

**Greater St. Albert
Catholic Schools**



**Return to School Plan
2021-2022**

JANUARY 7, 2022

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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 as we start the new calendar year of learning and growing in knowledge and faith with Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools. We hope you had a wonderful Christmas break and are hopeful that the coming months will see a greater degree of normalcy as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, while endeavouring to ensure 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. May God bless and keep you all safe as we begin 2022 and always!

Blessings,



Dr. Clint Moroziuk
Superintendent of Schools



Joseph Becigneul
Chair - Board of Trustees

Shared Responsibility

As we return from Christmas holidays to a new year, we are reminded now, more than ever, that of our responsibility to one another. We are mindful of the Omicron variant, which is spreading rapidly. This highly transmissible form of COVID-19 has caused us to revisit a number of our protocols.

We continue to follow the advice and of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and at times take additional precautions that we feel are necessary to keep our students safe.

Our goal is to provide as many opportunities for our students as possible, while maintaining a safe and healthy face-to-face learning environment. 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 following proper [masking protocols](#) as required.

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 a half, 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 in-person learning. At the beginning of the school year, we reintroduced a wide range of option courses and extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, drama activities, clubs and events. It is our hope to maintain as many of these opportunities for our students. Additionally, students are enjoying the use lockers, cafeterias and gymnasiums. Efforts made to mask properly demonstrates our commitment to a collective goal of having as normal a school year as possible. We thank each of you for your cooperation.

In light of the Omicron variant that is more transmissible than previous variants, AHS has adjusted its instructions for [proper masking](#). Schools will be receiving medical masks for distribution to students during the week of January 10, 2022. While we are appreciative of these masks, we encourage all families who are able to do so, to purchase high quality masks and ensure that students understand how to wear and care for their mask in order to provide the most protection against the spread of COVID-19.

To make wearing a mask more effective, it is important to remember that masks

should:

- Be medical grade (strongly recommended), or be made of three layers of sturdy cotton (2 layers of tightly woven fabric with a filter in the centre).
- Fit properly (no gaps, wire for the bridge of the nose).
- Be clean (frequently laundered, changed more than once per day).
- 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.

Pre-Kindergarten

- 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 K-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 for short breaks, at the discretion of the teacher.
- Masking is not required during physical activity.
- When outside, masks are not necessary, but we encourage students to practice physical distancing.
- Students will **not** be required to mask during **strenuous physical exertion** and while **eating and drinking**.
- **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 students are in class, seated, all facing the same direction, and not

interacting with others, they may remove their mask for short breaks, at the discretion of the teacher. At this time, while maintaining 2 metres distance from students, the teacher can also take a mask break.

- **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. It is an expectation that all our families continue to follow the guidelines below to minimize the spread of the virus at school.

Illness, Symptoms and Isolation

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.**

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.

Please note that for doubly vaccinated individuals (staff and students), the isolation requirement is **five days**. For five days following the isolation, these individuals are required to be CONTINUALLY MASKED.

- It is of utmost importance that individuals be additionally mindful of this as they eat and drink during this time period. **Only when an individual is seated to eat and drink, will they be able to unmask.**
- Students who are returning after five days of isolation will be asked to refrain from physical education classes and extra-curricular sports for the full ten days, as these environments create higher levels of aspirates and more instances where mask use is inconsistent.

Positive COVID-19 Cases within our schools

Although AHS will no longer be informing schools of positive cases, GSACRD schools will continue its practice of collecting and reporting on positive cases. We will rely on the voluntary disclosure of our families. When families inform us that a student in one of our schools has tested positive for COVID-19 (by RAT or PCR Test), we will notify parents/guardians of students in the class and adhere to the following guidelines:

- Classroom contacts will be informed via email.
- School administration will keep track of confirmed cases on our division website.
- **Please note that all case numbers are approximate as they are through voluntary disclosure.**
- **When a single K-9 class reports 3 cases in a 5-day period, the class will transition to online learning for up to 10 calendar days.**
- **When a single K-9 class reports 20% absenteeism due to illness for a 3 day consecutive period, the class will transition to online learning for up to 10 calendar days, even if the illnesses are not confirmed COVID-19 cases.**
- **In grades 10-12, absenteeism will be monitored by grade, and decisions to transition to online learning will be made if and when it is feasible to do so.**
- Classroom 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 **five** years of age and older. While vaccines are not mandatory, AHS strongly recommends **all** who are eligible to be vaccinated 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.**

At this time, there are no scheduled COVID-19 vaccine clinics within the schools. Parents wishing to have their children vaccinated against COVID-19 can call 811 or visit this site: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/page17295.aspx>

Please note that regularly scheduled vaccination clinics, that have typically been in held in schools (measles, mumps, rubella, etc.), will continue as long as AHS has the staffing resources to do so. Consent packages will be sent home prior to the vaccination clinic. **NO STUDENTS WILL BE VACCINATED WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF A PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN.**

Staff Vaccination Status

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 immediately, 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).

e-Tutoring Hub

As announced by Minister LaGrange, the e-Tutoring Hub will be launched during the week of January 10, 2022, to help students catch up on skills and learning where they may have fallen behind as a result of the pandemic. Initially, students in Grades 4 to 9 will be able to access pre-recorded video tutoring sessions online anytime to build their literacy and numeracy skills.

Later this year, Alberta Education will expand the online tutoring services to cover more grades and subjects, including live tutoring. The sessions will be free for all students and parents. Feedback from school authorities, parents and students will inform topics and English and French needs for new tutoring sessions.

GSACRD Processes When Transitioning to Online Learning

Transitioning a complete school or school jurisdiction to online learning is a decision that rests in the authority of the Minister of Education. School jurisdictions are asked to demonstrate that it is not operationally feasible to keep a school open to face-to-face instruction in order to be granted a transition to online learning. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

School jurisdictions have the authority to transition single classes or grades online when they meet the following criteria. School principals will communicate with families who are directly impacted by a transition online.

In order to be transitioned to online learning, the following thresholds will be followed:

- When a single K-9 class reports 3 cases in a 5-day period,

AND/OR

- When a single K-9 class reports 20% absenteeism due to illness (even if the illnesses are not confirmed COVID-19 cases).

The class will transition to online learning for up to 10 calendar days.

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.
- Students 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

As per Minister LaGrange's announcement on December 30, 2021, **January Diploma exams are cancelled. A decision has not been made in regards to April, June and August Diploma exams.**

Grade 10 and 11 courses in GSACRD schools will mirror the administration of Diploma exams. For January 2022, if grade 10 and 11 courses have an exam, it will act as a replacement grade.

At this time, Provincial Achievement Tests scheduled for June 2022 will be administered as planned.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Field Trips

Field Trips:

Based on the most current recommendations made by AHS, GSACRD will be pausing all out of school field trips.

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, changerooms).**
- 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 will temporarily suspend visitors and volunteers in our schools.

Cafeterias and Food Service

Serving and sharing food, and common eating areas, may present complexity in regards to COVID-19 protocols.

At this time, all students in grades K-9 who eat lunch at school will do so in their homeroom cohort. Eating food in other areas of the school is prohibited.

Students in grades 10-12, will be asked to remain seated while eating.

While schools will be able to continue 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
- [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](#)