

Via the Seine | Special Report

Planning our next steps | *A message from Superintendent Michael Borgfjord*

June is finally here, but it's unlike any June we have experienced before. In light of the province's latest COVID-19 announcement about Phase 2, we have been working hard to open up schools and make accommodations to safely welcome visits from students who need extra attention and one-on-one time with our teachers and staff. All other students will continue with their distance learning. The letter we sent to families last week outlines Seine River School Division's new plans and

guidelines for how this will work.

We continue to plan our next steps, including what school will look like in the fall, with honesty, empathy and respect for our entire education community.

We are also committed to continue communicating openly with you, and we hope you've been inspired by the stories you've read in our first two Special Report issues of Via the Seine. I know I have been both moved and encouraged by the dedication and

innovation of our staff, students and families, despite the challenges we are all facing. Our staff and students continue to demonstrate tremendous humanity and care towards others, which is essential in a productive democratic society. It is at times like these when support, compassion and assisting those in need is what becomes the most important. We appreciate your patience and support as we continue to ensure children's learning needs are met. ◉

The show must go... online!

When students at La Salle School found out the May performance of their school musical would be cancelled, they were crushed.

About 40 Grade 5-8 students had been rehearsing for Annie Jr. since September. But music teacher Andrea Kuhl found a way to give the students a new show to work towards: an online musical.

Kuhl came across "The Show Must Go Online! A Virtual Children's Musical" – a show hastily created by Beat by Beat Press to solve exactly this dilemma – which tells the story of students who rally together to produce their cancelled school musical online.

About half of the original students have joined the cast of the new musical, which has 24 speaking and/or singing scenes, each filmed like a video meeting. Kuhl meets with each student weekly to rehearse through a video chat.

"Kids everywhere have experienced a lot of losses with things being cancelled, so it's really important to continue to have a connection to the things we are passionate about," Kuhl explains. "It has been the highlight of my day to connect with these students."

Details of the final edited performance are still being worked out, but Kuhl hopes to share the musical with the group in an online watch party. ◉



◉ Grade 2 ARB teacher Wendy Guenther reads to her student Nicklas H. and his two little brothers during a socially distanced driveway visit in May.

Meet me in the driveway

Staff at Arbogate School found a fun and meaningful way to connect with students – at a safe distance.

"Many of our students are missing face-to-face interactions. To try and maintain some of those connections, I took my lawn chair on tour and read with students in their driveways," says ARB Resource Teacher Lindsey Cechvala. "It's definitely been a highlight for me and I hope the kids enjoy it as much as I do!"

Grade 2 teacher Wendy Guenther and educational assistant Kristy Morken teamed up to do the same, visiting students to read a book and chat with each of them, bringing treat bags plus items the students had left at school.

"It was amazing to see and connect with our students, and get a sense of how they are doing," Guenther says. "The children and their parents appreciated it, but in the end I think we were the ones that felt most blessed to have seen their bright, smiling faces and talk with them in person!" ◉

Feeding hungry families

When schools closed, more than just learning was at risk – many families who rely on school-provided meal programs stood to lose important support. So all of the Division’s schools that run food programs quickly adapted their plans.

“We told the schools to do whatever they needed to do to make sure that support was still there, and they’ve been very creative,” says Superintendent Mike Borgfjord.

Here are a few examples of what schools have been doing to feed hungry families with healthy food options over the last 10 weeks.



▶ Educational Assistant Tammy Engel makes cookies in the CLC Foods and Nutrition kitchen to deliver to families.

École St. Norbert Immersion

The ESNI team, which throughout the year focuses on its daily snack program providing fruits and vegetables to students, is now distributing grocery gift cards to families with diverse needs.

“We wanted to be respectful of varied dietary needs within our diverse community, and didn’t want to presume what families would need at this time. We recognize that this has been a difficult time for many families and we wanted to alleviate one of the many stressors they may have,” says ESNI Learning Support Teacher Brigitte Kiazuk-Mykytyn.

Ste. Anne Elementary and Ste. Anne Collegiate

In March, food from the canteen and food studies class was donated to the local food bank. The SAE guidance counsellor now shops bi-weekly at a local grocery store for healthy food, which is then packaged and delivered to families of both schools by a group of staff and volunteers.

“While it may have been possible to get things cheaper at a box store, it’s important to support local businesses. This is a small gesture that helps the school stay connected with families and let them know we care,” says SAE School Guidance Counsellor Corinne Ambrosio.

Collège Lorette Collegiate

The school uses money from the Foods and Nutrition and cafeteria budgets to create “wellness hampers” of food and household items twice a month.

“A team of 10 dedicated staff members shop for the food at the local Marketplace, pack the items at school, then deliver the hampers, following proper social distancing protocols. They even cooked up a storm one day making things like Shepherd’s pie, chicken chili and muffins for the families,” recalls Lise Turenne, Social Work Clinician for CLC and École Lorette Immersion.

Parc La Salle School

Food from PLS’s daily breakfast and snack programs was donated to several families when schools closed. Since then, the music and physical education teachers deliver food hampers to some PLS families every Friday.

“We wanted to make sure that the supports we were providing to children and families while they were in school are still being provided. The families have been very appreciative,” says Principal Teresa Hampton.

Richer School

Staff quickly formed a committee to decide how to distribute donations from local businesses and community members. They decided to purchase gift cards for families to shop in their local communities.

“Because of the rural nature of our community, this allows them to use the funds to meet their own specific needs at a grocery store. We all need to work together to support each other so our children and families can continue to thrive,” explains RCH Guidance Counsellor Carolyn Plett. ◉



▶ Breakfast and snack foods, plus egg coupons, that PLS had on hand when schools closed were distributed to families.