



Parent Guidebook for School Re-Entry 2020-2021

Last updated: January 8, 2021
(new/updated information is noted in red)

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Message to Parents/Legal Guardians

We look forward to continuing to work together as partners throughout the pandemic. This guidebook is written for parents/legal guardians to prepare you with programming details for this purpose. We have written the date on the cover of this guidebook because we expect to revise it as new messages are provided through the Minister of Education, Premier, Prime Minister, and Chief Medical Officer of Health in Alberta. Revisions will be written in red. Health measures are changing and we will be responsive and flexible as the year progresses.

Multiple health measures have been put in place to ensure that students, staff, and parents are safe. On July 21, 2020 the Minister of Education announced that students will return to school face-to-face in the Fall, at near-normal operations, with health measures in place. On August 4, grades 4-12 students and all staff have been asked to wear masks and mask use will be mandatory in common areas and when physical distancing of 2m is not possible. K-3 students are not required to wear masks. On August 31, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer, released an order ([CMOH order 33-2020](#)) that outlined requirements for non-medical mask use for Grade 4 to 12 students, all staff, and visitors in indoor spaces including on school buses and shared areas such as hallways. On September 8, all school jurisdictions received a [letter](#) from Dr. Deena Hinshaw restating and clarifying her guidance for school re-entry. On October 7, 2020, she and Health Minister Tyler Shandro, [announced](#) the likelihood of more stringent health measures should numbers of COVID-19 cases continue to increase in especially Edmonton and surrounding areas. On October 8, 2020, Dr. Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer, noted in the [media](#) that changes are voluntary but may become mandatory. Our school jurisdiction partnered with three other jurisdictions to make a [public statement](#) that there will be no extracurricular school athletics at this time and reconsideration will be given to athletics after Christmas Break.

In addition, there is an updated [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#), which is to continue to be used daily by students and staff and anyone who enters schools and division buildings. The information has changed to be more specific about the symptoms that legally require someone to isolate. Just a reminder that any changes to information about health measures are communicated at www.alberta.ca/returntoschool.

On October 13, 2020 Minister LaGrange announced that she had made the decision to allow students and parents to choose whether or not to write diploma exams for November. Through Colin Aitchinson, LaGrange's press secretary, the reason provided was: "We know these are challenging times and that's why we want to ensure students and their parents have the flexibility to make the best decision for their own situation this exam season." Our division supports this decision and is working with students and parents to assist in individual student choices about whether or not to write diploma exams for particular courses.

On November 12, 2020, Premier Kenney announced that the Priorities Implementation Committee, based on expert advice from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, introduced temporary measures to reduce the number of close contacts that Albertans have with others who test positive for COVID-19. Given the continual rise in cases of COVID-19, on November 24, 2020, Premier Kenney announced more restrictive mandatory public health measures, and the key changes that are most applicable to schools are:

- No indoor social gatherings in any setting (other than regular classes)
- Outdoor gatherings- max of 10 (other than regular classes)
- No festivals or events (only virtual Christmas celebrations)
- Grades 7-12 are engaged in online, at home learning Nov 30-Dec. 18 (*to stop the spread of the virus which has disrupted learning in especially secondary schools*)
 - Christmas Break Dec. 19-Jan. 3
 - Return to online learning Jan. 4-8 (*to continue to stop the spread of the virus*)
 - Return to face-to-face learning on January 11
- Grades Pre-K- Grade 6 continue at school learning Nov. 30- Dec. 18.
 - Christmas Break Dec. 19-Jan. 3
 - Start back-to-school in at home, online learning Jan. 4-8 (*to extend the length of time that students are not interacting beyond their families*)
 - Return to face-to-face learning on Jan. 11
- Mandatory masks for indoor workplaces (*not new*)
- Diploma exams are optional for the rest of the school year. Students and families can choose to write an exam or receive an exemption for the January, April, June and August 2021 exams (*continuation of what was started in November*)

We appreciate your support to continue to do the daily prescribed [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#) prior to coming to schools. We also thank you, parents/legal guardians, for doing this daily checklist with your children before coming to school each day. If students show any signs of illness, they are not to come to school unless the signs are established as part of a pre-existing health condition. Strict stay-at-home protocols are in place for those who are feeling unwell.

We will continue to follow [updates from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health](#).

All students are to return to face-to-face education on January 11, 2021 as [announced by Premier Jason Kenney on January 7, 2021](#).

If you have further questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal or Division staff at: schoolreentry@gsacrd.ab.ca.

Scenarios for School Re-entry

Our school re-entry plan is designed to prepare students, parents, and staff for school re-entry based on one of three scenarios:

- **In-school classes resume** (near normal with health measures)
- **In-school classes partially resume** (with additional health measures)
- **At-home learning continues** (in-school classes are suspended/cancelled). In the [School Re-entry Guidelines](#) from the province, it was stated that:

As we approach the new school year, the direction provided in this draft plan will be updated as circumstances change. Alberta Education is committed to providing the final plan no later than August 1, 2020 to allow school authorities time to make any additional adjustments to their own planning for the new school year.

It is imperative that school authorities plan and prepare for all of these three non-mutually- exclusive scenarios as the COVID-19 pandemic may change at any time and school authorities may be required to transition from one scenario to another with short notice.

Alberta Education is collaborating with Alberta Health to decide when to transition from one scenario to another– depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in communities across the province. The province has decided that students will return to school in September under an updated (October 8, 2020) [Scenario 1](#) of the provincial re-entry strategy. Therefore, at any point during the school year, the province could decide whether schools across Alberta, schools in a particular region, or individual schools and classrooms need to move from one scenario to another. This decision will always be made by a medical officer of health in collaboration with education officials. On November 24, 2020, Premier Kenney chose to temporarily limit Grades 7-12 students to at-home, online learning until January 11, 2020. ECS-Grade 6 will remain in Scenario One.

On December 8, 2020 Premier Jason Kenney [announced](#) new and [stronger province-wide public health restrictions](#), which will be in place until at least Jan. 12, to protect the health-care system and slow the spread of COVID-19. A ban on all indoor and outdoor social gatherings, as well as mandatory mask-use, became effective immediately, while all other measures come into effect on Sunday (Dec. 13). The announcement did not include any changes for schools; thus, programming and protocols will continue as previously directed. All of the new health restrictions are posted on the government's website.

On January 4, 2021. The Hon. Minister Adrianna LaGrange, Minister of Education, announced that K-12 students will return to school as of January 11, 2021. We will continue to follow all of the Chief Medical Officer of Health's recommendations to keep our students and staff safe in our schools.

Safety Measures

Safety depends on us working together as partners.

Multiple strategies will keep everyone safe.

We have worked with the ministry and with our partner jurisdictions to ensure similar approaches to implementing multiple health measures to keep everyone safe. These protocols are intended to reduce the risk of COVID-19. In addition to these protocols, the Government of Alberta [School Re-entry Plan 2020-2021](#), will continue to monitor and share information about COVID-19 cases in Alberta.

The Alberta government has developed a COVID-19 status map that shows the level of risk in regions and information about local health measures at [COVID-19 Status Map](#). It also shows the rate of COVID-19 cases and the number of active cases. Confirmed cases will be monitored in real time to inform proactive responses in localized areas of the province. Municipalities, counties and municipal districts with active cases over 50 per 100,000 population may have additional measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Alberta Health Services has just published a very helpful web location for parents (members need to isolate and when children can return to school. The [online tool](#) provides resources to address commonly asked questions. Additionally, Alberta Health revised numerous documents for enhanced clarity without substantive changes and links to those documents have been updated in this *Guidebook*.

