

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We have a lot of new things on the horizon. First and foremost, I think our school is taking some bold steps forward to reinforce our vision around learning. It's not that it's necessarily new, but rather a renewed commitment to student learning and achievement. Our focus is not on the grades per say, it's more on ensuring students are learning. A recent Gallup poll published in the United States that surveyed over 500,000 students stated that only 44% of students are engaged in learning. That is too low. We're doing everything we can to ensure that our students are more engaged and as a result learning more.

One of the steps that we are taking to improve engagement is around cell phone and device usage within the classroom. While many of us embrace the technology and its use in learning, we have noticed a steep decline in student engagement and learning within the classroom when students have cell phones on them. Lots of research supports our findings that students need approximately 45 minutes of uninterrupted time to learn an outcome. Often times we find students being distracted about every 2 minutes with a Snapchat or a text message from their peers. Every time there's a distraction, that learning opportunity is disrupted and missed. While we have tried to teach students how to use cell phones properly by self-regulating and disciplining themselves, it has become apparent that as a school we need to take steps to protect their learning opportunities in the classroom. So from this point forward, we are asking students to place their phones on the teacher's desk in a designated area during class time. Students will have access to their phones between classes and over lunch time message their friends.

I'm also asking all staff to refrain from using their cell phones during class time as well. That includes me. My phone is in my office desk. If folks want to reach me, they can reach me through the school phone number. In addition, we would appreciate that if parents are wanting to reach their children that they do so through the office as well.

On another note, I know there's been much talk about the schedule for next year. I want to take this opportunity to clarify and correct some misinformation that has been circulating through the community. We are changing the schedule so that our start time will begin at 8:40 a.m. which is a change from the existing 8:25 a.m. The reason behind this is to provide the rural kids, who were getting on the bus as early as 7 a.m. the opportunity to get a few more minutes of sleep before getting on the bus. We've been able to make some adjustments with the timetable that means we're only needing to bump the day ahead to 3:15 p.m. from our existing 3:10 p.m. We still meet our mandatory instructional minutes required by Alberta Ed and the required 60 minutes of recess for our

elementary students required by Grasslands School Division. I know there has been some concern about this change, but we feel it is necessary to do so for our students' sake. I've enclosed the timetable as well.

In addition, we are making a change in the high school by adopting the modified quarter system. In the past years because we are a rural school, many of our classes have been split classes. This means, for example, a 30 - 1 and a 30 -2 group shared the same classroom and teaching time with a teacher. Essentially, this meant sharing the amount of time spent teaching between each group of students, which greatly affected how much time students were being taught their educational outcomes. In order to correct this situation, we needed to come up with a schedule that would allow us to have more dedicated time for each grouping of students. So beginning next year, the grade 10 & 11 students will have 78 minute periods (more instructional time and fewer splits) and the grade 12 will operate on a quarter system (two blocks of 156 minutes each per day for 8 ½ weeks and fewer or no splits). They will write their diplomas 4 times throughout the year instead of two times per year. Many of our students struggle with test anxiety, feeling the pressure to get good grades for university entrance. We believe this will help alleviate some of those challenges. Also, some students will be done all their programming in April.

This is not the first time a school has tried this, in fact, Central Catholic School in Lethbridge has been doing this for the past 15 years. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOncv1vIZAk> However, in their case they have been doing this from grade 10 through 12. We are only looking at doing this with grade 12 students next year. From a scheduling perspective, it allows us to provide separate classes for students so that they will have more instructional time to cover their outcomes.

Learning is the most important thing for us at the school. We want students to be engaged. We need to do things differently so that we as teachers are engaging our students more as well. It's a team effort overall.

Timetable 2016 - 17

4 Block / Quad			8 Block			Elementary	
TIME	High School		TIME	Jr. High			
WARNING BELL AT 8:36 8:40 – 9:58 (78 min)	1		WARNING BELL AT 8:36 8:40 –9:18 (38 min)	1		WARNING BELL AT 8:36 8:40 –9:20 (40 min)	1
			9:20 - 9:58 (38 min)	2		9:20 -10:00 (40 min)	2
10:05 - 11:23 (78 min)	2		10:05 - 10:43 (38 min)	3		10:00 – 10:15 (15 min)	Recess
					10:15 – 10:55 (40 min)	3	
11:25 – 11:55 (30 min)	RRI		10:45 – 11:23 (38 min)	4		10:55 – 11:35 (40 min)	4
			11:25 – 11:55 (30 min)	RRI		11:35 – 12:15 (40 mins)	5
LUNCH 11:55 – 12:33 (38 min)	Lunch		LUNCH 11:55 – 12:33 (38 min)	Lunch		Lunch 12:15 – 12:35 (20 min)	Lunch
WARNING BELL AT 12:33 12:36 - 1:54 (78 min)	3		WARNING BELL AT 12:33 12:36 - 1:14 (38 min)	5		Recess 12:35 - 1:05 (30 min)	Recess
			1:16 - 1:54 (38 min)	6		1:05 - 1:44 (39 min)	6
1:57 – 3:15 (78 min)	4		1:57 – 2:35 (38 min)	7		1:44 – 2:22 (38 min)	7
					2:22 – 3:00 (38 min)	8	
			2:37 - 3:15 (38 min)	8		3:00 - 3:15 (15 min)	Recess