

**Greater St. Albert  
Catholic Schools**



**Return to School Plan  
2021-2022**

**OCTOBER 15, 2021**

## Contents

---

Message from the Superintendent and Board Chair .....	2
Shared Responsibility.....	3
Masking in GSACRD Schools .....	3
Pre-K to Grade 3 .....	4
Grades 4-12.....	4
Staff .....	5
We're in This Together .....	5
Illness and Symptoms .....	5
Positive COVID-19 Cases within our schools .....	6
Vaccines .....	6
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette.....	7
Enhanced Cleaning Protocols Within our Schools.....	7
Operations & Programming.....	7
Online Learning Options .....	7
GSACRD Processes When Moving Classes Online .....	8
Optional Courses in Junior High.....	8
Lockers and Coat Hooks .....	8
Cohorts .....	9
• Pre-K – 6.....	9
• Grades 7-12 .....	9
High School Programming - Quarters or Semesters.....	9
Assessment .....	9
Extra-Curricular Activities and Field Trips .....	9
Music and Band .....	10
Visitors and Volunteers in Schools .....	11
Cafeterias and Food Service.....	11
Assemblies and Special Events .....	11
Air Quality in GSACRD Schools.....	12
Transportation .....	12
Mental Health Supports.....	12
Student Supports for Mental Health and Well-Being .....	12
Parents and caregivers can also access the following additional supports .....	12

Please note that this document will be reviewed regularly and may be adjusted at any time in response to the evolving status of COVID-19 in the province or our school communities.

## Message from the Superintendent and Board Chair

Welcome back to another wonderful year of learning and growing in knowledge and faith with Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools. We are looking forward to having our students return to what is a more normal school year in a safe and caring learning and teaching environment.

We continue with our Three-Year Faith Theme - *Arise: Get up, get going, and go with God!* Our particular focus in this second year of the faith theme is on the idea of witness, as our response to hearing Christ's voice is to "get going", to respond through action, and to become like Christ for others. The following passage from the Acts of the Apostles anchors our faith theme for the 2021-2022 school year:

"Arise! I have appointed you as a witness of what you have seen." (Acts 26:16)

As we work to serve as witnesses and see Christ in one another, may we all bear in mind the health and well-being of ourselves and others. Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools has endeavoured to develop a plan for returning to school that advocates for the health and safety of students and staff, while ensuring that individuals can make choices in accordance with their best interests. Although our Division is comprised of many parts, we are truly one body in Christ. Let us care for ourselves, as well as one another, as we work to facilitate a safe and healthy return to school for our students and staff.

Blessings,



Dr. Clint Moroziuk  
Superintendent of Schools



Noreen Radford  
Chair - Board of Trustees

## Shared Responsibility

---

We approach the 2021-22 school year with optimism and hope. With the promise of reduced restrictions we anticipate a wonderful year full of growth and opportunity.

As you will see in the specifics of our plan, we anticipate that our students will be able to participate in extracurricular activities, theatre performances and concerts, assemblies, option courses, food service and field trips. We know that these events contribute to school culture and climate, development of student and staff relationships and overall well-being in the school. We also know that these are the opportunities that our staff and students have missed tremendously over the past year and a half. In order to maintain access to these events it is important that all community members recognize that there is a shared responsibility to keep one another safe and healthy. As such, we encourage all GSACRD families to be flexible in thought and practice and follow the recommendations of vaccinating when eligible, maintaining physical distance when possible, and wearing masks as required. It is our hope that by following these protocols, our students will experience a rich, enhanced, face-to-face educational experience.

As a faith-filled community we want to stress the importance of treating one another with the utmost respect and kindness. Our schools are places of community and inclusion, and we will strive to ensure that all students and staff are made to feel comfortable and accepted. We understand that each family has had to make difficult decisions during the course of the last year, and while there are strong feelings in regards to many of the issues at hand, there should be no feelings stronger than those of love and compassion for one another.

## Masking in GSACRD Schools

---

Mask wearing is one tool used to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Adhering to masking guidelines will allow our schools to safely continue many of the activities that we were unable to do last year because of the need for strict cohorting and scheduling of students. We are excited to once again offer a wide range of option courses and extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, drama activities, clubs and events. Additionally, students are enjoying the use lockers, cafeterias and gymnasiums.

How to make wearing a mask more effective: Both [AHS](#) and the [CDC](#) have some important guidelines that increase the efficacy of wearing a cloth mask. It is important to remember that masks should:

- Fit properly (no gaps, wire for the bridge of the nose).
- Be clean (frequently laundered, changed more than once per day).
- Be made of three layers of sturdy cotton (600 threadcount is optimal, light should not be seen through the fabric).
- Be handled appropriately (clean hands, not left on surfaces, never shared).
- Be doubled if they are thin and do not meet the criteria of listed above.