We have been made aware of websites and social media that publish positive COVID-19 cases, close contact numbers, and other information about COVID-19 in schools. At times, misinformation has been published. We work closely with Alberta Health Services to provide you with what we are permitted based on what is publicly available and would ask that you check information with your school principal if you have any questions. Additionally, on October 29, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw announced the newest cases using the status map and redirected the community to that map.

On August 26, 2020, Prime Minister Trudeau [announced](#) \$2B in federal funding to be provided to provinces to fund pandemic-related direct expenses such as online education, cleaning, and personal protective equipment. At the public board meeting on October 26, 2020, the community received a report on how these funds have been allocated and/or committed its \$1.98 million in the following areas:

- Additional supports (staff) for online learning that is provided in addition to face-to-face setting and substitute costs related to COVID – \$1,568,400 (79%) (Note 1);
- Personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, gowns, thermometers, and face shields); cleaning and hand sanitizing supplies and facility alterations (filters, floor markings, plexi-glass screens, hand sanitizing dispensing units) – \$135,000 (7%);
- Increased custodial time in schools – \$140,000 (7%);

- Increased transportation (cleaning and routing) – 80,000 (4%);
- Online learning and teacher training (PD/Equipment) – \$56,900 (3%)

Note 1: There are presently 16.5 certificated staff FTEs assigned to Online Learning Pathway. Schools have contributed approximately 4 teacher FTEs with remaining 12.5 FTEs to be covered by this federal funding. Approximately \$247K is assigned to substitute costs.

On September 2, 2020, Minister LaGrange announced how this federal funding would be distributed; our Division will receive \$1,980,300 to address our increased costs related to school re-entry. Additionally, on August 31, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw mandated [CMOH-order 33-2020](#), which articulated mask use guidelines for schools. Details are included in this section. Further to this health order, on September 3, 2020, Dr. Hinshaw also published a [letter](#) that was then sent to all school jurisdictions on September 8, 2020 and, through our superintendent, to all families.

On November 5, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw announced the potential of having to enact more stringent health measures to control the continued surge in confirmed cases of COVID-19. Our jurisdiction committed to further restrictions on numbers of staff and students in contact by scheduling changes this past week to be put in place after the Fall break. On November 12, 2020 and November 24, 2020 [temporary restrictions](#) were announced and have been addressed in this *Guidebook*.

In schools that have had “outbreaks” (2+ cases) or have been on a “watch” (5+ cases) list, we have welcomed public health inspections to support our jurisdiction to learn and to continue to refine our health and safety measures. We were successful in meeting all Albert Health guidelines, and we share some of the lessons learned throughout this section. The main lesson was that schools can go beyond the minimum health measures.

Cleaning

Our Division has been working in the summer to prepare for schools re-opening. Air handling units and coils have been pressure washed and pleated air filters have been installed. We are attentive to ventilation practices suggested by Alberta Health such as encouraging proper ventilation using open doors and windows, holding classes outside, and holding classes in larger spaces with greater air volume and air flow.

Approved cleaning protocols have been put in place in all Division buildings. Custodial staff have been trained to identify high touch areas and to know how to clean, sanitize, and disinfect them. Soft furnishings that cannot be easily cleaned have been removed from classrooms and common areas. More frequent cleaning protocols have been put in place with respect to washrooms, high traffic areas, and common areas. All schools have approved cleaning supplies as well as microfiber cloths that are sent to be laundered on behalf of staff.

Staff will work with school principals to identify high touch surfaces within classrooms and learn how to wipe them down should it be necessary in the day.

During our public health inspections, schools will further limit cloth on tables or displays that can be easily touched will be removed as cloth is not easily cleaned, disinfected, and sanitized. Recently, we have also been informed of the importance of following division practices of ensuring that our cleaning cloths are laundered daily. We will also use paper towels if and when this practice cannot be followed.

Screening

Before coming to school each day, all staff and students must complete the [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#), which is [available in multiple languages](#), to determine whether they can attend or must stay home. Students who have any symptoms noted on the questionnaire cannot attend school. The form does not need to be submitted to the office. If your child has any symptoms, contact your school office to let your child's school know. Everyone who enters a school will see a sign that reminds them to complete the daily Alberta's Daily Checklist before entering the building. On November 18, 2020, [Dr. Deena Hinshaw](#) explained that employers need to ensure that employees do not stay at work if symptomatic. We continue to be dedicated to daily screening for all staff, students, and visitors to our schools.

On December 6, 2020, we received a phone call from our Outbreak Lead who informed us that she is noticing that schools tend to leave the daily screen to parents. While that is important, we are encouraged to actively involve students in answering the questions for themselves daily because the question being ignored by many Albertans is this question: ***Has your child had close contact with a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days? Face-to-face contact within 2 metres for 15 minutes or longer, or direct physical contact such as hugging.*** We will therefore consider ways to review the daily screening questions with our students when in school face-to-face and as part of our education while online.

Illness at School: What Happens at School

On September 3, 2020, Alberta Health Services has just released a [summary guideline](#) for when students become ill at school. On October 8, 2020, a [simplified guide](#) for what to do when your child shows symptoms has also been prepared for schools and parents.

If your child becomes ill during the day, he/she will be brought to a designated area in or near the office to ensure that the child is safe and that others stay safe.

Your child will be informed about the process to minimize any psychological impact:

- When a child becomes ill at school, a staff member will help him/her and wear the necessary personal protective equipment (mask and any other required safety items [face shield, gloves, gown], if necessary).

- Your child will have a temperature check with a contactless thermometer to inform you as to whether he/she has a fever.
- Your child will review which symptom or symptoms he/she is having based on [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#).
- If your child is sick, parents or guardians will be contacted to pick up their child immediately. It is important for you to provide the school with your current contact information and updated emergency contacts to help us to keep your child safe.

Parents in the broader community will only be notified when risk warrants notification. This determination is made with Alberta Health Services' consultation.

Alberta Health Services' [website](#) is updated regularly. Currently, guidelines have been updated at this [link](#) and are summarized here for what to do next are as follows:

- *AHS advises that you should get tested if you have any COVID-19 symptom. Go online to [book an appointment](#) to get a COVID-19 test.*
- *Please follow the guidelines in the [October 29, 2020 Checklist by Alberta Health Services](#). The symptoms for COVID-19 have been detailed and are subject to change in the AHS website.*

CORE SYMPTOMS : If you have any of these core symptoms, you need to isolate for at least 10 days from the start of your symptoms or until they are gone, whichever is longer, or until you test negative for COVID-19.

Adults over 18

- *cough*
- *fever*
- *shortness of breath*
- *runny nose*
- *sore throat*

Children under 18

- *cough*
- *fever*
- *shortness of breath*
- *loss of sense of taste or smell*
- *Other symptoms*

OTHER SYMPTOMS

Adults over 18

Any symptom: Stay home and limit contact with others until symptoms are gone. Testing is recommended.

- Stuffy nose
- Painful swallowing
- Chills
- Headache
- Muscle or joint aches
- Feeling unwell or fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye

Children under 18

- **1 symptom:** Stay home for 24 hours, get tested if symptoms don't improve.
 - **2+ symptoms:** Get tested and stay home until well or test is negative.
 - Sore throat
 - Runny or stuffy nose
 - Painful swallowing
 - Chills
 - Headache
 - Muscle or joint aches
 - Feeling unwell or fatigue
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite
 - Conjunctivitis, also known as pink eye
- Monitor your health and call Health Link 811 or your health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Call 911 immediately if experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19, including difficulty breathing, severe chest pain, feelings of confusion or loss of consciousness.
 - Please check [isolation guidelines](#) as they have been updated: COVID-19 can take up to 14 days to cause symptoms. Some people who get it only have minor symptoms or don't have any symptoms at all but could still be infectious.

