

**DATE:** April 28, 2020

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson

**SUBJECT:** Edmonton Public Schools response to COVID-19  
(Response to Request for Information #70)

**ORIGINATOR:** Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF:** Janice Aubry, Laurie Barnstable, Todd Burnstad, Laurie Elkow, Leanne Fedor, Terri Gosine, Brenda Gummer, Marlene Hanson, Dave Jones, Trish Kolotyluk, Terry Korte, Roland Labbe, Ron MacNeil, Darwin Martin, Coreen Moccia, Leona Morrison, Kathy Muhlethaler, Ann Parker, Nancy Petersen, Kent Pharis, Madonna Proulx, Natalie Prytyluk, Carrie Rosa, Emmy Stuebing, Mike Suderman, Christopher Wright, Liz Yule

---

**ISSUE**

At the public Board meeting on April 14, 2020, Board Chair Estabrooks requested that Administration provide a fulsome update to the Board on how the Division is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including what actions have already been taken and what further actions are planned to support all students in their learning.

**BACKGROUND**

On February 6, 2020, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, sent [a memorandum](#) to all school staff and parents/guardians of school children, to provide information about the novel Coronavirus. In the memo, she recommended heightened hygiene practices and staying home if ill and suggested best practices for those arriving from China. These messages were shared across the Division and heightened hygiene practices were put in place and encouraged with videos, posters and other signage through all Division buildings. Employee Health Services staff tracked student and employee absenteeism to identify illness-related absences, with the commitment that any report of 10 per cent of staff or students or more in a school or decision unit would be reported to Alberta Health Services

Dr. Hinshaw wrote again on [March 3](#), confirming that there were still no COVID-19 cases in Alberta (the first case was confirmed on March 5), and again on [March 10](#), classifying the risk of exposure as low and suggesting more caution around travel.

On March 12, Superintendent Robertson [wrote](#) to families to share Dr. Hinshaw's travel cautions and to assure them that the Division and every school was actively working to prevent spread of the virus by taking the following measures:

- Increased cleaning and sanitization at schools, especially in high-traffic areas.
- Continued education and reinforcement of best health practices in our schools
- Closely monitoring attendance among staff and students

- Cancelling all international field trips until the end of April
- Asking schools to consider restricting volunteers and visitors coming into the schools
- Asking schools to limit large gatherings, limit bringing multiple classes together and create more physical space between students where possible

The Board Chair and Superintendent [wrote to families](#) on March 13 to let them know that the Board of Trustees and Superintendent were participating in a call on March 14 with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to learn more about the government's approach with COVID-19 for school jurisdictions across the province and that the Board was planning to meet on Monday, March 16, to discuss the details of what Dr. Hinshaw shared and what it means for schools.

On March 15, the Alberta government cancelled all Kindergarten through Grade 12 classes indefinitely to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

On Sunday, March 15, immediately following the announcement of class cancellation, the Division deployed SchoolMessenger (voicemail and text urgent notification system) to notify all families who had signed up for the service and posted messages to SchoolZone and the Division's social media channels. Central staff phoned all school principals, who then worked with their school staff to contact each family directly that evening or the next day. Division Communications also arranged an emergency media availability with the Superintendent and Board Chair and responded to media inquiries.

On March 16, Superintendent Robertson [wrote to families](#) informing them of the cancellation of classes and assuring them that the health and safety of students remained the Division's top priority. He explained that over the next two weeks, one of them being spring break, Division staff would be working on plans to deliver the curriculum and assess student learning and that more information would be provided on March 30, after spring break. Schools arranged schedules for students to pick up their belongings before spring break.

On March 28, the provincial government announced it was redirecting 14 per cent of the Base Instruction Grants to all school divisions for May and June towards the COVID-19 response. For Edmonton Public Schools, that amounted to \$13.78 million from the Base Instruction Grant and \$3.76 million from transportation. Although the Division used about \$2.5 million in savings from operations to help cover the shortfall, the majority of the Division's budget is spent on staffing, so schools and central units were forced to make difficult decisions to help make up this funding shortfall.