The below protocols will be reviewed regularly and may be adjusted at any time in response to the evolving status of COVID-19 in the province or our school communities.

## Pre-K to Grade 3

- We recognize that wearing masks properly can be challenging for younger students. For this reason, we recognize that students may require instruction and demonstration as to how to mask properly.
- Masks are required in **common areas** (hallways, bathrooms and foyers) and when classroom cohorts are intermingled.
- Masks are **strongly recommended** in classrooms.
- When outside, masks are not necessary, but we encourage students to practice physical distancing.
- **Masks are mandatory on the school bus, to and from school and to any school sanctioned event.**

## Grades 4-12

- **Masks are required in all situations.**
- When students are in class, seated, all facing the same direction, and not interacting with others, they may remove their mask.
- Masking is not required during physical activity.
- When outside, masks are not necessary, but we encourage students to practice physical distancing.
- **Masks are mandatory on the school bus, to and from school, and to any school sanctioned event.**

## Staff

- **Masks are required in all situations.**
- When staff can ensure two metre physical distancing and all students are seated, they can remove their mask.
- **Masks are mandatory on the school bus to any school sanctioned event.**

In cases where staff or students have obtained a medical exemption from a physician, psychologist, or nurse practitioner, they will not be required to wear a mask and will be welcome to fully participate in all school events.

### [Medical Note for Mask Exception](#)

We understand the delicate balance of physical and mental wellness, and we will continue to adjust our health measures in accordance with the pandemic situation in the province and the health and safety of our community. Please be assured that we endeavour to provide students and staff with a safe, caring, and Christ-centered environment in which to teach and learn.

## We're in This Together

---

We must work together toward a safe school environment. We ask that all students and staff respect that a variety of opinions and individual health circumstances exist. This consideration and respect is essential if we are to facilitate a safe, caring, and Christ-centered learning and teaching environment for everyone.

## Illness and Symptoms

In the 2021-22 school year, GSACRD students and staff will continue to use [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#) that families and staff exercise an abundance of caution and stay home if they are exhibiting signs of illness, particularly **any** symptoms associated with COVID-19. This will help reduce the risk of spreading the virus and contribute to a safe environment where all can feel protected. **Please note that if individuals (staff, students or guests) begin to exhibit any symptoms of illness (especially those related to respiratory issues) during the course of the day, they will be asked to go home immediately. Please have a plan to pick up your child in the event that they become symptomatic over the course of the day.**

## Positive COVID-19 Cases within our schools

As of October 12, 2021, schools in Alberta will be returning to contact tracing and reporting. Similar to the communication plan we had initiated in September; we will adhere to the following guidelines:

- AHS will report positive cases to school administration. Parents are still welcome to disclose a positive test to the school, as this may allow for communication in a timelier manner.
- Close contacts will be informed via email. Names of close contacts will be shared with AHS and they will receive communication from AHS, confirming that they have been in close contact with a positive case.
- School administration will inform the whole community that a positive case has been identified.
- **Please note that the community will only be notified if the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 was in the school while infectious.**
- **When a single K-6 class reports 3 cases in a 5-day period, the class will transition to online learning for 10 calendar days.**
- Close contacts are not being asked to isolate at this time.

Parents of children who test positive have a legal obligation to keep their child in isolation in accordance with the COVID-19 protocols set out by AHS. Please check <https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx> and adhere to the required isolation measures.

## Vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines are available to all Albertans born in 2009 or before. While vaccines are not mandatory, AHS strongly recommends **all** who are eligible to be vaccinated to do so, as it is the single most effective way to limit the most severe outcomes of COVID-19. In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP) and the [Health Information Act](#), **the privacy of students and staff, including their vaccination status, must be respected by all.**

Currently, all COVID-19 vaccine clinics that were scheduled for Fall 2021 have already taken place GSACRD schools.

**NO STUDENTS WILL BE VACCINATED WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN.**

Effective October 25, 2021, GSACRD will be requiring all staff to declare their vaccination status. Staff will be required to be fully vaccinated by December 20, 2021, or will be required to provide a negative test result every 72hrs. This is consistent with [Administrative Procedure 489, COVID-19 Vaccination Status-Employees and Volunteers](#).

