

CONESTOGA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TOWNHALL

SUPERINTENDENT, DR. BETH JOHNSEN

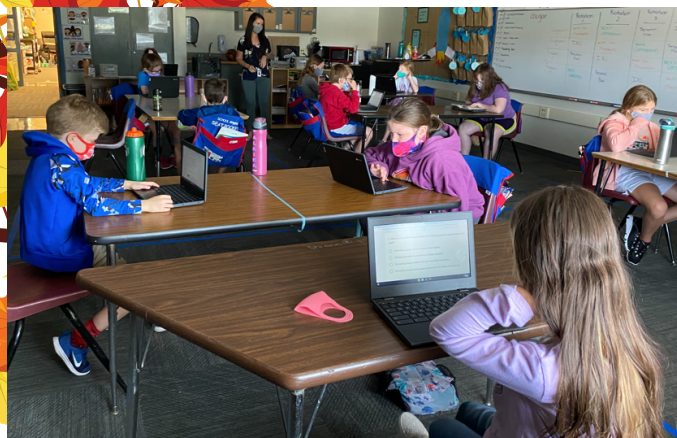
FALL GREETINGS!

Conestoga will be finishing up on the first quarter of school on October 16, 2020. And with this milestone, we are gaining strength in the belief that we can get through a school year by having classes in the buildings. As a school community, we are working together to keep everyone safe and healthy. Our school statistics for individuals who had tested positive are at three people since our closing on March 13, 2020 (last school year). This is a low number, if we consider the 800+ people that are in the two buildings during each school day. Between families, students, and staff, we are working to maintain and continuously improve the school environment.

A normal day of school has students and staff wearing masks and limiting the contact of others within the classrooms. It's a surreal world to watch learning happen with everyone wearing masks. Everybody is doing their part in keeping all others safe. The community-conformity of wearing masks is heart-warming because it truly shows that everyone is thinking about protecting the people around them.

There's a new Direct Health Measure (9/21/20) sent out by Governor Ricketts that gives more directives to the quarantining and isolation of school-aged individuals. The DHM has a focus on the wearing of masks. Within the school setting, if people are wearing masks and they have been in close contact to a COVID19 positive person, who also had a mask on, then only the person who is COVID19 positive will isolate and the others will self-monitor. The wearing of masks by everyone at school and events reduce the spread of the virus and the need to quarantine those who have had the close contact. This will be a big difference in the number of people who would have to quarantine!

Please help us recognize and celebrate the efforts by students, families, and staff to keep our schools safe.



Here's the recent summary document that helps simplify the process, when a school would need to investigate a contact-tracing of a COVID19 positive scenario.

NALHD
Nebraska Association of Learning and Health Districts
COVID-19 RESPONSE

Investigations: PreK-12 Settings

- In all scenarios below, a student is considered a **close contact** when they have been within **6 feet of the COVID-19 positive individual for 15 minutes**.
- If the exposure occurs during extracurricular activities that take place outdoors or in large spaces (such as gyms) where 6-foot distance can be maintained, in lieu of quarantine, close contacts may self-monitor.
- In all scenarios below, **students who are self-monitoring are required to wear masks**.
- PreK-12 students who are a **close contact due to exposure to a household member are required to quarantine**.

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| <p><i>When a masked child tests positive and close contacts were wearing masks...</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">ISOLATE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">SELF-MONITOR</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; padding: 5px;">COVID POSITIVE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">CLOSE CONTACTS</div> </div> <p><i>Everyone Masked</i></p> | <p><i>When an unmasked child tests positive and close contacts were wearing masks...</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">ISOLATE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">QUARANTINE</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; padding: 5px;">COVID POSITIVE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">CLOSE CONTACTS</div> </div> <p><i>Close Contacts Masked</i></p> |
| <p><i>When a masked child tests positive and SOME close contacts were wearing masks...</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">ISOLATE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">QUARANTINE</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; padding: 5px;">COVID POSITIVE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">SELF-MONITOR</div> </div> <p><i>Some Close Contacts Masked</i></p> | <p><i>When an unmasked child tests positive and close contacts were NOT wearing masks...</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">ISOLATE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">QUARANTINE</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; padding: 5px;">COVID POSITIVE</div> <div style="background-color: #002060; color: white; padding: 5px;">CLOSE CONTACTS</div> </div> <p><i>No One Masked</i></p> |

Version - September 21, 2020

A NOTE FROM THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

MR. ERIC DENNIS



As I am around and about in the community, the two most common questions I am asked are how is school and how are the students adjusting to all the new guidelines? In my observations during the past five weeks of school, the teachers have done an outstanding job of making sure how we educate the students has not changed. The teachers continue to use their data to drive their instruction and will make instructional adjustments as needed.