- *By staying home, it lowers the chance of symptoms developing while you're in a public place, which lowers the chance of spreading the virus to others.*
- **When to isolate:**
 - *Isolate to avoid spreading illness.*
 - *You tested positive for COVID-19.*
 - *You are sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat* or runny nose* and have not been tested.*
**Children under 18 are exempt from mandatory isolation for runny nose or sore throat, but should stay home until well.*
- **When to quarantine:**
 - *Quarantine and watch for symptoms to prevent exposing others before symptoms appear.*
 - *You had close contact with a person who has COVID-19.*
 - *You returned from travel outside of Canada.*
- **Students with pre-existing health conditions** that cause symptoms of illness should be tested for COVID-19 at least once. A negative test will help show that symptoms are related to their pre-existing conditions, and not to COVID-19. This will establish what their baseline for being healthy looks like. Families should notify their school about any pre-existing condition and the symptoms it causes. As long as these symptoms remain the same, the student can attend school. During our public health inspections, our public health officer (PHO) emphasized that it is necessary to encourage parents to get their child(ren) who have had pre-existing conditions to get a COVID-19 test to rule out COVID-19. She emphasized that this is part of establishing a baseline.
- **If symptoms change or worsen**, the student will need to leave the school, follow illness protocols and have another COVID-19 test to determine if the symptoms are still related to the pre-existing medical condition. If the test is negative, the student may return to school. Families can learn more about COVID-19 testing and book a test online through Alberta Health Services.

Illness at School: Parents' Next Steps

[Alberta Health Services' website](#) for what to do next lists the following steps:

1. **Take the COVID-19 Self-assessment:** Go online to take the the [COVID-19 Self-assessment](#)

2. **Book a COVID-19 Test:** AHS advises that you should get tested if you have any COVID-19 symptom. Go online to [book an appointment](#) to get a COVID-19 test.
3. Parents should follow AHS [isolation guidelines](#).
4. **Monitor your health and call Health Link 811** if you have questions or concerns. **Call 911 immediately if experiencing severe symptoms of COVID-19, including difficulty breathing, severe chest pain, feelings of confusion or loss of consciousness.**

Isolation and Close Contact Protocols

If your child is ill or has been in contact with someone who has symptoms of or has tested positive for COVID-19, then you would follow the [isolation guidelines](#).

To provide additional information on who is a close contact, Alberta Health's [Close Contact Guidelines](#) continue to be in place.

Q: What does it mean to be a close contact of a COVID-19 case?

A: A close contact is anyone who, during the infectious period:

- lived with or was within two metres of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more of cumulative contact, i.e. multiple interactions for a total of 15 minutes or more, even if a mask was worn during that contact, or
- has had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person who has COVID-19 (e.g., was coughed or sneezed on), or
- provided direct care for a person who has COVID-19, or
- has physical contact with a person who has COVID-19, such as handshake, hugging, kissing, or sexual activity, or
- shares items with a person who has COVID-19 such as drinks, personal hygiene items, cigarettes, vapes, lipstick, eating utensils, etc.

For sports that involve close, sustained, or intermittent and repeated contact, all members of the teams playing each other are considered close contacts when there is a case on a team.

For schools, generally, all students who share a classroom with a student who was infectious with COVID-19 are considered close contacts.

Anyone who falls into any of the above categories is considered a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. Wearing a non-medical mask is not sufficient to exempt you from being considered a close contact. Consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by regulated health care professionals must be assessed to determine if the individual had adequate protection from a potential COVID-19 exposure.

A quick review of isolation protocols when you or your child is tested for COVID-19 is provided below:

Appendix E: Management of individuals who are tested for COVID-19

| Symptoms | COVID-19 Test Result: | Management of Individual: | Management of Individual's Close Contacts*: |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| Symptomatic | Positive | Isolate for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. | Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure |
| | Negative | Stay home until symptoms resolve. Except: if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarantine for 14 days since the last exposure (even with a negative result) | N/A |
| Asymptomatic | Positive | Isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the collection date of the swab. | Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure |
| | Negative | No isolation required. Except: if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarantine for 14 days since the last exposure (even with a negative result) | N/A |

*Close contacts:

- Provide direct care for an individual with COVID-19 or who had similar close physical contact OR
- Had close prolonged contact OR
- Had direct contact with infectious body fluids of an individual with COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed or sneezed on).

NOTES:

Individuals WILL NOT receive written or email documentation of their results. Those who wish to access their results directly should sign up for MyHealth Records.

There is not a requirement to provide evidence of negative results prior to returning to school.

AHS Public Health will contact all confirmed cases and their close contacts and provide them clear direction.

AHS Public Health will notify the school of a positive case.

Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms are encouraged to be tested using the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#)

Close Contacts

As we have experienced a surge in positive COVID-19 cases in the last couple of weeks, our schools, along with all schools in the Edmonton area, have had more confirmed cases. Therefore, we have had more students and staff who have become “close contacts” of a confirmed positive case. Alberta Health Services has prepared useful information accessible on their [website](#):

If a student is a close contact of someone confirmed to have COVID-19, they must quarantine and stay home for 14 days. This longer period of time is required because the incubation period of COVID-19 is two weeks. Visit Isolation requirements for more detailed information.

Close contacts include people who: take care of someone with COVID-19 or had contact through touch with the person with COVID-19 were close to that person

for a long time, or were coughed or sneezed on by that person. AHS will confirm and contact close contacts when there is a case at school and will contact parents and staff.

Generally, the entire classroom is considered to be close contacts of the case. This is a cautious approach to identifying close contacts in order to minimize the risk of transmission. This means that if a student tests positive for COVID-19, all of their classmates must quarantine and stay home for 14 days. Additionally, all of these classmates should also be tested for COVID-19. Even if a classmate of a case is tested and the result is negative, they still must complete the 14 day quarantine.

If a student is identified to be a close contact (for example, is a classmate of a student who tests positive), family members of the close contact do not need to quarantine unless the close contact also develops symptoms. Family members or other people in the household who had contact with a student while they were infectious (had symptoms) are required to quarantine for 14 days from the last time they were exposed to the sick student.

AHS Public Health will determine who is a close contact and how long they are required to quarantine when they complete their investigation.

On November 5, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw [announced](#) that due to fast-paced rises in cases, contact tracers are falling behind. For this reason, our school and division administrators have been working with AHS and calling close contacts and notifying close contacts prior to AHS sending letters. On November 12, 2020, Deputy Minister Andre Corbould stated that the Ministries of Education and Health continue to work together to explore tools for expediting close contact tracing. On November 20, Dr. Deena Hinshaw indicated that due to AHS falling behind on contact tracing, she has asked that they work from the most recent cases backwards and that those who test positive.

Since November 24, 2020, our division has been contacted by AHS about our most recent cases and we have noticed that there are times when AHS is telling us about a student who has tested positive and the parents/guardians have not called the school to let us know. Oftentimes, the parent/guardian had assumed that AHS would communicate with the school. Because of the high number of positive cases, schools often do not hear from AHS until days after the positive test. This unavoidable delay has caused students who are close contacts of the positive case to continue to attend school. This is contributing to increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and we ask that you call your school principal when your child has a positive COVID-19 test result. When you do this, you are helping us to reduce risk in our schools and in our homes. We thank you for your continued efforts to be partners in helping us to keep everyone safe.