## **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

Students will continue to have access to hand-sanitizer that will be readily available at entry points, in classrooms and common areas. Signage to educate and remind staff and students of proper hand hygiene will be visible in key areas (posters available for download from Alberta Health Services can be found [here](#).) **Proper hand hygiene will be an expectation of all staff and students at all times.**

Students, staff and visitors are to use proper respiratory etiquette (e.g., sneezing into the elbow or a tissue, discarding tissues immediately into a lined bin, performing hand hygiene). Students or staff who demonstrate any COVID-19 symptoms will be asked to go home, and in the event that this is not possible, they will be isolated within the school building. Please have a plan to pick up your child in the event that they become symptomatic over the course of the day.

## **Enhanced Cleaning Protocols Within our Schools**

GSACRD is committed to maintaining the increased cleaning schedule that was implemented in the fall of 2020, which includes frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces, increased hours for custodial staff and continuous replenishment of hand sanitizers and surface cleaning supplies.

## **Operations & Programming**

---

### **Online Learning Options**

GSACRD is proud to offer both face-to-face instruction and online instruction. For grades 1-9, students can choose to learn online through our Online Learning Pathway program. In light of the smaller number of families who have selected this option, it will be offered through a partnership between Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools and Evergreen Catholic Schools. Grades 1-6 will be coordinated through Evergreen Catholic, and GSACRD will coordinate grades 7-9. Students who work with Evergreen Catholic Schools are still registered as GSACRD students. We want to minimize any disruption to students and therefore we encourage families to make this decision for



the duration of the 2021-22 school year.

Grade 10-12 students will access online learning through St. Gabriel Education Centre. Any inquiries can be directed to Mrs. Renee Trottier, principal of SGEC. ([rtrottier@gsacrd.ab.ca](mailto:rtrottier@gsacrd.ab.ca))

## **GSACRD Processes When Moving Classes Online**

Effective October 12, 2021, AHS has announced that when all the following criteria is met:

- 3 or more cases among staff or students, AND
- in the same K-6 classroom, AND
- all cases attended school while infectious within a consecutive 5 calendar day period

students and staff in the K-6 classroom will transition to online learning for a period of 10 days.

- Schools will no longer need to report 10% absences to AHS in relation to COVID-19 cases, but only for other suspected communicable illnesses.

## **Optional Courses in Junior High**

At this time, all junior high schools and middle schools in GSACRD intend to run options courses. Students typically change cohorts and locations for these courses and switch options at each reporting period. Some option courses, such as Food Studies or Home Economics, may have additional health and safety measures due to the nature of their activities.

## **Lockers and Coat Hooks**

When it is reasonable to do so, GSACRD schools will return to the use of lockers and coat hooks. Each school site will determine how to organize lockers and personal belongings of students to ensure that they are able to prioritize student safety.

## Cohorts

- **Pre-K – 6**
  - Students in Pre-K to grade 6 are typically organized in homeroom cohorts.
  - Schools will endeavor to avoid situations where cohorts are required to mix. Exceptions may be small group interventions where students from more than one cohort are combined.
  - Students enrolled in Sports or Recreation Academy will continue to follow their current schedule.
  - Student may be required to re-cohort in order to provide programming.
  
- **Grades 7-12**
  - Students from grades 7-12 will change cohorts as they change courses throughout the day.

## High School Programming - Quarters or Semesters

GSACRD high schools will be returning to semesters for the 2021-22 school year.

- Semester 1 runs from August 31, 2021 to January 31, 2022 (inclusive of that day).
- Semester 2 runs from February 1, 2022 to June 29, 2022 (inclusive of that day).

## Assessment

The 2021-22 school year will see a return of Provincial Achievement Tests for grades 6 and 9 that will take place in May and June of 2022. Diploma examinations will be administered as per the published [Alberta Education schedule](#). Diploma exams are weighted as 30% of the student's final grade.

## Extra-Curricular Activities and Field Trips

### Field Trips:

As per our Administrative Procedure 260, each field trip is evaluated by the school principal for its educational value, cost, and potential risk. We will continue to follow these procedures to ensure that all field trips are a wonderful enhancement to the

regular programming that students receive in class. All field trip destinations and service providers will be vetted to ensure compliance with current AHS protocols.

Pre-K – Grade 6: Field trips will take place in class cohorts.

As per the guidelines for the Restriction Exemption program, youth participating in youth activities, where all participants are under the age of 18 years of age, are not required show proof of vaccination or negative test.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities:**

GSACRD will offer extracurricular activities to the extent possible while following the public health measures and recommendations that are in place. We will work with St. Albert Physical Education Council (SAPEC), Interschool Sports Committee (ISC), Metro Athletics, North Central School's Athletics Association (NCASAA), and Alberta School Athletics Association (ASAA) to coordinate our efforts and provide consistency to support the athletic activities that enhance our school communities.