As far as everyone is adjusting to the new guidelines, the staff and students are adjusting very well. The teachers have done an excellent job at social distancing the students and the students have done an outstanding job at wearing their masks. It seems to have become a habit that when students get up out of their seats, they immediately put on a mask.

What has been hard for students is not being able to play with all of their friends at recess or sit with them at lunch. The socialization aspect of school is a very important part of a student's education. We as educators will have to keep a closer eye on our students to make sure that mentally, our students are doing well. I am still a little worried that the longer the students have to social distance from their friends the more social/emotional issues we will see. I also know that Conestoga Elementary has a caring staff that will continue to make sure all aspects of school are being met for all students.

As of today, in my opinion, we will have a full school year without having to do virtual learning as we did last year. We will continue to wear our masks, social distance and take all precautions necessary to keep our students healthy. I have always known Conestoga to be a hidden gem in the state of Nebraska, and it really shows during these challenging times.



COACHES CORNER

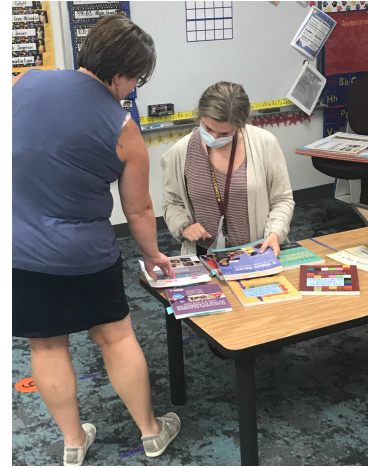
ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL COACH, MRS. TONKIN



This month, Mrs. Bobbi Keene and I started offering coaching sessions at the elementary school. Coaching sessions are offered each month and occur at the end of the school day. This month, we offered sessions on phonemic awareness and subitizing.

In our Phonemic Awareness Session, Mrs. Keene gave our teachers ideas on how to help students hear and identify phonemes in words. She outlined activities and presented resources that teachers could use to further reinforce phonemic awareness among our students. These skills are the basic building blocks for reading and writing words, therefore they are essential for all students to have mastered before they leave the primary grades.

Our session on subitizing focused on giving students opportunities to build their number sense and working memory. Subitizing is the skill of looking at a group of objects and being able to tell how many there are without counting each one. This is an important number sense skill. We know that strong number sense sets students up for success in the later grades. After attending this session, teachers left with several resources and ideas for practicing this important number sense skill in their classrooms.



CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT CORNER

DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT, MRS. BERGMAYER

Students and staff at Conestoga have truly pulled together to overcome so many challenges in order to start the year off successfully. October 16th will be the end of first quarter and quite the quarter it has been. Students at Conestoga have embraced a "new normal" and have been understanding of the changes. What are all the changes? In addition to daily mask wearing and learning via Zoom... or with Zoom learners.... and even Zoom teachers when necessary, they have also learned to work with the same group of classmates, day in and day out, rather than rotating rooms like in the past. They have cultivated new friendships from sitting with these same peers on a daily basis. Imagine only seeing some classmates when passing in the hall! They have learned the meaning of teamwork from watching our teachers truly live the meaning of collaboration and teamwork. Teachers and assistants have created learning environments in cooperative spaces, on a cart, on a moment's notice due to classroom adjustments, and even in the smallest of spaces like a tiny backroom or under the stairs! Learning is continuing to happen in so many fantastic ways at Conestoga Public Schools— can't be stopped! Great year to be a Conestoga Cougar!

A NOTE FROM THE JR./SR. HIGH PRINCIPAL

MR. ROB GEISE

We continue to move forward with the goal of serving our students the best we can. Both teachers and students are finding some normalcy during a very abnormal time. The students continue to amaze me with how they've embraced our rules and procedures we have in place so we can be in school. In addition, both students and teachers are doing great with our new block schedule. The technology we possess has elevated our abilities to provide our students with an amazing educational experience.