On December 6, 2020, our Outbreak Team Lead provided updated instructions on how to determine close contacts. While many school jurisdictions followed the “15-minute rule”, which initially meant that if a person was in a room with a positive case for 15 minutes, that person was deemed to be a “close contact.” We now know that it is not about a “one-time” 15-minute exposure; it is about **cumulative exposure to a positive case during an infectious period**. For example, if an individual experiences symptoms on December 25 and later tests positive for COVID-19, the infectious period is 48 hours before and the individual experienced symptoms. Therefore, if a person spoke with that person who tested positive on December 23rd for 5 minutes in the morning and for 5 more minutes in the evening, and then again on December 24 for 5 minutes, that individual would be a close contact. For a succinct visual explanation of who is a close contact, please refer to this chart from [Alberta Public Health Disease Management Guidelines](#):

Table 3a: Definition of Close Contacts^(24–27)

| DEFINITION OF CLOSE CONTACTS |
|---|
| <p>Individuals that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provided direct care for the case, (including HCW^(J), family members or other caregivers), or who had other similar close physical contact (e.g., intimate partner, hug, kiss, handshake) without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), OR lived with or otherwise had close prolonged^(L) contact which may be cumulative, i.e., multiple interactions for a total of 15 min or more and within two metres with a case without consistent and appropriate use of PPE and not isolating OR had direct contact with infectious body fluids of a case (e.g., shared cigarettes, glasses/bottles, eating utensils) or was coughed or sneezed on while not wearing recommended PPE |

On December 6, 2020, our Outbreak Team Lead also informed us that for any student or staff member who had tested positive, AHS will inform that person that he/she is immune and does not need to self-isolate within 90 days of that positive test if he/she comes into close contact with a positive case. The caveat to this general rule is as follows: *She noted that if the person who was deemed positive within 90 days becomes symptomatic, then, like any person who develops symptoms, he/she needs to self-isolate for 14 days.*

COVID-19 Protocols

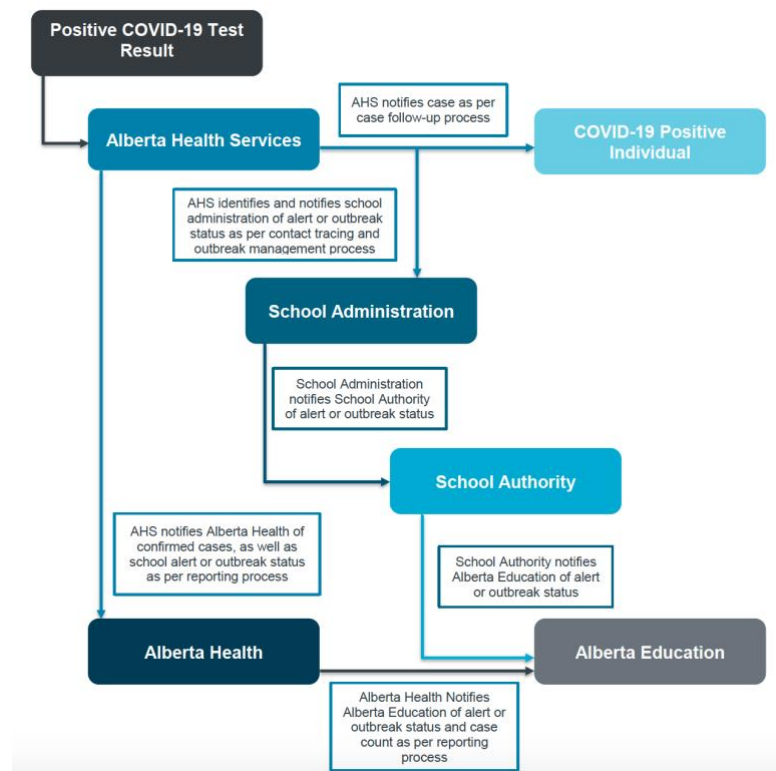
If health officials confirm a case of COVID-19 in a school community, Alberta Health Services will take the following steps:

1. The zone medical officer of health will work with school authorities to quickly:
 - identify cases
 - identify close contacts
 - create isolation measures when needed

- provide follow-up recommendations
2. A COVID-19 case will not automatically lead to school closure—it could be that only the group of students and staff who came in close contact will be required to stay home for 14 days.
 3. Parents will be notified if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at school and the individuals who tested positive, the school, and/or public health officials will contact those who were in close contact with the person.
 4. Each school authority will support students and staff to learn or work at home if they are required to self-isolate.

COVID-19 Outbreak

AHS developed a [guide](#) to assist staff and parents to know what to expect if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in one of our schools:



FAQs

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

Follow recommendations from AHS Public Health, including when to resume regular instructional activities that may have been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak and returning to standard practices.

What is Alberta Health Services' Role?

AHS Public Health will work with the school administration to determine when the outbreak can be declared over. The standard time frame is 28 days with no new cases. The Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/designate declares the outbreak over in the school.

AHS Public Health will notify Alberta Health that the school COVID-19 outbreak is over, and close the outbreak investigation.

What is Alberta Health's role?

Alberta Health receives a report that the COVID-19 outbreak is over. Alberta Health will update the public website to reflect when the outbreak is declared over/closed.

Q. Do we need to send the whole class home if the teacher becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19?

A: If a teacher or staff member becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19, Alberta Health Services Public Health will work with the school community to identify close contacts and ensure that they follow the appropriate quarantine restrictions. The specific details of the case will determine who is considered to be a close contact.

Q: How many confirmed cases in a single school will result in closure of the school?

A: Any one confirmed case will result in an investigation by Alberta Health Services Public Health. It is likely with a single case that exposure is limited to a single class or group. Closures of specific classes, cohorts or schools may occur dependent on the outcome of an investigation. Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternative instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by the Government in conjunction with local officials.

Q: What does the school administration do if a staff member or parent/guardian of a student/child calls the school to say they/the student or child are COVID-19 positive and the school has not been previously notified by AHS?

A: Alberta Health Services (AHS) receives all of the case notifications directly from the lab. If there is a confirmed case in a school, the school will be contacted by AHS. It is not necessary to contact AHS to confirm. The appropriate individuals and schools will be notified. Parents and staff with general inquiries can be directed to call Health Link at 811 or can visit the Alberta Health Services website: <https://albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6410.aspx>

Hand Hygiene

Staff and students will learn about and implement [Alberta Health Services' hand hygiene practices](#). Everyone who enters a school will use hand sanitizer or wash their hands immediately. Students and staff will be required to wash and/or sanitize their hands throughout the day, including every time that they enter or exit the school/classroom, before and after using shared equipment, and before and after eating. Schools will provide hand sanitizer throughout the building to support these requirements. ***It is also encouraged that***

families send their children to school with personal hand sanitizer. Schools will also promote proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette with verbal reminders and posters throughout the school. Parents can help their children practice these hand hygiene practices at home before returning to school.

Cohorts

A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. The size of the cohort will depend on the size of the classroom and the number of students assigned to the teacher.

Every effort will be made to keep the same students and staff together and limit contact between cohorts within the school. Cohorting continues to be a focus during activities outside the classroom, such as recess and lunch breaks. The cohort concept encourages individuals who cannot maintain 2 metre physical distance when in group settings to interact with the same people within their own cohort group. If students from two different cohorts wish to socialize, they should remain 2 meters apart. Strategies such as staggering breaks and limiting gatherings will lessen the chances of an outbreak and ease contact tracing. *While schools cannot control what happens outside of school hours, cohorting or other control measures within a school will still help lessen the risk of COVID-19 transmission as per the Alberta Government's [Implementing School Re-entry Guidelines](#).*

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is one health measure to reduce risk of transmitting COVID-19. At times, students and staff will be sitting, walking, talking, or doing activities that require them to be closer than 2m, so varied strategies will be put in place to promote physical distancing throughout their buildings, where possible, including in classrooms, hallways, washrooms, and common areas.

