

May 29, 2020

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

As we near the end of Easter season, we look forward to Pentecost Sunday, which we will celebrate this weekend. This day is often referred to as the “birthday of the church,” because it is when the Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptize those who believed. Such a hopeful end to the month of May brings several positive messages that will keep you up-to-date regarding awards, programming, summer school, distance learning, and school-re-entry.

We are honoured that GSACRD has been announced a recipient of Gallup’s 2020 [Don Clifton Strengths for Students Award](#), which recognizes school authorities, universities, and colleges that enable students to apply their strengths to thrive in school and in all areas of their lives. By making strengths a way of life, GSACRD, as part of this global community of schools, helps students turn their talents into strengths and fosters optimal academic achievement, engagement, and wellbeing – setting them up to succeed as young people and adults. Our division joins the company of four other elite educational institutions and is the only K-to-Grade-12 division to earn this prestigious distinction. To learn more about this award and how our division integrates strengths with students, parents, and staff, please read this [news release](#).

Our Board of Trustees recently approved a decision to relocate St. Gabriel High School to the lower level of the Division Office, effective 2020-21. This will provide easier access to busing and barrier-free access to the school. Renovations will take place over the summer, and the school will be ready for students this fall. Flexible scheduling of online learning and face-to-face instruction will continue.

Our Board also approved a decision for École Marie Poburan to offer [Sports Academy](#) programming to students in Grades 4 to 6, starting in September. Sports Academy – currently provided at several GSACRD schools – is based on the philosophy that, through sport, students can learn to maintain and improve academics and sports skills at the same time.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Academy, our newest school (pre-K to Grade 5) opening in Morinville this fall, hosted a virtual open house on May 21. This was an opportunity for the community to learn about the school and its programming, to meet some of the staff, and to ask questions. Nearly 100 people tuned in for this event – a truly impressive response. If you missed the presentation, you can [watch the recording](#). The school is accepting [registrations](#) for the fall.

As I noted in my communication, online learning will continue until the final days of school for Kindergarten (June 19) and Grades 1 to 12 (June 26). Because teachers need to submit their marks on June 19, in preparation for report cards, teachers will work with students to get assignments completed and marked prior to this date. 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 end-of-year requirements, including the return of school materials such as textbooks or technologies.

Now is the perfect time to enrol your child in classes for the new school year that starts in the fall. 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. While the Alberta Government [has not made any decisions](#) regarding school operations for 2020-21, it continues to work with school authorities and education system partners on developing a comprehensive [re-entry plan](#). The plan will prioritize the safety and well-being of teachers, staff, and students and be informed by both Alberta’s [Relaunch Strategy](#), as well as expert advice from the chief medical officer of health. GSACRD will be ready for any scenario the province brings forward.

As is the case in many school jurisdictions in Alberta, GSACRD will offer online [summer school](#) for grades 9 to 12 students in July. Due to restrictions around the pandemic, we have streamlined our course options, and only web-based classes will be offered. Students can take courses from anywhere with an internet connection. Registrations are open – [enrol today!](#) Students in grades 10 through 12 are also encouraged to register for distance education courses at St. Gabriel High School. Our Alberta-certified teachers teach through face-to-face online and Moodle and e-mail instruction. Sessions are recorded, so students can access the material later, as needed.

As we near the end of this Month of Mary, we reflect on the meaning of the [Immaculate Conception](#). Mary is sometimes called the new Eve, as her ‘yes’ to God undoes the ‘no’ of original sin. You can find [resources](#) on our website to help you and your family celebrate the Month of Mary.

I encourage you to keep sharing your stories of faith and learning at home, using the hashtags #ABLearnAtHome, #GSACRDproud, and #GSACRDgrace. Please follow and like us on [Facebook](#) (fb.com/GSACRD), [Twitter](#) (@GSACRD), [Instagram](#) (@GSACRD_official), and [YouTube](#) (@GSACRD). 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: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html](https://canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html)
- [Alberta Government: alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx](https://alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx)
- [Alberta Health Services: albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx](https://albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx)
- [City of St. Albert: stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources](https://stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\): who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://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](mailto:studentsupport@gov.ab.ca) to studentsupport@gov.ab.ca. Services are available on Monday to Friday, between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

I hope you are enjoying the beautiful weather as you plan for summer activities, such as camping, yard work, or relaxation. Have a wonderful weekend, and stay well.

Sincerely,

David Keohane
Superintendent of Schools