our children that we allow this to occur.

As we work through meeting the challenges that will no doubt occur, we must honour the resolution process to provide ample opportunity to address concerns at the appropriate level. When a concern is brought to any level of our organization, we will be asking about the steps that have been taken. Our intent is to respect the abilities of parents and the school to work cooperatively to resolve these types of issues. Of course, when the appropriate steps have been taken and our help is still needed, we will be glad to offer our support and assistance to the resolution process. At the end of the day, our objective is to ensure that the learning needs of students are being met and that as a team we are working together to make this happen.

Once again, on behalf of your school and Buffalo Trail Public Schools, I look forward to working with you and your children as vital members of our team. When our collective purpose is to provide the best that we can for our children, we can do great things. I look forward to being out in your school communities throughout this school year.

Take care,



Michelle Webb
Superintendent of Schools