

March 15-18, 2021

What are the Thunderbirds Up To?



Shoulder-touch push ups and fitness challenges in P.E.



Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) time in the growing dome!



Learning Covid Safe Four-Square for Daily Physical Activity (DPA)



Sharing messages of GRATITUDE and HOPE throughout the school.



Speaking of feathers... students had a visit from Alex the 5-month old cockatiel who is working on learning some new words and practicing new songs.



Adorning feathers and getting crafty with Kukom

Parent Teacher Interviews and Report Cards

Teachers have been working busily on report cards for the end of Term 2. Parent teacher interviews take place March 16-17, 4:00-7:00pm and will be conducted remotely as we did in the Fall.

Teachers will be sending information about booking timeslots via Google Meet or phone call, based on your preference. It is important to note that regardless of barriers to attendance and in-person learning and transitions between LTA, self-isolation, and being in class, all students are required to meet curricular outcomes in order to progress grade levels. Now is the time to ask your teacher what your child needs to do to be successful in moving forward!

Questions Parents can ask Teachers on Parent Teacher Interview Night

To help you have productive parent teacher interviews, we thought we would offer some tips that you might find useful; while the standards/outcomes and numerical marks and overall grades are often your first concern as a parent, the parent-teacher conversation should focus on the learning and growth, since that is the best way to help your child's achievement. In order to do that, ask the teacher some of these specific questions below; and don't wait for Parent Teacher Interview night -- they are also great conversations to have at any time in the year.

1. **What is my child like in class?** This allows you to hear more about the learner attributes (behaviours that contribute to their learning). When we begin by discussing your child's learner attributes, you might find out how you can support your child's ability to find success in the class. Sometimes we can become frustrated to hear our child is not acting how we might expect. If there are negative behaviours distracting a child from potential learning, helping the teacher get to know your child on an individual basis can help their instructional planning. This is a great opportunity for you to share things about your child's strengths or interests that the teacher may not know, and that information may help the teacher think of new ways to engage the student. How your child is doing socially in the class is just as important as any marks. While we do not summatively assess learner attributes and behaviours, they are important factors in the classroom because they help support academic success. Often, teachers will discuss with each other shared students and their learner attributes and behaviours to find they act differently in different classes. Sometimes this may be a result of the peer group, or the course content, or even some of the structures in place in the teachers' classes. Each classroom has its own culture, rules, and high expectations. Navigating this can be challenging for a young person, especially as they transition to and from remote learning to in-person learning. This discussion with teachers can help you in communicating what works best for your child, but also helps you work with your child in living up to the expectations you and their teachers have of them. As well, both you and the teacher can work together to correct any behaviours that are getting in the way of student learning.

2. **What outcomes or content has been challenging for my child? What have they missed? How can my child access opportunities to learn what has been missed or improve on these skill sets?** As students get into upper elementary, we often hear parents and students ask about "re-do's" and "no-zero policies". Our school division has a 'reluctant zero' policy, where teachers make efforts to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the learning outcomes, but the student still must follow through with that demonstration in order to avoid a zero, incomplete, or 'unable to assess'. The teacher does require a body of evidence in order to evaluate student

