

## Newsletter For October 2020



### From the Principal's Desk

Though it has certainly been a different start to the school year, I could not be more proud of our staff and students and community with respect to the way in which everyone quickly adjusted to the new routines associated with ensuring everyone's safety and wellbeing. At Erin PS, we are so very fortunate to have so many exterior doors that no one door is being used by a maximum of two classes. In fact, most of our classrooms have their own exterior door. From the start of the school day, when students immediately join their class lineups, to the structure for buses outside at the end of the day, the students have been doing a good job of adhering to the new normal. Students have also been very receptive to playing in assigned areas during recess, their scheduled washroom breaks and not having access to lockers. The one thing I would ask is parents' help in reminding students about the importance of social distancing while out on the yard. This is something we are still working on. Other positive notes evident from the start of the school year include the dramatic decrease in students arriving late each morning as well as the number of students remembering to bring their work, personal resources and lunch from home each day. The extra efforts of everyone have been noted and greatly appreciated! A special thank you parents, for your very obvious support of our students as they navigate this new normal.

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On September 30th we had our annual **Terry Fox Walk** and although we could not hold a school-wide event, teachers signed up their classes and walked the track in recognition of Terry and his dream of some day eradicating cancer.

September 30th was also the designated **Orange Shirt Day**, and our students spent time learning about indigenous children who were taken out of their homes and put into residential schools, the damage that had inflicted and the efforts for reconciliation.

October 5th marks **World Teachers' Day**. We are very grateful to our own EPS teachers who are so dedicated to their chosen profession and have emerged as leaders in these unprecedented times of the global pandemic. Thank you for all that you do, every day!

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### **Virtual Open House**

As a result of the restrictions associated with the pandemic, the traditional in-person Open House for parents is not possible this year. However, please note that a **Virtual Open House** will occur on **Friday, October 9th**. Please check your child's Google Classroom on October 9th to meet their teacher, and see their classroom, through a slideshow or video.

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### **October 24 Child Care Worker and ECE Appreciation Day**

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### **Remote/In-school Switch Update:**

The board is currently working on a plan that will allow students to switch from the current learning model (in-person to remote and vice versa). A survey will be going out next week for families who would like to switch their child's current placement. **The survey will be open for a week**, giving parents time to decide what they want to do – the survey does not need to be completed on the first day. The first day of class for students who wish to switch models will be **Nov. 30**. *Please watch the school and board websites next week, as well as social media, for notifications of the survey being sent out.*

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### **Communication With Your Child's Teacher**

As a reminder, please note that communication with your child's teacher is facilitated through Google Classroom. Each teacher has access to a Google Classroom (the same platform used during last spring's Distance Learning) for home/school communication. The Google Classroom replaces the traditional school agenda, commonly used by teachers and parents for communication purposes.

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### **Life-Threatening Allergies**

We have children in our school with potential life-threatening allergies to various foods and other materials called anaphylaxis. This is a medical condition that causes a severe reaction to food or other materials, and can cause death within minutes. In recent years, anaphylaxis has increased dramatically among students. Although this may not affect your child's class directly, we are letting you know so that you may refrain from sending foods to the school that contain peanuts and nuts. We aim to create an allergy safe environment at our school. If your child is in

a classroom with an anaphylactic child, or your child has anaphylaxis, you will be contacted by the classroom teacher. Our school has procedures in place to help manage anaphylactic reactions. If your child has health concerns of any kind, please tell your child's teacher or the office and we will take the necessary health protection steps. Thank you for your understanding in ensuring an allergy-safe environment for all of our students.

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### **Kiss and Ride Area on Erindale**

Thank you to all those who are using this space for dropping students off. It has made such a big difference! We have fewer students crossing Daniel street at the start and end of the day and the street is much less busy with traffic and safer for the substantial number of school buses. Thank you also to all of the parents who are taking care not to come onto the property. We are always happy to see you, but are working really hard at making sure the students do not have to walk through crowds.

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### **Talking about Mental Health**

Welcome back! Whether remote learning or in-building learning, we are all facing a very different return to school. At UGDSB we have committed to ensuring a welcoming, safe and mentally healthy return to school. Although we don't know exactly what the next months will look like we DO know that the best way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships (Wheatley, 2004, Disturb Me, Please). We need to all commit to continued learning and, especially, to reflecting deeply on the inequities that have been amplified through the pandemic (School Mental Health Ontario, 2020). We need to SEE students and give them space to tell their stories, to feel like they belong, to build relationships and to feel safe and welcomed. And we need to continue to prioritize mental health and well-being at our schools.

We are excited to share with our parent/family community the launch of the UGDSB Umbrella Project! Through a teacher-led curriculum and school-based activities this program helps us all to explore ways to manage the everyday stressors of life. Every month a new theme will be the focus across the board from staff, to students and beyond. We hope that you will join us in this important work because as caregivers you have a powerful impact on childhood well-being.

