

**Greater St. Albert
Catholic Schools**



Return to School Plan 2021-2022

MARCH 1, 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

Effective March 1, 2022, Alberta is moving ahead with Step 2 of the easing of provincial COVID-19 restrictions. We have updated the Return to School Handbook to reflect the changes, as well as provide an outline of measures that are still in place. We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to all our staff and families whose responsible adherence to health protocols thus far has led us to this point. Your selfless cooperation has demonstrated that we truly are Christ for one another.

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 of Christ, may we all bear in mind the health and well-being of ourselves and others. Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools has endeavoured to provide a reasonable and measured approach to COVID-19 throughout the year. In spite of the varying viewpoints, we are proud of our community, who prioritizes respect and compassion. May God bless and keep us all safe!

Blessings,



Dr. Clint Moroziuk
Superintendent of Schools



Joseph Becigneul
Chair - Board of Trustees

Shared Responsibility

While we are excited about the lifting of the provincial restrictions, we are mindful of the need to continue to mitigate the risk of transmission within our schools. In order to ensure a healthy environment for all our staff and students, we will adhere to the protocols listed in this plan.

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 two years 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

Effective March 1, 2022, masking will optional for staff and students in kindergarten to grade 12 schools across the province of Alberta. A significant change to note is that school jurisdictions will no longer have the authority to implement masking protocols as a local measure. **GSACRD will support students who wish to continue masking.**

Masks are still required for fully immunized staff and students who have tested positive for COVID-19 and who choose to return to school after 5 days of isolation.

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 respiratory viruses at school.

Illness, Symptoms and Isolation

Maintaining a healthy school environment for our staff and students, **especially for those who are medically fragile**, is of utmost importance. We ask that staff and families continue to 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 respiratory viruses and contribute to a safe environment where all can feel protected. AHS continues to require all staff and students to adhere to [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#) prior to attending school each morning.

Provincial isolation requirements associated with confirmed positive COVID-19 cases

have not changed. **The following requirements come directly from AHS and are not negotiable.** Positive cases must:

- Isolate for 10 days (if not fully vaccinated).
- Fully vaccinated individuals may return to school after 5 days, if symptoms have fully resolved. Those who choose to do so are required to mask continually.
- See [AHS Isolation Requirements](#).

Positive COVID-19 cases within our schools

As there are still legal requirements for isolation of positive cases during Step 2 of the provincial easing of restrictions, 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.
- Confirmed cases will be updated daily in our [COVID-19 Case Count Tracker](#).
- **Please note that all case numbers are approximate as they are through voluntary disclosure.**

Parents of children who test positive continue 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 for Step 2.

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

Given the significant shift in the direction and advice of the government arising from the announcement made on February 8, 2022, GSACRD has suspended [Administrative Procedure 489: COVID-19 Vaccination Status - Employees and Volunteers](#) as of February 11, 2022. The implications of this suspension are that staff who opted to participate in the regular and rapid testing and reporting to the Division will no longer be required to do so. As well, providing proof of vaccination or a negative test will no longer be required for volunteers, student teachers, or contractors.

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 continue to be an expectation of all staff and students, as it is a practice that is known to reduce the spread of viruses and bacterial infections.**

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 symptoms of respiratory illness will be asked to go home, and return to school when they are free of symptoms.

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

Student Learning Hub

As announced by Minister LaGrange, the [Student Learning Hub](#) has been launched 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 classes to online learning has been used during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a tool to reduce the transmission of the virus at the school level. In light of the easing of provincial restrictions, we will no longer transition classes online.

Instead, we will return to pre-pandemic procedures, where student attendance is monitored. When a school reaches the threshold of absenteeism for illness it is a requirement to report the absenteeism rate to Alberta Health Services and work with them to determine appropriate next steps.

In circumstances of staff shortage, classes may be transitioned online to preserve the continuity of learning.

Cohorts

As per the announcement made on February 26, 2022, there will be no requirement to maintain cohorts in K-6 schools.

Assessment

As per Minister LaGrange's announcement on December 30, 2021, **January Diploma exams were 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:

Field trip practices will return to pre-pandemic protocols. Approving field trips remains a responsibility delegated to school principals. Factors that will determine approval of a field trip may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Educational value.
- Safety as per our Administrative Procedure 260 - Field Trips and Excursions.

Please note that some field trip destinations may have masking requirements. School principals will ensure that parents are aware of the requirements prior to the excursion.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

GSACRD will continue to offer extracurricular activities. We will work with St. Albert Physical Education Council (SAPEC), Interschool Sports Committee (ISC), Metro Athletics, North Central Alberta Schools' 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.

GSACRD schools welcome spectators to extra-curricular events.

Music and Band

Students in music and band courses can return to pre-pandemic practices.

Visitors and Volunteers in Schools

- GSACRD is open to visitors and volunteers under the supervision and direction of the school principal.
- Volunteers and visitors must be free of any and all symptoms as per [Alberta's Daily Checklist](#) upon entry in the school.

Cafeterias and Food Service

In Step 2, students will no longer be required to follow provincial requirements to remain in cohorts during lunch time. Schools will organize their lunch time routines according to their context and under the direction of the school principal.

While the transmission of COVID-19 through food itself, remains a very minimal risk, it is prudent and sanitary to:

- Refrain from sharing food or drink at all times.
- Remain seated while eating.
- Practice good hand hygiene prior to eating and drinking.

Assemblies and Special Events

Schools will be able to resume school-wide assemblies and special events.

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 no longer be required to wear a mask while riding the bus to and from school.

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](#)