Pre-K- Grade 6: Extra-curricular activities, such as intramurals will take place in class cohorts.

Grades 7-12: Extra-curricular events will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Masks and distancing are not required by youth under 18 while engaged in physical activity.
- Players need to be masked when not participating in activity (on bench, change rooms).
- No spectators (exceptions may be made for outdoor sporting events in accordance with current AHS protocols).
- No unnecessary contact (high fives, hugs).
- Coaches and Referees to be masked.
- Maintain physical distance whenever possible (time-out huddles are allowed unmasked).
- Sanitizing of equipment, and elimination of unnecessary equipment.
- No sharing of water bottles or garments.

## **Music and Band**

Protocols for Music and Band in GSACRD:

- When singing indoors, students need to be distanced as much as possible, masked, and all facing the same direction. (It is recommended that students change their masks after singing.)

- When singing outdoors, students should remain distanced, but masks are not required.
- Wind instruments are permitted with the use of bell covers to prevent the spread of droplets.
- Equipment and materials will be cleaned between cohorts.
- Instruments cannot be shared between students.
- At this time, we are not permitting spectators in the schools.

## Visitors and Volunteers in Schools

- GSACRD schools values its volunteers. With our new safety measures in place, we are excited to welcome volunteers once more in our schools.
  - All scheduled volunteers entering our schools will be required to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test (within 72hrs) as per our [Administrative Procedure 489, COVID-19 Vaccination Status-Employees and Volunteers](#).
  - Schools are not open to visitors at this time. This includes sporting events and performances.

## Cafeterias and Food Service

Serving and sharing food, and common eating areas, may present complexity in regards to COVID-19 protocols. As a result, schools will be judicious in how they return to food service in the 2021-22 school year.

While schools will be able to resume food service, each school will be reviewing their practices to ensure that appropriate safety precautions are in place. Schools may choose to have fewer students in a congregated site at a time and/or limit high touch surface items like vending machines or microwave ovens.

While the transmission of COVID-19 through food itself, remains a very minimal risk, we ask that schools adhere to these safe food practices in schools and classrooms:

- **Refrain from sharing food or drink at all times.**
- Food and treats brought into the school should be pre-packaged (not home-made) and distributed by one individual. The person who distributes food should be properly masked and have sanitized hands.

## Assemblies and Special Events

Whole school, in-person assemblies and special events are **not** permitted at this time.

## **Air Quality in GSACRD Schools**

GSACRD Operations and Maintenance staff have thoroughly reviewed the air quality and ventilation in our schools. Currently, all our schools have ventilation and air quality that meet or exceed provincial requirements. We are committed to continual monitoring and maintenance to ensure this level of quality is maintained.

## **Transportation**

GSACRD students will be **required to wear a mask** while riding the bus to and from school, as per current [Government of Alberta protocols](#). Please ensure that your child is equipped with a mask and that they have it properly on as they board the bus.

## **Mental Health Supports**

---

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools is supporting the mental health of students through strategic wellness planning to ensure that all students feel cared for and supported to be able to learn and live life fully and joyfully.

### **Student Supports for Mental Health and Well-Being**

- Additional time has been allocated to our schools for counselling services to best serve the needs of our students and school communities. To access support from your school counsellor, please contact your school's office staff once schools have reopened.
- Added support through the work of our Family Support Workers and our Specialized Student Support Coordinator. Available support from these specialized staff are based on referrals from our school leadership teams.
- Divisional strategies and resources through our comprehensive approach to wellness for all schools as led by the Director of Innovation and Wellness. For more information, please contact our Division office at 780-459-7711.
- GSACRD's Mental Health Capacity Building team which is focused primarily on educating our students in the areas of social emotional growth, resilience and relationships.

### **Parents and caregivers can also access the following additional supports**

- An easy-to-access hub so that youth mental health remains top of mind, and our communities are able to easily access the education, tools, support, and reliable information they need.

- [jack.org](http://jack.org)
- [Togetherall](#) is a free online community, available to all 16+ Albertans. The community is a safe place to support your mental health 24/7.
- [Kids Help Phone](#): Canada's only 24/7, national support service. We offer professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French.
  - 1-800-668-6868
  - Text 686868
- [Mental Health Help Line](#): The Mental Help Line is a 24 hour, 7 day a week confidential service that provides support, information and referrals to Albertans experiencing mental health concerns.
  - English (1-877-303-2642)
  - French (1-800-567-9699)
- [AHS: Help in Tough Times](#) - Important Hotlines of Support
- [Hope for Wellness Help Line](#): This line offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada in Cree, Ojibwe and Inuktitut.
- [Indigenous Mental Health Resources](#)