In early April, the Division ended all support temporary bi-weekly assignments, effective April 30. All exempt temporary contracts were examined. Where possible, these contracts were also ended, effective April 30. Following these decisions, Human Resources worked with all principals, directors and managing directors to discuss temporary layoffs for permanent support, custodial and exempt positions (teachers are not subject to temporary layoff). Individuals identified for temporary layoff were notified the week of April 14. Their last day worked will be May 15. Through these proposed layoffs, Edmonton Public Schools will be able to cover the funding reductions the Division is facing.

For most Division staff, the cancellation of classes resulted in having to learn and facilitate an entirely new way of delivering instruction in two weeks. It is not quite one month since online delivery of

instruction began. What follows is an overview of the Division's actions taken to support students, families and staff since March 16, and the actions the Division has planned for future implementation.

### **Actions Taken to Date for students and families**

Division staff have worked to ensure students and families have the information and supports they need during the transition to remote learning. In addition to communication directly from schools, central communications have continued to provide support to students and families through:

- Superintendent letters to families on [March 20](#) and [April 17](#)
- A [letter](#) from the Board of Trustees on March 31
- A video message from the Superintendent to staff and families
- Ongoing work with media to ensure all families and the wider community are aware of the supports available
- Messaging and graphics urging families to contact schools to make sure they have their usernames and passwords to access SchoolZone so that they can receive updated information
- SchoolZone messages answering school fee questions
- Access to District Support Services, which is helping families navigate this time by providing clarity on changes in school operations and procedures, and connecting families with the supports they need through both schools and community partners

Ensuring student wellness is key to the Division at all times, and particularly during this pandemic. Schools have reached out in many ways to support to students and families. To provide a sense of normalcy, schools have held virtual school-wide assemblies, recognition of birthdays, Fun Friday activities and classroom or school-wide challenges. Teachers established and shared learning schedules, "office hours", Google Meet and connection times. Many principals are joining in Google Classrooms so that they can interact with students within the lesson delivery.

Schools are also finding unique ways to engage entire families beyond structured academic activities. For example, they are running contests (virtual Easter egg hunts, guess the staffs' baby photos, photos on a particular topic, chalk drawings on the sidewalk, puzzles, etc.) and/or inviting all members of students' families to participate in school/family dance parties led by administration. A number of schools are hosting weekly online meetings for parents to connect with the principal to ask any questions or just to chat.

Videos of staff singing the school song or reciting the regular morning message, principals hosting weekly "news broadcasts", a staff car parade through the school neighbourhood and messages on school signs, windows and in cards sent home have all helped students feel they are still part of their school community.

Knowing that this is an anxious and unsettling time for many, mental health supports are being offered through a number of channels.

- Social Workers have contacted all students they were supporting prior the cancellation of classes to determine if continued direct support is necessary. They have also contacted any additional families that schools have brought forward.
- Social Workers and members of the Mental Health Transition Team are connecting with families/students with mental health challenges by phone to provide emotional and programming support and are supporting teachers to connect with these families.

- Teachers continue to be vigilant in making sure that students are able to cope with the changed circumstances.
- Division Mental Health Therapists are available for consults as needed.
- The Comprehensive School Health team sent all school counsellors and to Inclusive Learning Supervisors a collection of resources intended to help with managing stress in times of uncertainty that they can share with students.
- AHS has established a secure means to enable Mental Health Therapists to continue service delivery to students and families.
- Family Centre Success Coaches, Mental Health Therapists and Root and Wings Family Support Workers continue to engage families or students with whom they have formal case files. Principals are also able to make new referrals.
- Central staff are also collaborating with support agencies and the government to identify how more supports and resources can be made available to ensure children are safe and healthy.
- Many schools have created websites or added information to their existing site with mental health resources and tips for students and their families. They are also sharing this information via social media.

One positive outcome of distance learning are the connections being made with some students who have been, in the past, reluctant learners or non-attenders. In a few individual cases, schools have reported an increase in the attendance of students who were not comfortable with attending school and being part of a classroom. These students now have daily access to instruction where they can turn their camera off and learn in an environment where they experience decreased anxiety.