**Why an umbrella?** The umbrella represents the ways in which our skill sets can protect us from and help us work through some of the everyday stressors we are faced with. Just like the weather there will be calm days and stormy days. We can't control the weather, but we can keep ensuring that we have a strong umbrella.

**How can you participate?** Every month my Talking About Mental Health article will focus on the theme of the month., This month is the introduction of this important work. So, what can you do at home?

- Talk about what things help you face difficult days?
- Make a list of words that represent "wellness" to you

- Keep a wellness jar with words, pictures or phrases that can be taken out by other family members when they need a little boost
- Put something on your fridge (maybe a big umbrella cutout!) that represents the skills you will be building through the year
- Talk about how to find support if you aren't feeling mentally healthy

Keep your eyes open for next month's theme! Join our wellness community and follow along with the Upper Grand's Umbrella Project each month. You can also follow on social media #UGUmbrella.

Jenny Marino, Mental Health Lead

#ugdsb\_mental\_health. #UGUmbrella

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### **Video Surveillance**

This is a reminder that Erin PS, similar to all schools in the UGDSB, is outfitted with video surveillance cameras, both inside and outside the building. The purpose of the video surveillance cameras is to ensure student/staff safety, and to help reduce vandalism at UGDSB schools. School administration must follow the UGDSB's video surveillance policy, which can be viewed here: <https://www.ugdsb.ca/board/policy/policy-203-video-surveillance/>. Signage is posted on the outside of the school noting that video cameras are active.

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### **First Nation, Métis, Inuit Self-identification**

If your child is a member of a First Nation, the Métis or the Inuit, please consider having him or her self-identify. Self-identification helps in several ways:

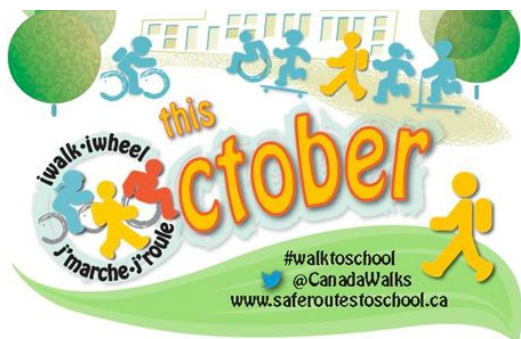
1. Students will have access to more culturally relevant programming and opportunities for unique cultural and academic experiences.
  2. The school system will have an opportunity to focus efforts and resources, as well as an increased awareness of the diverse needs of indigenous families.
  3. The school community will have an opportunity for building relationships to increase student success and well-being. Share your pride in your heritage! Please come to the office (or have your child do so) to get a card that can be filled in and submitted if you wish to self-identify. Data will be protected and governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
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### **Upper Grand Learning Foundation**

Lately the school has had a number of requests from parents and community members who would like to donate money to the school. As a means to assist the school with financial donations, parents are encouraged to utilize the Upper Grand Learning Foundation. Charitable tax receipts are provided for donations of \$20 or more and only when the donor's name and address are provided in full. For more information regarding the Upper Grand Learning Foundation and the process through which to donate, please visit [www.uppergrandlearningfoundation.com](http://www.uppergrandlearningfoundation.com)

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## Oct 7th IS INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL DAY!



Participate in International Walk to School Day on October 7th 2020!

In October we celebrate “active travel” by encouraging students to walk or bike between home and school, or to actively travel as much as they can in their local environments.

“In the ParticipACTION Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, the overall grade for children remains at a D- for the third year in a row. Overall, only 9% of 5-17 year olds are getting the 60 minutes of

heart-pumping activity they need each day. And sadly, only 24% of 5-17 year olds are walking/wheeling/rolling to school. Our tendency to constantly watch over them or keep them indoors to ensure they are safe from risk limits their opportunities for physical activity, endangering their long-term health.” <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/>

4 ways that walking, biking or rolling can benefit kids

by Katherine Martinko

- Outside activity is known to improve academic performance. Children that have had some outside time in the morning arrive brighter and more alert for their first morning class.
- Walking gives children good life experience. It’s an opportunity for them to be independent, think responsibly, and make decisions for themselves. Some children feel less anxiety about being at school when they know how to get home.
- Walking gets children outdoors – and, according to Richard Louv, who wrote about Nature Deficit Disorder, kids certainly aren’t spending enough time outside these days. Find opportunities for your child to get outside and get moving by walking, biking, skipping, or rolling too!
- Walking/biking/rolling provides daily exercise for children. Obesity rates have skyrocketed in North America, so incorporating physical activity into a child’s daily routine is a good place to start fighting it.

Encourage your children to get outside and get active!