Strategies include but are not limited to:

- removing excess furniture in classrooms to make more space to spread student desks and tables farther apart;
- removing or rearranging seating in common areas to prevent students from gathering;
- staggering the start/end/break times for classes to prevent crowded hallways;
- posting signs and using floor markers to control the flow of foot traffic and support physical distancing; and
- using plexiglass shields.

It is important to note that students are not expected to sit in their desks for the duration of the day. It is recognized that learning can occur during various activities. Additional measures such as the following will be implemented when students are not seated in the classroom:

- Considering activities that take place outdoors or in areas that allow for increased physical distancing and/or increased ventilation.
- Considering how best to limit the number of students moving within the classroom or throughout the school at one time to promote physical distancing.
- Wearing masks when engaging in activities where physical distancing of 2m cannot be maintained.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns are provided to staff who work with students in classrooms, in Division programs such as our RISE program and our Sports Academies, or who come into contact with students or staff who are ill. All Division staff will be provided with two reusable masks and a face shield to support a safer return to school. Face shields do not replace masks; masks are still required for staff who are wearing face shields.

Masks

On September 2, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw confirmed that masks are part of our “new normal” and will require ongoing learning about multiple measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. She was sharing interpretations of her newly released (August 31, 2020) [CMOH-order 33-2020](#), which articulated mask use guidelines for schools. In that order, Dr. Hinshaw confirmed that the following guidelines:

8. All students attending grades 4 through 12, staff members and visitors must wear a non-medical face mask that covers their mouth and nose while attending an indoor location within a school, unless the student, staff member or visitor:

- (a) is unable to place, use or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance;*
- (b) is unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical concern or limitation;*
- (c) is consuming food or drink in a designated area;*
- (d) is engaging in physical exercise;*
- (e) is seated at a desk or table;*
- (f) within a classroom or place where the instruction, course or program of study is taking place, and*
- (g) where the desks, tables and chairs are arranged in a manner*
 - (i) to prevent persons who are seated from facing each other, and*
 - (ii) to allow the greatest possible distance between seated persons;*
 - (iii) is providing or receiving care or assistance where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance; or*
 - (iv) is separated from every other person by a physical barrier.*

Originally, we shared that masks are an important way to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19, particularly when people are indoors and physical distancing of 2m or more is not possible. The Minister of Education and the Chief Medical Officer of Alberta have mandated that all staff and all grades 4-12 students wear a mask when physical distancing at school is not possible. It is recommended that K–3 students wear masks, although this is not a requirement in schools at this time. Masks are required for students on buses, as buses are an environment in which students from multiple cohorts come together and social distancing is difficult to maintain. Individuals who are physically, psychologically or developmentally unable to wear a mask or who are protected by the Alberta Human Rights Act may be excused from wearing a mask.

Proper mask use will be taught and promoted, and it is our collective responsibility to adhere to mask protocols. Masks will be provided to students. That said, we encourage families to send their children to school with a mask and to practice [proper mask protocols](#) prior to coming to school. Emergency supplies of masks, face shields, gloves, gowns will be kept at the school office.

Programming Options

Faith-based Education

As a Catholic school division, Religious Education and faith permeation are central to who we are. We seek to nurture your child's faith through religious education, and through opportunities to participate in prayer (personal prayer and class/school celebrations and liturgies).

Face-to-face Education

In Scenario One, In-school classes resume with health measures in place. Just as in any school year, students will be assigned to their classes with a designated teacher(s). When possible, the teachers will move to the classrooms to limit the movement of students in the hallways.

If a student needs to stay home due to illness, their classroom teacher will provide work to support their learning. If the student is away for an extended period of time, there will be an option for the student to be supported online (i.e., scheduled Google Meets, email support).

Online Education and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Students who learn online will be part of an online learning group with an assigned teacher from the Division. Online students will remain enrolled at the school where they registered for 2020- 2021.

This learning format will include live online teacher instruction, directed activities and assignments that students will complete independently. Teachers will focus on the core subject areas (English/French Language Arts, Math, Science, Social, Religion, Physical Education and Health). Students who are also registered in Sports or Recreation Academies will continue in these programs which are more fully described in the section on *Starting School*. Options will be provided, when possible. The teacher will assess and report on student progress in these areas. The parent would need supervision of their children in their daytime environment (home, caregiver), but the parent would not require that supervisor to teach their children.

If your child becomes ill and cannot attend face-to-face school, the classroom teacher will continue to maintain contact with your child unless the illness is lengthy. If the illness is longer than one-two weeks, you will have the option to register in online programming as long as there is sufficient room and resources to accommodate the request. If you are registered in online programming, the online teacher may offer face-to-face opportunities for the class to get together for a safe gathering. The health measures would be fully explained to you. You and your child would decide whether or not to take part in these opportunities.

FAQs

What will programming look like?

The programming would be very similar to what is being offered in face-to-face classes. Your child would take core courses: English/French Language Arts, Math, Social, Science, Religion, Physical Education and Health). Once the online core courses begin, teachers will review what is possible for option courses. Both face-to-face and online education teachers will use common course outlines and key learner outcomes so that what is studied is the same whether your child is face-to-face or online. The topics will be paced to enable a student to shift from one mode to another, if necessary. Online education is available to all students, including students who are registered in our academies, IB, or AP courses.

What do I do if my child starts in online programming and then would like to switch back to face-to-face programming?

Your child will start in his/her pathway of choice in our school. Because you are one of our families, you will have opportunities throughout the year to indicate whether or not you choose to stay in online education. Each reporting period, you will receive an email on certain dates as outlined in the Reporting and Notification section of this guidebook. You may also contact the acting school principal, Mr. Evan Holstein at: eholstein@gsacrd.ab.ca and 780-459-6616.

Will my child have a teacher for his/her grade level?

Online English Programming

We currently have sufficient enrollment to provide you with Kindergarten-Grade 12 English programming. Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient enrollment to offer Pre-Kindergarten online programming.

Online French Programming

We currently have sufficient enrollment to provide you with Kindergarten-Grade 3 French programming. Initially, we did not have sufficient enrollment to offer a full roster of French Immersion courses for Grades 4-9. We have decided to add French programming (Gr. 4-5, Gr. 6, Gr. 7-8, Gr. 9), offering core subjects.

Home Education

Some parents may confuse doing online education at home with home education. To clarify the difference, online education is provided by the Division and home education is provided by the parent. Home Education is provided by the parent and governed by the [Home Education Regulation](#). Our Division has prescribed requirements in our [Home Education and Shared Responsibility AP 230](#). A parent may start a home education program at any time but needs approval from a supervising school authority.

International Education

Only international students already here in Canada and who have pre-registered for the 2020– 2021 school year will be accommodated. The province has indicated that after Canada lifts current travel restrictions and non-essential travel resumes, international education programs can resume. Any students would need to follow quarantine requirements and any relevant public health orders.

Reporting and Notification Periods

Once you have started the year in either face-to-face or online education, you will receive report cards based on the school's reporting periods. You will have more than one opportunity to consider whether you choose to continue with face-to-face or online programming or vice versa. We aim to keep students moving forward in one programming mode during a reporting period, whenever possible. This ensures academic success for all students. If our online school program that you requested is full, options will be explored for how to continue with your designated school's programming.

