

Aug. 13, 2020

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: Students, Parents/Legal Guardians, and Staff

All of us at Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools are looking forward to the upcoming school year, and we are excited to welcome students back to class in just a few short weeks. On a personal note, I am blessed to work with so many wonderful students, families, and staff, as I have noted in [this brief video message](#).

Safety is Our First Priority

The safety of everyone in our faith and learning community remains our top priority and is incorporated into all of our decisions, protocols, and actions, in order to meet Alberta Health Services' guidelines. As I noted in [my communication](#) on Aug. 6, 2020, our Division has developed a comprehensive [school re-entry plan](#) that:

- complies with the [directions and guidelines](#) of the Alberta government and the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health;
- is a collaborative effort between the Division and its staff, provincial and municipal governments, local and provincial health authorities, other school divisions, and our faith-and-learning community (students, parents/legal guardians, staff, and community partners); and
- incorporates invaluable feedback from the community through public engagement.

Multiple health measures have been put in place in all of our schools, as well as our Division office, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 and to help keep our students, staff, and communities safe. These protocols include, but are by no means limited to:

- using face masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- enhanced cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing in all schools and buses;
- avoiding use of shared items;
- following prescribed hand hygiene requirements (regular hand-washing and use of hand sanitizers - hand-sanitization stations have been installed in several locations throughout each school);
- cohorting (keeping the same students and staff together), as much as possible;
- wherever possible, maintaining physical distances of at least two metres;
- restricting and monitoring entry into all schools;
- directing student traffic in and through classrooms, hallways, and common areas (arrows/foot-markers on school floors will help students maintain physical distancing within the school and to know which direction to walk through the hallways);
- screening and testing; and
- managing illness or symptoms of illness.

Parent Guidebook for School Re-Entry: 2020-2021

The aforementioned safety protocols are described in detail in our new [Parent Guidebook for School Re-entry: 2020-2021](#). This essential resource provides critical information concerning programming (face-to-face and online), transportation, communication, health and safety protocols, and logistical matters for school re-entry so that parents/legal guardians know what to expect and can prepare for the new school year.

As health measures are continually evolving, we will be responsive and flexible as the year progresses. This *Guidebook* will be updated and revised as new information becomes available from the Prime Minister of Canada, the Premier of Alberta, the Minister of Education, and Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health. The *Guidebook*, which can be [downloaded](#) from our website, has the most up-to-date information available.

Face-to-Face and Online Learning

Last week, I invited you to help us gain clarity about whether parents/legal guardians prefer face-to-face or online education by responding to our *School Re-entry Online Education Survey*. The impressive participation rate of more than 3,700 responses clearly indicates how important this matter is to our parents/legal guardians. I appreciate that you took time to complete this survey, and I sincerely thank you for your input.

While the majority of survey respondents preferred that their children return to school in a face-to-face environment, with health measures in place, a minority expressed interest in online programming for their children. Therefore, we will offer both face-to-face and online programming to all K to 12 students, with the flexibility to move between these options throughout the 2020-2021 school year. We want to be adaptive to students' needs as they arise. Parents/legal guardians who desire online education for their children will be contacted by their schools' principals or designates, who will provide complete details.

Student Enrolment

Whether your child attends school in a physical classroom or a virtual one, it is important that you enrol him or her for the new school year. To register your child, please contact your school directly.

Preparing for School Re-Entry

- Anyone entering a school must complete the prescribed **COVID-19 Information Screening Questionnaire** (available in both [English](#) and [French](#), as well as in [multiple other languages](#)) **prior** to arriving at school. Parents/legal guardians are expected to conduct this checklist **daily** with their child(ren) to determine if the child should come to school or stay home.
- If your child shows any signs of illness, he or she should not come to school, unless the symptoms are related to a pre-existing health condition.
- Strict stay-at-home protocols are in place for those who feel unwell. If a student becomes ill at school, he/she will be supervised in a designated area until he/she is picked up.
- Your child's principal will share specific details about student drop-off and pick-up routines.
- Posters will be displayed in prominent locations throughout the school to remind students and staff about physical distancing, hand-washing, hand-sanitizing, staying healthy, and other health and safety protocols and standards.

Testing

Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have been working hard to expand COVID-19 testing capacity and reduce turnaround times for results. As another measure to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the [Alberta government is recommending](#) that all teachers and staff in Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 voluntarily participate in asymptomatic testing prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year. The Alberta government has emphasized that sufficient capacity will be in place for regular testing of teachers and staff throughout the fall.

More Information

Just as we continue to closely follow and implement the direction of Alberta Health Services, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and all levels of government, we encourage you to do the same. You can find credible and relevant information, as well as important updates about COVID-19, via the sources below:

- [Health Canada](#): canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html
- [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

I encourage you to visit these websites often and to follow the suggestions to keep you and your family healthy.

We will continue to keep our faith and learning community informed. Regular updates are available on our [website](#) (www.gsacrd.ab.ca/schoolreentry), as well as our official social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)). Our goal is to answer any questions that you may have as you prepare for school re-entry. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please [send us an email](#) (schoolreentry@gsacrd.ab.ca) or reach out to [your child's school](#) directly.

I look forward to another successful and exciting year of learning and growing together. I wish you an enjoyable rest of your summer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clint Morozuk
Superintendent of Schools