Nutrition support is also being coordinated for families. Details about the Division's work to bolster food security for families are included in the Response to Request for Information Report being presented at the public Board meeting on April 28.

A number of learning resources have been developed for students and families in response to COVID-19 and the cancellation of classes. These include:

- *Supports for Students Working at Home* - two-page documents with links to Division and Alberta Education resources that are available free for parents. Four versions were developed:
  - [Elementary](#)
  - [Junior High](#)
  - [High School](#)
  - [General \(K-12\)](#)
- The [Resource Hub at Edmonton Public Schools](#). This Hub provides Division-made resources to external teachers, parents, students, schools and school divisions for various grades, subject areas, and languages at no cost. As of April 17, the Hub had 30,860 visits and 6,180 downloads.
- An online registration process, which school, District Support Services and Programs and Student Accommodation staff have supported families to use.
  - Central staff provided optional registration processes to City Centre schools and those schools working with families that may have a language barrier to ensure that the families were supported.
- Dedicated pages on epsb.ca with [Coronavirus Information](#) and information and resources for [Distance and Online Learning](#)
- [Techhelp.epsb.ca](#), a new website to help families setting up technology at home for distance and online learning

- To enhance the support available to families, Division IT staff were polled and a listing of the languages they speak was created so that many callers may now be assisted in their first language
- Loans of Division Chromebooks to students. Extensive work was done in the first weeks of distance learning to ensure students had access to the technology they needed to engage in learning. The Chromebook loans are being facilitated through schools and entered in the Division's library information system. As of April 17, 13,000 Chromebooks had been loaned. Staff also worked with donors to provide almost 400 free Chromebooks to socially vulnerable families.
- Facilitation of low-cost internet access.
  - The Division coordinated internet service with Telus and the "Internet for Good" program. Principals nominate families who do not currently have internet access, Division staff provide them with a code, and the family calls Telus to redeem that code. The family can have internet installed at \$10/mo. Principals may choose to cover this cost, and TIM is also working on securing donations to cover this charge. To date, we have sent out 199 codes to students from 79 different schools.
  - Division staff have also devised a "Mobile Hot Spot" option using re-purposed smart phones from our TIPS Team virtual reality kits and a data-only SIM card which can then be assigned to a student Google Suite account. Students are then able to connect a Chromebook or any other device to the phone as a mobile hot spot.
  - Division staff are working with a community agency that has indicated they may be able to cover the costs of internet for those families who require this assistance.

Staff are also providing more direct support to students and families. For example:

- Kindergarten Educational Assistants are collaborating with their teachers to provide direct online support for children accessing Program Unit Funding (PUF) and their families and for other children in the classroom. This support has come in the form of online videos such as self-regulation puppet shows, science experiments, reading social stories that help children manage stress due to COVID-19, and demonstrating learning games and activities. Educational Assistants are also participating in online classroom meetings and are meeting one-to-one or with small groups of children to read stories, model language strategies, practice self-regulation skills, sing songs and engage children in literacy and numeracy activities.
- School Family Liaisons (SFLs) are checking in with Kindergarten families of PUF children that they serve to see what the family may need to support their child's learning at home. This is done in collaboration with the school. Some of these families have challenging circumstances and have been provided information to access supports such as income assistance, nutrition support, respite, and other basic needs during this stressful time. If families require language and/or cultural support, the SFLs work closely with the Multicultural Health Brokers and the Inclusive Learning Intercultural Consultants to help families cope.
- Many schools' staff are assembling materials for a week or a month of learning for students with limited or no access to technology or requiring specialized supports; these packages include numeracy, literacy, fine motor and site words components and activities.
- School and Inclusive Learning staff are offering individualized support to families with students requiring specialized supports.
  - Items such as daily schedules for learners or "First/Then" prompts that help students complete a less-preferred task before attempting a "more-preferred" task are being provided. This work is often time and staff intensive. For example, visual supports were

created and mailed home to parents of students with severe autism in an Interactions site. When created, the teacher, EA, principal and family at home (including the student) met virtually online and went through how this support could be used, prior to mailing it home. Modelling occurred online and was also captured in a video to serve as an ongoing support for the family if they need to refer back to it. School staff modelled language and process for using the visuals to guide the child through a self-regulation process and continue developing their skills in the home environment.