On November 5, 2020, principals communicated with parents who wished to switch their children from face-to-face to online programming or vice-versa. It was also communicated that while there will be another opportunity to make this choice later in the school year, we may not be in the position to honor switches from face-to-face to online programming due to having insufficient rooms and resources. Each request will be considered and every effort will be made to accommodate parents' choices.

Please see the notification periods for your child's school in the chart on pages 24 and 25.

Please use this chart as a guideline for notification periods:

| Reporting Periods | Notification periods |
|---|---|
| <p>Elementary Schools Reporting Period 1: Aug. – Nov. 2020 Reporting Period 2: Nov. – March 2021 Reporting Period 3: April – June 2021</p> | <p>Elementary Schools Notification Period 1: Oct. 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> |
| <p>Junior High Schools École GH Primeau Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Dec. 4, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>École Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Dec. 4, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Dec. 5 – Mar. 19 Reporting Period 3: Mar. 20 – June 25, 2021</p> <p>Legal School Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Nov. 29, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Nov. 30 – Mar. 21 Reporting Period 3: Mar. 22 – June 25</p> <p>Morinville Community High School- Gr. 9 Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Jan. 31 Reporting Period 2: Feb. 1 – June 25</p> <p>RS Fowler Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Dec. 4 Reporting Period 2: Dec. 5 – Mar. 19 Reporting Period 3: Mar. 20 – June 25</p> <p>Sister Alphonse Academy Reporting Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Dec. 6, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Dec. 7 – Apr. 4 Reporting Period 3: Apr. 4 – June 25</p> <p>Vincent J Maloney Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Jan. 31 Reporting Period 2: Feb. 1 – June 25</p> | <p>Junior High Schools École GH Primeau Notification Period 1: Oct. 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>École Secondaire Sainte Marguerite d'Youville Notification Period 1: Oct. 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>Legal School Notification Period 1: Oct. 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>Morinville Community High School- Gr. 9 Notification Period 1: Nov. 5, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>RS Fowler Notification Period 1: October 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>Sister Alphonse Academy Notification Period 1: Oct. 15, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>Vincent J Maloney Notification Period 1: November 5, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> |
| <p>High Schools Morinville Community High School, Gr. 10-12 Quarter 1: Aug. 31 – Nov. 15, 2020 Quarter 2: Nov. 16, 2020 – Jan. 31, 2021 Quarter 3: Feb. 1 – April 20, 2021 Quarter 4: Apr. 21 – June 25, 2021</p> | <p>High Schools Morinville Community High School, Gr. 10-12 Notification Period 1: Oct. 9, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>St. Albert Catholic High School Quarter 1: Aug. 31 – Nov. 15, 2020 Quarter 2: Nov. 16, 2020 – Jan. 31, 2021 Quarter 3: Feb. 1 – April 20, 2021 Quarter 4: April 21 – June 25</p> <p>St. Gabriel Catholic High School Reporting Period 1: Aug. 31 – Jan. 31 Reporting Period 2: Feb. 1 – June 25</p> | <p>St. Albert Catholic High School Notification Period 1: Oct. 9, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> <p>St. Gabriel Catholic High School Notification Period 1: Nov. 5, 2020 Reporting Period 2: Mar. 5 – 19, 2021 (Transition April 12, 2021)</p> |
|--|--|

Common Course Outlines and Online Materials

A group of 50 K-12 teachers met over the summer to identify essential outcomes to be used by online and face-to-face teachers for common course outlines across our Division. Therefore, students will be engaged in similar learning whether they are in online or in face-to-face contexts.

Also, this group of teachers prepared online lessons and materials for school start up and will continue to meet throughout the year to further develop this repository of lesson materials. This is an opportunity for us to learn collaboratively and to share across face-to-face and online teaching contexts to support students who may have to switch between face-to-face and online education.

Smooth transitions between face-to-face and online education based on common outcomes and course outlines.



Routines in School

Communication from the Division

You will continue to receive weekly updates through the Superintendent about school start up in August and early September. This week's update was designed to provide more details about programming, and the guidebook will be revised as necessary to further address questions arising from families. Regular updates are posted on the Division's [website](#), our schools' [websites](#), and our official social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)).

Communication from the School

Throughout the school year, you will receive a message from your school principal about orientations, classes, and any other important programming requirements at the school level. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 in your child's school, your school principal will work directly with Alberta Health Services and with Division Office staff using the most current [COVID-19 in school settings](#) to communicate with "close contacts". In a school setting, **close contacts** are individuals that:

- a) Provide direct care for an individual with COVID-19 or who had similar close physical contact
OR
- b) Had close prolonged contact (i.e., for more than 15 minutes cumulative and within two metres) with a case
OR
- c) Had direct contact with infectious body fluids of an individual with COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed or sneezed on).

The school principals will also provide notification to all staff and parents/guardians to inform the community about what is happening and next steps as soon as permitted by Alberta Health Services.

Staggered Entry and Delayed Start

We have experienced a very successful school re-entry with staggered re-entry for K-9 Face-to-Face students who began **on August 31, 2020** (students who had last names beginning (A-K) attended school on this day) and on **September 1, 2020** (students who had the last names beginning (L-Z) attended school on this day.). Regular classes began on **September 2, 2020** for K-9 face-to-face students.

Delayed Start for K-9 Online Students:

September 8, 2020: Online education classes for K-9 students begin, which is a delayed start for these students.

August 28 – September 4, 2020:

- Online registrations have been confirmed with school principals.
- Mr. Evan Holstein, acting school principal, GSACRD Online Pathway will be available for questions about K-9 online education. Email: eholstein@gsacrd.ab.ca Phone: 780-459-6616.
- Online teachers will contact parents to share details about school start-up (schedules, routines, where and how to access materials).
- Online students do not come to school until September 8th unless they are in high school.

Pre-Kindergarten programs

- **August 31 – September 4:** Pre-Kindergarten Family Orientation Meetings – The Pre-Kindergarten teacher will contact the family with a time.
- **September 8 – 9:** Staggered Entry
- **September 10:** All children attend.

Getting to School on the Bus

Before coming to school each day, all staff and students must complete [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#), which is [available in multiple languages](#), to determine whether they can attend or must stay home. Students with COVID-19 symptoms or experiencing illness will not be permitted on the bus.

Because physical distancing is not possible on a bus, to help keep students and staff as safe as possible, the following protocols will be followed:

- Students in Grades K–12 who are physically, psychologically or developmentally able to wear a mask will be required to do so.
- Students will practice physical distancing while at the bus stop and line up 2 meters apart.
- Students will be assigned seats using a seating plan that limits close contact with others when possible.
- Students will sit with members of the same household when possible.
- Students will be taught and reminded of how to respect physical distancing.
- There will be a protective zone between the driver and student passengers, with no person seated directly behind the bus driver.
- The bus will be cleaned according to COVID-19 cleaning standards.
- High contact areas will be cleaned throughout the day.
- A deep clean of the bus will be completed daily.

Arriving at School

All students will have an assigned door to use every time they enter and exit their school. When students arrive at school, they will:

- go to the area outside their assigned door.
- follow physical distancing guidelines to stay at least two meters apart while they wait outside.
- follow physical distancing guidelines to line up when it is time to enter the school.
- wait for staff to bring them into the school.

School staff will be outside to remind students of these requirements, and to help students line up and keep an appropriate distance from each other. Many schools will develop staggered entry schedules to limit how many students enter the school at once. This schedule may be slightly different from the regular bell schedule. During extreme weather, such as severe cold or rain, schools will have a plan in place so students can enter the school early. Adults bringing students to school will be asked to stay in their vehicle or outside the school, and to maintain a safe physical distance between themselves and others. Those who need to enter the school must book an appointment with the school office. Individuals without an appointment will not be able to enter the school.