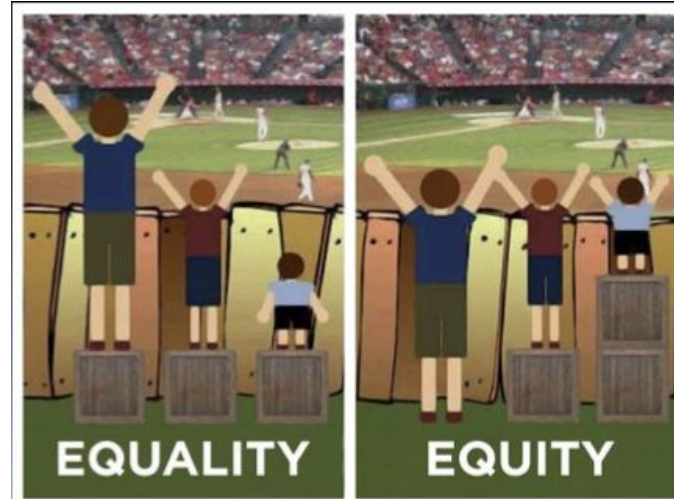
achievement, so when we don't have enough of a body of evidence, we need your help and support from home to get there. Ask the teacher where each missing assignment came from and how the learning can be re-demonstrated. Because teachers need to ensure item security and the integrity and validity of their summative assessments, it may not always be as simple as writing the same assessment at a later date. And if the teacher deems the student 'not ready' for a re-assessment, work collaboratively to develop a plan to prepare the student or fill in gaps in their learning before demonstrating again. Trust that the teacher is not trying to penalize your child for past transgressions or misunderstandings; but rather, understand that teachers are trying to ensure appropriate student learning has taken place and are responsible for promoting readiness for future assessments or future grade levels. Some examples of strategies teachers may use involve mandatory tutorial sessions, keeping students in at lunch or after school for assignment completion, and some teachers will even use the success of students on specific curricular outcome items in the final test as proof of student learning that wasn't there a few months back. Our teachers are tirelessly working toward your student's success, so be open to the strategies your child's teacher finds effective. Don't be afraid to ask what you can do to help!

3. With all missed time from past two school years through this pandemic, what should my child focus on right now to be ready for next school year? Some students have been unable to attend due to close contacts or positive cases, while others have been kept home for extended periods for an abundance of caution. No one wants to get sick, and in many ways, our parents and teachers have had little control of what learning has looked like through the pandemic. Let's not focus on what was lost, but rather, focus on what we can do now to best find success. Regular attendance for in-person classes helps our teachers better support your child, but when that isn't possible, ask what ways can you support your child from home and work collaboratively with the teacher to choose the most important pieces to work on. We know all learners have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, but focus on what your child, your teacher, and you can commit to for April, May, and June to provide the best opportunities for growth.

4. What is my child like on the playground or at other unstructured times? Students at this age are exploring social boundaries and are transitioning from having the adults in their life being the most significant influence to gradually having their peers having more and more influence on their interests, beliefs, and choices. This is a critical time to reflect on whether your child makes the right choices when no one is looking, or, if they need more support in making good choices. At Aurora, we see peer conflicts as an opportunity to learn how to interact with others in the world to foster positive relationships that support our success. Rather than 'yelling' or lecturing students when they have a misstep, we try to model calm, positive language that explores the implications of their choices, offer chances to choose a more constructive or appropriate replacement behaviour, and look to a restorative justice piece rather than punishment. This all starts with helping your child at home talk through challenging relationships with peers they might be having at school with a solution focus, rather than a 'blame-the-other-kid' focus. We know we won't like everyone we meet, but if we can focus on how our own child responds in a conflict as opposed to focusing on what someone else's child has done, we can better prepare them for the challenges of independence in the future with a solid understanding of what a healthy relationship looks like. We can only control ourselves and our reaction to stressful situations, and practicing positive healthy ways to respond will only bring them more chances of happiness and success in the future. Ask your teacher what they see

as some potential conflicts your child might need to talk through, practice, and monitor so we can support them through this important piece of growing up.

5. **What is the best way to keep the lines of communication open between teacher and parent?** Some teachers prefer e-mail, while others prefer phone calls; all teachers now regularly update their Google Classroom environment and some make use of PowerSchool's SchoolMessenger. PowerSchool keeps student marks available to parents at all times, but remember from the questions above that grades are only one piece of your child's success. Be proactive in staying informed so you don't have to wait for parent teacher interviews; inform the teacher of the best way to stay in touch with you, and be clear about the kinds of things of which you want to stay up-to-date. When your child has specific learning needs, another discussion you might have with the teacher would be how they can accommodate for your child. Keep in mind that all students come to Aurora with varied levels of readiness, and teachers want to scaffold your child's learning to meet the outcomes. It is always tempting to compare our own child to someone else's. However, some students need different supports than others; our teachers know that 'same' is not always equitable. Think about it in this way, as depicted in the image to the right. Teachers provide supports that reflect equity in learning opportunities, and this may mean that we come up with a learning plan for a student that varies from another student. We want every student to have the right supports at the right time.