- Follow ups with parents have included listening to what a typical day at home looks like and brainstorming how to implement tools into their day to continue to promote student independence and engagement. For many parents, it has been a steep learning curve from how to program iPad apps to connecting interfaces and switches to a variety of switch adapted equipment. These skills and technologies, however, are essential to student participation in meaningful communicative and educational activities that without these tools would not be possible.
  - Suggestions about how to create optimal learning spaces for students requiring specialized supports are provided to families, along with support for accessing equipment such as mobility aids, adaptive bicycles, or equipment for blind/visually impaired students.
  - Sign language support is being provided by interpreters and Educational Assistant signers in presentations and videos and with individual students as needed.
- Many other department consultants and resource staff are working directly with families:
    - English as a Second Language consultants and educational assistants are supporting families for whom English is a second language to help them connect to online learning. They are also supporting English language use by ESL students in whose home English is not spoken.
    - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit high school completion coaches have been working collaboratively with schools to connect with the students that they support. They continue to plan delivery of cultural sessions, tutoring, and online learning opportunities via Google Classroom.
    - Speech Language Pathologists, Speech Language Assistants and Occupational Therapists are providing sessions to families to support their child's developmental needs at home.
    - Intercultural Consultants are supporting families with online learning by helping them access and set up on computers and showing them how to connect to SchoolZone and other support resources.

Metro Continuing Education night and English Language Institute classes have also transitioned to online delivery. Laptops and course materials are available to students through a safe pick up process at the school. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) childminders have gone online to provide resources and support to the parents of the children in the program. Daily activities include homemade readalongs, singalongs and craft activities, as well as recommended links.

The Division is also working with partners to adapt to distance learning.

- Comprehensive School Health staff have been working with several community partners through the Edmonton Local Immigration Partnership and Edmonton Immigrant Services Association to bring together immigrant and refugee serving agencies across the city to explore supports and responses to needs for families.

- School Resource Officers (SROs) have organized themselves by geographic quadrants and have offered their services to all schools in each quadrant, regardless of whether they had an SRO before classes were cancelled. Officers are assisting with food hamper delivery, checking in with at-risk students, and following up with families that schools have been unable to contact.
  - Numbers are not tracked centrally, but anecdotal information indicates that schools have few students with whom they have not been able to connect. Schools do make multiple attempts to connect with students through a variety of methods including phone calls, emails, notes left on doors and mailed to the home address, and calls to District Support Services, Inclusive Learning and Children's Services.
- School and central staff are connecting community resources with families when issues of abuse, domestic violence or neglect are suspected.
- Schools have also worked with the RCMP both within and outside of the province to do welfare checks on students who have moved out of the city.
- in keeping with the City of Edmonton's closures, the Division closed all playgrounds on March 26 to help contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

Overall, student engagement in online and distance learning remains high. Where engagement may have been an initial challenge, school staff have connected with families and found that the problem most often stemmed from families being unsure how to access or use the technology. Staff have made technology available and worked individually with students and their parents to provide tutorials which have been well received. Staff are monitoring attendance and, should engagement wane, teachers and principals are reaching out to the student and/or parent.