Another adjustment we'll be making is moving our fall Parent-Teacher Conferences to a virtual format. Students will be filling out information pertaining to areas of growth as well as strengths. They'll be setting goals for their future and even sharing work. By becoming a part of the conference with their parents, it becomes a student-owned conference. I'm extremely proud of our students, staff, parents and community for coming together during a difficult time. Conestoga truly is an amazing place.

STUDENT SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES, MRS. WRIGHT

Ensuring Social Emotional Success of Our Students

Social Emotional Learning has long been identified as a critical area for success in the life of any child. It is even more important now due to COVID 19. While a great majority of people have had to deal with disruptions in their lives due to the pandemic, it has had a greater impact on children. Almost everything they were used to has been altered including home life, interacting with peers, and school.

Because we recognize the importance of social emotional learning, now more than ever, Conestoga Public Schools continues to create a system of social-emotional support linked directly to the assessed needs of our students. We accomplish this through the screening of students' social emotional health. The basis of the screening is to provide all students with timely and targeted support based upon the results of screening in the area of social-emotional behavior.

The screener focuses on social-emotional areas that affect academic engagement, such as low academic achievement, negative attitude, withdrawal, seeming sad or anxious. The screener refines and strengthens our efforts to help all of our students be successful by allowing us to take positive and preventative measures as early as possible.

During the month of October and again in the Spring, a teacher familiar with your child, will complete the social-emotional screener for our students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. In addition, students in grades 2nd through 12th will complete a survey concerning how they feel about their own social, academic, and emotional behaviors.

Participation in the student self-survey is voluntary. More information will be shared with parents on details of the screener, how to opt their child out of the self-survey if they so choose, and how screener results will be used to assist students.

MATH 7-10

MATH TEACHERS, MRS. DEWISPELARE AND MS. SCHREINER

This year has gotten off to an interesting start for everyone, but Ms. Schreiner and Mrs. DeWispelare say that they are seeing a sense of normalcy happening in their classrooms. "They are starting to get into the rhythm of things," stated Schreiner. One thing that the teachers were excited about was to have class sets of the same calculators from 7th grade all the way through 12th. The goal with this was so students could use the same skills from year to year using the same model of calculator, a TI-34, which can be used on the ACT. Mrs. DeWispelare's classes have been following protocols so well that she rewarded them with a Scoot activity (pictured) where students get to roam around the room, while staying distanced, and find hidden math clues.



ZOOM, ZOOM, ZOOM

JR./SR. INSTRUCTIONAL COACH, MS. LEWIS

Zoom. It's quite a dynamic tool for both our students and teachers at Conestoga. Zoom provides opportunities for our students to remote into class during quarantine and remote learning. The Conestoga students and staff have utilized numerous features to make the learning environment as diverse as possible. Breakout rooms, small groups, and class meetings allow students to work together remotely. Very similar to FaceTime or Skype, Zoom is a video conferencing tool that allows for participants to work simultaneously in a virtual environment.

Zoom has also provided opportunities for our staff to work with our ESU 3 consultants and other professional development experts to grow in their abilities to teach synchronously and asynchronously. Zoom places a lot of flexibility in a teacher's schedules to schedule meetings with parents, colleagues, and consultants at ESU 3. Zoom will be utilized to schedule virtual parent-teacher conferences this fall.

COLLEGE PASSPORT

7-12 GUIDANCE COUNSELOR, MRS. KREIFELS

With the help of our EducationQuest Grant we are looking to roll out a new program for our 9–12th grade students in the next month or so. The program is the College Passport program. Each student will be issued a booklet with pages full of activities that will expose, promote, and prepare them for post–secondary education. Many of the activities will be done at school, but others will be up to the student to complete. Some examples of the activities may include: campus visits, college rep visits, taking dual credit classes, job shadow, completing scholarship applications, creating an activities resume, etc. Staff members will stamp the booklets when tasks are completed. Students that complete and turn in the booklet before they graduate will receive incentives and rewards for doing so.

PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

SCIENCE TEACHER, MR. HUSKEY

Physics class will be completing two units over Newton's laws, forces and motion. At the end of this unit and the end of the first quarter they will apply those principles to construction of a bridge made from basswood strips. The goal of each bridge will be to have the highest efficiency, not necessarily just hold the most weight. Efficiency will be determined by dividing the weight it holds by the weight of the bridge. This will hopefully simulate an engineering project where cost and strength are both taken into consideration.

Astronomy class did an excellent job with their ABC Star Projects. They developed power point presentations with 26 slides, each representing a letter of the alphabet with a term or terms familiar to Astronomy. For example: A might stand for Asterism, H for Hubble constant, etc. A couple screen shots of those finished slides are attached below.

ACTIVITIES AT CONESTOGA

ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR, MR. JASON AHRENS

We are two months into the fall sports season and one thing is for certain this fall will definitely be one to remember due to all the Covid–19 protocols and procedures that have been put into place by our school and our opponents to help lessen the risk of the virus.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all Cougar fans, athletes, and coaches for following all of the procedures and while still working to create a good atmosphere and memorable experiences for our students. We have been fortunate so far and only have had to cancel a few practices and games for our teams. As we head into our final month of our fall season please continue to follow all protocols to help ensure our teams and students continue competing throughout the remainder of the season.

Upcoming October Home Events: Specific protocols and procedures for all Cougar home events and the most up to date information on all upcoming contests, can be found online at www.conestogacougars.org under the Covid–19 information tab on district's main page.

10/2 FRIDAY

7pm V FB Home v. Cedar Bluffs

10/5 MONDAY

5pm C/JV VB vs. Louisville (High School)

5pm C/B/A JH VB v. Louisville (Elementary)

5:30pm JV FB vs. JCC

10/6 TUESDAY

5pm JV/V VB vs. Falls City

10/8 THURSDAY

6pm JH FB vs. Auburn (Home)

10/10 SATURDAY

9am Varsity VB Tri @ Conestoga

10/13 TUESDAY

7pm HS Music– Virtual

10/15 THURSDAY

5pm C/B/A JH VBall v. Palmyra (Elementary)

7pm V FB v. Brownell–Talbot



SOFTBALL

COACH, MRS. SARAH DEWISPELARE



This season has been our first season as a co-op with Louisville and it has overall gone really well. One of our main goals was to create a positive and cohesive environment, which we truly believe we have succeeded in. In any situation you can find negatives, but even trying to look for them, they are hard to find.



However, we have sustained multiple injuries this season, which has been less than desirable, but with that, we have gotten to witness these girls come together as a team and rally around our hurt players and battle even harder, and we are so honored to not only witness that, but be a part of it. Seeing these girls work together shows us every day that this co-op was a perfect fit for us. So far, our records are better than they were last year which is also a great benefit. We hope to make it past districts and on to state to compete and show everyone what we've got as the Cass Wildcats!

THE RACE IS ON

CROSS COUNTRY COACH, MR. SEAN TRAMPE

The 2020 cross country team has had an interesting start to their season. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, runners have had to be resilient and adaptive in order to find success. Our team has shown great resolve in overcoming several obstacles this season, and their ability to remain steadfast in the face of adversity is a testament to the character that each runner possesses. As a coach, it's hard to ask for much more than an athlete's best effort, and I'm constantly impressed by the willingness of our team to go beyond "good enough".

Our season began on August 10th and was abruptly put on pause on August 12th, when we subjected to a team-wide quarantine. Not ideal. Runners were up to the task of continuing their training independently while under quarantine, but there is no substitute for practice in a traditional setting. Our return came the day before our first scheduled competition, and our results showed a real lack of preparedness. If I could go back and not run that first race, I would still make the same decision to run. Our team was unsatisfied with their efforts and took it upon themselves to go above and beyond a normal workload to make up for lost time.

Since our first meet, improvement has been both substantial and steady. It's evident that our runners have made great strides to become more competitive. Although we aren't where we ultimately want to be, I'm confident that we are on the right track and will peak at the right time. Coaching this team is always an honor, and seeing our athletes grow as they overcome difficult situations reminds me of how great of kids I get to work with every day.

You can follow our teams' seasons by visiting conestogaxc.com. Thank you for your continued support of our athletes, our team, and our school community as a whole.



Conestoga Public Schools
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