Signs and Arrows

Schools will use information on posters and on the floor (arrows/footmarkers) to help students to maintain physical distancing within the school and to know which way to walk through the hallways.

Laminated signs will be displayed throughout the school as reminders to:

- [Help Relaunch Safely](#)
- [Please do not enter, if...](#)
- [Self-screening Questionnaire](#)
- [How to wash your hands](#)
- [How to use hand sanitizer](#)
- [How to wear a face mask](#)
- [Practice physical distancing](#)
- [School closure](#)
- [Elevator safety](#)

Lockers, Coat Hooks, and School Supplies

In the earlier versions of these guidelines, we recommended limiting students' access to lockers and coat hooks due to distancing protocols and gathering restrictions. Newly revised guidelines from the Alberta Government envisage the potential of using coat hooks and lockers only when measures are in place to minimize crowding:

- Spacing lockers/coat hooks out when possible.
- Assigning lockers/coat hooks based on cohort/grade/class.

As we began school, it was difficult to ensure that crowding was easily minimized, so school principals have worked with staff to have students bring what they need for the day and keep school supplies and textbooks in their backpacks or in storage solutions proposed by classroom teachers to minimize locker visits or the need to go to cubbies and coat hooks. As we continue to live our health measures, some school principals were able to use their coat hooks and lockers by adhering to health guidelines for maintaining physical distances of 2m or more, mitigating risks by also wearing masks and sanitizing, and by controlling the number of students in the hallway at one time. We continue to support teachers to direct the best way to store items, in consultation with the school principal.

Students will have their own personal supplies to use that are stored separately. Teachers will plan learning activities to reduce or minimize the need to share equipment, textbooks or materials. If items are shared, they must be cleaned and disinfected after use. Students will wash or sanitize their hands both before and after using the shared items.

Washrooms and Common Areas

Washrooms will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day. There will be a maximum number of students permitted in the washroom at one time. Depending on the size of the school and the location of washrooms, schools may assign students to specific washrooms. Areas such as libraries and gymnasiums may be used as classrooms and this will be determined by the school principal. Gatherings will be discouraged in all common areas, and limitations placed on resource sharing to ensure that all health guidelines can be met.

Open/Closed Campus

Junior high and high schools will work with their school community to decide if students will be allowed to leave campus during lunch breaks. If students are permitted to leave the school building, they must:

- exit through their assigned door
- respect physical distancing and all other COVID-19 health protocols when off campus

- assess whether they have any symptoms of illness before they re-enter the school— students with newly developed symptoms will not be permitted to return to school
- re-enter the school through their assigned door

Additionally, high schools will need to determine if students may leave campus and return to the school building during a spare period. Schools will also need to identify a space or spaces in the school where students on spares can be accommodated while physical distancing.

Playgrounds

With this in mind, schools will not be assigning staff to supervise playground equipment before and after school. To support safety, this equipment will be off limits to students during these times. Families who wish to take children to the playground at other times of the day are encouraged to follow the province's [Guidance for Playgrounds](#) to use the equipment as safely as possible. School principals will review the guidance for playground use and decide whether to permit playground access during school hours.

Prekindergarten and Kindergarten

Early childhood education is following many of the suggestions provided by the Government of Alberta's [Guidance for Daycare and Out-of-School Care](#). Like all classrooms, PreK and K classes focus on creating cohorts (a group of children and staff members assigned to them who stay together throughout the day). Multiple safety measures for young children will be in place, such as hand hygiene, cohorting and sub-cohorting, and physical distancing, as well as PPE will be available to school personnel, such as a therapist, who is not part of the cohort. In addition, extra attention is paid to limiting interactions while waiting for parents at pick-up times and while students are waiting to enter school at drop-off times. These smaller groupings/sub-cohorts also spend time together at mealtimes, playtimes, and outdoor activities.

Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 9 Classes

In Pre-K-9, Pre-K-5, Pre-K-6, 5-8, and 7-9 schools, students will stay with their classroom as a cohort and teachers will travel to classrooms as much as reasonably possible. Core (English/French Language Arts, Math, Science, Social, Religion, Physical Education and Health) and option courses will be offered by following Alberta Health [guidelines](#). On November 24, 2020, with continued temporary enhanced restrictions on how we offer music, singing, dancing, and performing arts, we will adhere to such guidelines in our selection of options. Given gathering restrictions, we will not be having concerts that are face-to-face, but we will look for virtual alternatives. We will modify programming to ensure that we continue to limit equipment sharing to cohorts, and to have fewer teachers offering courses, which will limit options and/or flexibility to take options of choice.

Grades 10, 11, and 12 Classes

In high schools, we are implementing a quarterly schedule for all courses. This means that students will take core and option classes in a compressed schedule of Sept.- Nov., Nov.- Jan., Jan.-April, or April - June. The reason for this scheduling is to have students take part in fewer classes to maintain smaller cohorts. This will also maintain minimal disruption to writing diplomas and completing high school programming if schools are required to switch between scenarios one, two, and/or three.

Provincial Exams

Grade 3 Student Learning Assessments will be optional. Grades 6 and 9 Provincial Achievement Tests will not be administered. Diploma Exams are now a choice for quarter one as per the Minister of Education's public announcement. On October 13, Minister LaGrange announced that she had made the decision to allow students and parents to choose whether or not to write diploma exams for November. Through Colin Aitchinson, LaGrange's press secretary, the reason provided was: "We know these are challenging times and that's why we want to ensure students and their parents have the flexibility to make the best decision for their own situation this exam season." Our division supports this decision and is working with students and parents to assist in individual student choices about whether or not to write diploma exams for particular courses. If you have questions about whether your child should write diploma exams, please contact your child's teachers and/or school principal for guidance.

Diploma schedules will be communicated by your school. All diploma exams will be offered every quarter. Diploma exams are optional for the rest of the school year. Students and families can choose to write an exam or receive an exemption for the January, April, June and August 2021 exams.

Respectful Inclusive Supported Education (RISE) Programs (Jr./Sr. High Schools) and Inclusive Education

To support children and students in attaining the goals as stated in the Ministerial Order on Student Learning, school authorities must ensure that all children and students (Kindergarten to Grade 12), regardless of race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, or any other factor(s), have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports.

Our RISE program students learn together in an inclusive context in which they will come to school as a cohort (the same students with the same staff) every day. Students will continue to take part in classes face-to-face unless those students choose online education. Students will continue to take part in classes face-to-face and access resources virtually (e.g., Google Classroom) to ensure that they have necessary medical care, when needed, and targeted and

individualized support to meet their personalized education goals. Staff who are working with RISE students face-to-face in closer than 2m proximity will be provided with masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns, to be used when necessary based on Alberta Health Services' guidelines.

For students who have diverse learning needs, returning to school can cause additional concern or anxiety. We are taking steps to support students, which include:

- working with Alberta Health Services on COVID-19 safety protocols for some of the complex medical interventions and supports that some students require, to keep both students and staff as safe as possible.
- applying COVID-19-specific strategies to Individual Program Plans (IPPs), Individual Care Plans or Individual Student Behaviour Plans.
- addressing effective learning strategies for online learning in IPPs.

Students' academic, social, emotional, behavioral specialized supports and services were assessed when making decisions about supporting all students in face-to-face and online programming. Phone calls were made to families who may have selected online programming and who needed access to specialized services and supports. If you have questions about inclusive programming and supports and services, please contact your school principal and/or Mrs. Raymonde Roulston, Director of Early Education and Learning Support Services at 780-459-7711.

