

June 19, 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: Students, Parents, and Staff

We look forward to celebrating dads this weekend, as we celebrate Father's Day on Sunday. As we remember and honour our earthly fathers, may we also remember and honour our Heavenly Father, who created each person to know, love, and serve God and others. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father," inviting us into an intimate relationship with God, who wants us to call Him our Abba. What a great and awesome privilege this is! Jesus revealed God as Father to us, saying, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9). May God the Father, who loves each and every one of us with an infinite and everlasting love, bless us, and make us holy in Jesus' name. "*See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God*" (1 John 3:1).

This Sunday is also [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#). We join in solidarity, truth, and reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and we celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Sacred Heart Parish of the First Peoples in Edmonton will [live-stream a special mass](#) on Sunday to celebrate this important day.

As requested by the federal government, and where practicable, flags at our schools and division buildings will be lowered to half-mast on June 23 to recognize the [National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism](#). Every year, this day marks the anniversary of the bombing of Air India Flight 182 off the coast of Ireland in 1985. In total, 329 people lost their lives, many of whom were Canadian; it was the largest terrorist attack in Canadian history. We will join Canadians across the country in honouring the victims of the bombing, as well as those Canadians who have lost their lives due to other acts of terrorist violence. Let us keep those who have been impacted by terrorism in our prayers, and may we be mindful of how we can contribute to a world that always pursues peace in everything we do.

Now is the perfect time to enrol your child in classes for the new school year. We are excited to have our students back this Fall for another exciting year of learning! I encourage you to submit your child's registration as soon as possible. I also want to remind you, that if you want your child to ride the bus to and from school next year, to be sure to [register your child for bus services](#) by **July 1, 2020**. This deadline ensures we can plan transportation routes and pick-up/drop-off times that will work for your child and all students. More information is available [here](#).



We continue to develop plans for school re-entry based on the feedback we received from our students, parents, and staff through our recent school re-entry surveys and in accordance with the directions of the Alberta government and the province's chief medical officer of health. More information will be shared in the weeks to come. As I mentioned last week, my heartfelt appreciation goes to all those who took the time to share their ideas, concerns, and suggestions.

While the government [has not made any final decisions](#) regarding school operations for 2020-2021 school year, the province has [announced](#) that it is “targeting a return to near normal operations, with health measures in place” to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The government is considering three scenarios for the upcoming school year: near normal operations, a partial return to school, or continuing with at-home learning. The province will make a decision by Aug. 1.

The government, school authorities, and education system partners continue to work together on developing and implementing a comprehensive [school re-entry plan](#), which allows schools and parents to prepare for learning while putting students’ and staff safety first. The plan offers guidance on a wide range of operational issues and will be informed by both Alberta’s [Relaunch Strategy](#) and expert advice from the chief medical officer of health. GSACRD will be ready for any scenario the province brings forward, and we will share information as it is available.

Today is the final day of school for our Kindergarten students. What an exciting time for our youngest students and their families! I congratulate all these young, eager learners on completing their first year in public education and who will transition to full-day classes next fall. I also thank our staff and parents for their hard work and support throughout this school year.

As I noted in my previous communication, online learning will continue until the final day of school on June 26 for grades 1 to 12. Report cards will be issued electronically for all students on June 25. During the last week of school (June 22-26), teachers will be available to continue learning with students, while also supporting year-end requirements. Your child’s school will communicate with you how students are to return school materials, such as textbooks and technologies. Each principal will work with school staff to:

- determine dates for students to return borrowed items,
- indicate which items (e.g. textbooks, Chromebooks) are to be returned,
- detail where and how to return the items (e.g. scheduling returns to minimize social contact and to maintain physical distancing), and
- communicate any missing items or items not returned.

As is the case in other school jurisdictions in Alberta, GSACRD will offer [summer school](#) for grades 9 to 12 students in July. We have streamlined our course options, and only online classes will be offered. Due to a recent ministerial decision, diploma exam courses will be offered. As details are confirmed regarding exam protocols, we will communicate how diploma exams will be completed.

I encourage you to share your stories of faith and learning at home, using [#ABLEarnAtHome](#), [#GSACRDproud](#), and [#GSACRDgrace](#). Please tag GSACRD in your posts, and follow and like us on [Facebook](#) (fb.com/GSACRD), [Twitter](#) (@GSACRD), and [Instagram](#) (@GSACRD_official). You can also [e-mail your stories](#) to us.

Just as we continue to follow and implement the recommendations of the chief medical officer and all levels of government, we encourage you to do the same. You can find credible and relevant health and safety information, as well as important updates about COVID-19, as follows:

- [Government of Canada](#): bit.ly/2XXLNc6
- [Alberta Government](#): alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx
- [Alberta Health Services](#): albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx
- [City of St. Albert](#): stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#): who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

This continues to be a challenging time for some families. If you need support, please reach out to your local school. You may also access Alberta Education’s help-line and email service for parents of students, especially those requiring specialized supports. Call 780.422.6548 (toll-free: 310.0000, followed by the nine-digit phone number), or [send an e-mail](#) to studentsupport@gov.ab.ca. Services are available on weekdays, between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Happy Father’s Day to all dads! Have a blessed weekend, and stay well.

Sincerely,

David Keohane
Superintendent of Schools