

# WELCOME AT THE START OF THE 2019/20 SCHOOL YEAR

## PRAIRIE SPIRIT SCHOOL DIVISION



### Welcome back!

On behalf of the Prairie Spirit Board of Education, I would like to welcome you back to another year of learning together in Prairie Spirit School Division!

Our students are returning to school today on **Provincial Students' Day**. The Minister of Education designates Provincial Students' Day each year to acknowledge the importance of all students and to alert drivers that students are back in school.

This special day to recognize students was proposed by the Prairie Spirit Board of Education in 2009 and has been proclaimed throughout the province at the start of the school year ever since.

#### **Staff commitment: Service Awards 2019**

We would like to congratulate staff members who have reached significant milestones in their employment with Prairie Spirit this year.

Please go to the following [link](#) (posted on the All Staff portal) to see the list of employees who have reached 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35+ years of employment as of September 1, 2019. We would like to thank everyone on this list for being a member of the Prairie Spirit team and for their dedicated work to support learning!

These staff members will receive information about their service award options from Nadine Meister, Assistant to the Director, via Prairie Spirit email over the next several weeks.

#### **Investing for the future**

The work of educating students is never done. It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. Every year a class graduates and another class begins kindergarten. The education sector does not build the future; however, we can and must build FOR the future.

Every act of kindness to a student, every minute invested in teaching a child to read or write and every work of art or music created — all that will find its way into the future.

I will try to explain this idea by borrowing an image from author N.T. Wright in his book, *Surprised by Hope*. It is that of a stonemason working on a part of a giant cathedral.

The architect has drawn up the plans and the foreman has passed on instructions to the team of masons, as to which stones need carving which way.

The foreman distributes the tasks among the team. One shapes stones for a particular tower, another works on a coat of arms, still another chisels out a frame for a stained glass window.

When they are finished with their stones, they hand them over to other workers without necessarily knowing what the final product will look like.

They trust the architect that the work they have done will not be wasted. The stonemasons are not building the cathedral themselves, but they are building FOR the cathedral and when the project is complete, their work will be enhanced and mean much more than it could have as they were chiseling and shaping it down in the stonemason's yard.

No single person can craft every stone for the entire cathedral! And there is a sense of freedom in realizing that. This enables us to focus on a few stones, to craft them very well, so they have the most impact.

The work we do in the present gains its full significance in the future of each student as they contribute to the greater society.



The Board believes each Prairie Spirit student is a cathedral under construction. It is our privilege to serve our Prairie Spirit staff members as you support our students in a variety of ways.

**Sam Dyck,**  
**Board Chair**  
**Prairie Spirit Board of Education**



Dalmeny High School

Borden School

Aberdeen Composite School

## Know Your Impact

In his picture book, *The DOT*, Peter Reynolds tells the story of a girl in art class. She is sitting alone in the room with a blank piece of paper in front of her and it is clear by the look on her face that she is frustrated.

Her teacher begs her to put something – anything – on the paper and so, the little girl raises her pencil crayon and brings it down onto the paper.

When she lifts up her arm, she has left a dot! Her teacher picks up the paper, looks at the dot with a furrowed brow and intense focus. After a moment or two, her teacher hands the paper back to the little girl and says, “Sign it!”

The next time the girl comes to art class, she notices that her “dot” is in a gold picture frame hanging on the wall behind her teacher’s desk. She thinks to herself, “I can make a better dot than that!” In the next few weeks, she goes on to prove just that. She paints every size and color of dot imaginable.

In classrooms, hallways and staff rooms all across Prairie Spirit, you have been gathering to prepare your spaces and environments for the learners who arrived today.

My hope is that *My Prairie Spirit Classroom* is providing a framework for you in which you will consider what to pay attention to – big ideas, choices, co-construction, side by side and how the learning might unfold.

Like the teacher in the story of *The DOT*, you are paying attention to the impact you will have on the learners and the learning in the environment you are responsible for.

You are thinking about how to engage your learners, who you might need to inspire, and how you will respond to those who might be timid or reluctant.

In each situation – a morning greeting in the hallway, a game of pointing tag on the playground, an acknowledgement of a question, or a story shared before a volleyball practice – you will be impacting the person you are interacting with, as well as those who are watching or listening.

Some might hear the words: “*You cannot NOT model!*” in the background.

As I invite you to think about your impact, I am mindful that you will need supports and inspiration as a learner as well. I wonder how we might encourage you to step outside, get some air and remind yourself of who you are and who you want to be?

How might we support you as a side by side learner in your big ideas, choice and next steps?

I can only imagine how long that art teacher had been waiting for the little girl to create something or how much recess time had already gone by waiting for the young artist to finish her assignment.

We can’t really hear all of the things that are going on in the teacher’s mind, but by her response to the dot, we can infer at least one thing: that teacher knew and valued that little girl.

At the end of the story, all of the girl’s dot pictures end up in an art gallery display in the school and we see a young boy looking up at the artwork in awe. He says, “I wish I could paint like that! I can’t even draw a straight line!”

The young girl gives him a paper and says: “Show me!” He hesitantly draws a line on the page. She looks at it for a long time. She furrows her brow and focuses intently. Then she hands back the paper and says, “Sign it”.



We are so pleased to have staff members like you supporting students and impacting learning in Prairie Spirit! The possibilities are endless! It all starts with a dot.

What mark will you make?

**Lori Jeschke,**  
**Director of Education**  
**Prairie Spirit School Division**