More information about how we're supporting students with diverse learning needs during COVID-19 will be available in school and division communications, including this guidebook, as we move forward. School principals and Division staff will work with families who have specific questions about school re-entry.

IB and AP Exams

IB and AP exams will continue to be administered in May 2021. IB and AP courses will be offered according to when it is possible based on school staffing and scheduling requirements. Some considerations may be off-schedule times (lunch, after class). Teachers who teach an AP or IB course will have certain courses scheduled in certain quarters that each school will communicate to AP and IB students. Teachers will follow up off-schedule to work with students to be prepared for exams in May.

St. Gabriel Education Centre

At the Regular Board Meeting on August 31, 2020, our board resolved to rebrand what was St. Gabriel Catholic High School to St. Gabriel Education Centre, which coordinates our newly established K-9 online learning pathway. In this centre, high school students who may need greater flexibility than a quarterly schedule provides, will choose to take their courses in quarters, semesters, or as a full year programs based on conversations with teachers and the acting school principal, Mr. Evan Holstein. Students will have access to diploma exams every quarter.

Physical Education, Extracurricular Activities, and Athletics

Schools will continue to provide physical education instruction, and we will provide guidance as far as privileging outdoor activities and individual activities indoors as recently emphasized in the [Targeted Public Health Measures](#) released on November 12, 2020. Earlier, Alberta Health Services (AHS) had reviewed our approach to keeping students in subgroups within our classes and using equipment with attention to all cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing protocols.

Schools will limit extracurricular activities at this time. Extracurricular activities and athletics will **comply** with all guidance from AHS and the Alberta Schools' Athletic Association (ASAA), as applicable. On October 28, 2020, our school division collaboratively posted the following media release about athletics, **and this announcement was updated and revised on January 8, 2021:**

Announcement: School Athletics Postponed

To protect the health and safety of our students and staff, Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools, St. Albert Public Schools, Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord, and Sturgeon Public Schools have made the joint decision to continue to postpone all school-based extracurricular junior and senior high athletics until further notice.

This decision was not made lightly and is a result of the continuing increase in COVID-19 cases in our communities. We know how important athletics are for many of our students, and we hope to be able to provide our student-athletes with the opportunity to participate and compete later this school year. We will monitor the situation in the upcoming months to determine if it is safe to resume athletics based on health guidance from the provincial government.

On November 12, 2020, with an increase in cases of COVID-19 in the Edmonton area, a temporary stop to all group fitness, team sports, group performance activities in the community has resulted in limited use of facilities such as rinks and arenas as of Nov.13-Nov. 17. Our local facilities have communicated:

In response to the November 12 update from the Province, the following activities in City recreation facilities will be cancelled from November 13 – 27 inclusive:

- *All arena and fieldhouse and gymnasium activities.*
- *Bookings for group/team cohort physical activities including dryland training.*
- *Registered or drop-in recreation, fitness and aquatics programs, including personal training.*
- *These restrictions do not apply to outdoor recreation. We encourage you to look to outdoor activities to remain active during this time.*

Even though the [restrictions do not apply to schools](#), we have chosen to apply these restrictions on leaving the school until [further notice based on guidance from the provincial government](#).

Sports Academy

On November 24, 2020, Premier Kenney mandated enhanced public health measures to have all grades 7-12 students engage in at-home, online learning from November 30 until January 11 while continuing with a Christmas Break (Dec. 21- Jan. 1). [Although there is a return to face-to-face classes on January 11, 2020, strict health guidelines to continue to decrease community spread of the virus has been emphasized by Premier Kenney and Dr. Deena Hinshaw in their public media release on January 7, 2021. One aspect of these guidelines is to continue to limit unnecessary interactions through social gatherings and interactions in extracurricular and athletic contexts.](#)

[Therefore, if](#) your child is registered in Hockey, Soccer, Gym/Cheer/Dance, or Recreation Academies, your child will be participating in these programs with modified programming as described above that meets safety measures of the Chief Medical Officer's and Alberta Health's guidelines at their respective school sites.

Highly specific guidelines have been created and the best person to discuss these activities and guidelines with is Geoff Giacobbo, Sports Academy Consultant. If you have an interest in registering in Sports/Recreation Academy, please contact Mr. Giacobbo at: ggiacobbo@gsacrd.ab.ca.

Music

At the present time, with the [November 12th health restrictions](#), we will continue to meet Alberta Health measures and [guidelines](#) for offering music, singing, dancing, and performance arts in our schools.

Food

Activities that involve the sharing of food between students are suspended until further notice. Classes that teach food preparation may occur as long as students do not share the food they prepare with other students or staff.

For lunches and snacks:

- No Skip-the Dishes or food services (e.g., hot lunches) will be available in schools.
- Food provided by the family should be stored with the student's belongings.
- Students/children should practice physical distancing while eating.
- There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and pepper shakers, ketchup).
- If families forget to send lunch, you will need to contact the office to arrange to drop off the lunch as opposed to walking through the school to the student's classroom.

Parents can help by discussing these measures with your children before the start of school.

Field Trips

Field trips that require students to ride a bus are currently postponed, in keeping with provincial guidelines. The status of such field trips will be reviewed as provincial guidelines continue to evolve. All international, provincial, and local field trips that require travel are suspended but will be reviewed as chief medical officers of health adjust recommendations about traveling between provinces (learn more about Alberta's COVID-19 travel restrictions). Virtual field trips, in-class/classroom field trips and socially distanced community walking trips that follow COVID-19 health and safety protocols are permitted.

Assemblies and Special Events

Gatherings that bring multiple cohorts of students together are not permitted at this time. This includes such things as performances, book fairs, guest speakers, school dances, in-person meet-the-teacher events and group fundraisers like bike-a-thons. Virtual assemblies may be held within the school community. This year's READ IN Week event will be limited to school staff reading with students and virtual guest readers.

School Council Meetings

School council meetings for the 2020–2021 school year may go ahead as long as they meet Alberta Health restrictions for social gatherings as well as the safety protocols and expectations of the Chief Medical Officer and Division health guidelines. School principals will support their school council members to determine if they will hold in-person meetings and/or online virtual meetings. Any in-person meeting must adhere to COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Libraries/Learning Commons

Schools will decide if they will use the learning commons or school library space as instructional space. Schools that decide to use this space for instruction must follow COVID-19 strategies that support physical distancing. These spaces will be cleaned and disinfected between each cohort of students. If the libraries/learning commons are used to share resources, a protocol will be reviewed to loan materials that will be in keeping with COVID-19 health measures. Public Health Inspectors reinforced that when books are taken out, they must be left for 72 hours before being loaned again.

Supporting Mental Health and Well-being

In our Division, we provide all students with access to school counsellors. Please contact your school principal if your child experiences signs of mental duress or requires proactive support to have a successful schooling experience. In addition, parents or guardians who are concerned for their child's well-being can reach out to these community resources:

- **Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642**

This toll-free helpline provides confidential and anonymous services, crisis intervention, information about mental-health services and referrals to other agencies.

- **Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868**

- kidshelpphone.ca
- Text CONNECT to 686868

- **Health Link: 811**

- **Alberta Health Services**

- Help in Tough Times
- Healthy Together

- The federal First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line, at 1-855-242-3310 and online chat (in [English](#) and [French](#)), is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

[GSACRD Voice](#) is our Mental Health Capacity Building Grant Initiative comprised of a Wellbeing Team that has created resources for students and parents, including virtual evenings to talk about research-proven strategies to be resilient and healthy. Please check out these [resources](#).