Please also remember that our teachers have only 6 hours this week to meet with every family, and this means we may only have a few minutes for each parent, especially when there is a waiting queue. *Be respectful of the other parents' scheduled times; if you require more time, our teachers are glad to book a meeting at a later date in order to ensure your queries are addressed satisfactorily.* Whenever you have a concern about your student or their progress, the appropriate step is always to speak with the teacher first. Whenever an administrator receives parent concerns, we will always redirect you to the teacher to ensure they have an opportunity to address your concerns directly. Very often, concerns arise out of a miscommunication or a misunderstanding on the student's part, and this can very easily be fixed by a quick conversation with a teacher to get clarification and accurate understanding. If there is not an easy solution, then I would be glad to meet with you, the teacher, and the student to come up with a plan. We want to handle our concerns this way and involve the student because it is an excellent opportunity to model mature, problem-solving strategies and conflict resolution – an invaluable skill in 21st century workplace environments. Every problem we face in school should be an opportunity to learn and grow; after all, that's why we're all here!

Parent Feedback Requested!

To help us plan for next year, we want to know what Learning Pathways you want to see offered. Share your stories, join the discussions, or ask questions at engage.nlpsab.ca and watch for the survey launched on Feb. 20th on the [NLPS website](#).

NO NEW Confirmed COVID cases connected to Aurora Middle School

As we welcomed back several students and staff who were isolating recently, we are happy that for the second week in a row, we had no new cases reported! Please remind your child to follow school rules for masking, distancing, and hand-sanitizing. Students must properly wear masks whenever directed by staff, and students must comply in order to enhance our safety while at school. We have been sending home any students who do not comply with our safety guidelines, as they cannot continue in-person learning at Aurora without complying with our safety rules and staff direction.

As most of you are well aware, our school has been affected again by a recent rise in COVID-19 cases in our geographical area. If you or your child have received a positive test result, contact the school directly and immediately at 780 623 4129; after hours, please email conal.donovan@nlsd.ab.ca so we can begin our safety procedures and communication plan as soon as possible to reduce the spread.

If you hear rumours of a case, please know that every parent of a child identified as a close contact of a positive case is immediately phoned and notified with directions for their child's self-isolation. Following successful connection with all of those families, we then send a notification to the entire school community. If you did not receive a personal phone call from our administration, then your child is NOT a close contact of the positive case. That said, we respect every parent's wishes for their child's safety. If you plan to keep your child home, contact the school about the absence and clarify whether they are ill or are just staying home out of an abundance of caution. Also note that your child's teacher is ready to program for students remotely. Learning Together Everywhere (LTA) is not required, as your Aurora Middle School teacher will use the Google Classroom environment to program for your child as they miss in-class learning. Contact your teacher directly for more information about how you can connect your child from home if you haven't already done so. When a class is directed to self-isolate, the teacher will continue programming for the entire class, providing they are healthy enough to do so. Last, we want to thank all the parents for the patience, understanding, and kind words as we navigate through this. We also appreciate when you book a COVID test immediately, as the sooner we have more information, the better we can plan to protect all our families in Aurora. Go to [AHS's Info for Close Contacts](#) for more information.

Typical Symptoms of COVID-19 Infection

Anyone who has these symptoms **MUST SELF-ISOLATE** for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.



Fever



Cough



Shortness of breath



Difficulty breathing



Sore throat



Runny nose

ahs.ca/covid



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.



Parent Volunteers Needed! While BINGO operations are temporarily suspended due to the confirmed cases in Lac La Biche County, our future dates for BINGO worker days in 2021 are: **Apr 29, May 16, June 27, and Aug 28!** Enjoy a free meal while watching the bingo action and helping out the students of our school! The shift runs from 5pm to about 9pm and we require three people to work the shift. Free food and wonderful people make for a great Sunday night out. Please call or text our amazing and hard-working BINGO Fundraising parent volunteer coordinator Joyce Cloutier at (780) 623-8203 if you are able to volunteer. Our next PAC Meeting is Wednesday March 24, 2021 at 6:30pm via [Google Meet](#)