### **Actions Taken to Date for Staff**

Communication is critical in a time of such tremendous change. To help staff stay informed and support them in communicating with students and families, the following communications initiatives were undertaken:

- Frequent email updates to staff from the Superintendent
- Scripts and key messages to support principals in sharing information with staff and families
- Voicemail scripts for schools to use
- Shared school closure posters for schools to post on doors
- A daily Question and Answer document to which schools can submit questions to be answered by central staff
- A Q&A on HR-related inquiries, which included information about staff pay and benefits, work at home options, vacation time, sick leave policy reminders, etc.
- Advice on using social media to connect with students
- Messaging and a template letter for schools to share information about temporary staffing reductions due to COVID-19
- Daily meetings with Assistant Superintendents and all principals in their leadership groups

In schools, teachers have co-created weekly learning plans with a focus on critical or essential learning outcomes and ensuing activities support learning. This student learning is supplemented by a variety of initiatives, such as music follow along and join in activities, music appreciation, and character development activities on topics such as kindness, caring and gratitude. In all grades and subjects, school staff continue to differentiate instruction and adapt lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Most teachers are connected within a cohort by grade/subject or division. Staff are sharing resources, lesson ideas, resources and expertise. This organizational format facilitates staff sharing Google Classrooms to ensure continuity of instruction should one teacher become unwell for a period of time. Teachers are also attending each other's virtual live classes, and some are "co-teaching" within it; this is enhancing both student learning and teacher capacity.

A variety of professional supports have been created for staff, including the following:

- Several new resources on Connect, the Division intranet:
  - A *Working from Home* section provides tips on everything from ergonomics to mental health
  - A *Distance and Online Learning Supports* section equips staff to deliver instruction to students remotely. This section was coordinated with central decision units to ensure the section would be a one-stop-shop for content related to curriculum, technology, specialized learning and more
  - *Alternative Delivery Supports* houses hundreds of resources for teachers and parents, sorted for teachers by grade and by subject area. Numerous resources continue to be added daily.
  - The *Specialized Learning Supports* page provides links to tools and resources that teachers can use with students requiring specialized supports
  - A *Comprehensive School Health Approved Resources* page contains links to materials on topics such as mental health and physical literacy to help students build their resilience and their capacity to cope with uncertainty
- Videos to support distance learning and supplement instruction
  - A video message from the Superintendent informs staff about the alternative ways the Division will deliver education to students
  - Three videos featuring Argyll Centre Principal Jean Stiles help frame what distance learning looks like from a Division I and II, Division III and Division IV perspective
  - Visiting teachers working with the Confucius Institute are developing videos on activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese paper cutting, dough art, calligraphy, Chinese knots and dance exercises to be used by local teachers to support Chinese language programs
- Argyll's K-12 online content, made available to all Division educators
- Online training sessions, instructions, resources, lessons and a principal FAQ from the Technology in Schools team, as well as extended IT help desk hours
- Staff Communities of Practice to exchange best practices and provide support for remote instruction.
- Resources for teachers on how to ensure their online lessons and meetings are accessible for students with hearing loss
- Expanded access to eBooks and eAudiobooks at no cost until the end of the school year
- A memo outlining copyright considerations when reading aloud to students in an online learning community
- A *Quick Guide to Consultants*, which connects principals with curriculum, language and literacy consultants
- *Getting Started with Alternative Delivery: Essentials for Teachers* online sessions designed to support teachers with distance and online learning:
  - Session 1: Determining Priorities for Teaching K-12 - 254 teachers attended
  - Session 2: Initial Curriculum-supportive Routines for Managing Delivery of Instruction (K-12) - 264 teachers attended



- Session 3: Initial Approaches/Strategies to Teach Curricular Content (K-12) - 224 teachers registered
  - Session 4: Resources to Support Student Learning (K-12) - 235 teachers registered
  - Session 5: Monitoring and Supporting Student Growth K-12) - 244 teachers registered
- Repeat sessions will be delivered, and five new sessions are under development to address needs related to assessment, evaluation and reporting.
- Assessment resources, including the *Distance and Online Learning Kindergarten to Grade 12 - Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting: Information for Staff at Edmonton Public Schools* and five Assessment Quick Guides support teachers in with various assessment topics:
    1. Beginning to Plan for Assessment for Learning
    2. Ongoing Assessment for Learning Practices
    3. Assessment of Learning: Getting Started
    4. Assessment of Learning: A Focus on Grading
    5. Reporting and Progress Reports
  - Virtual sessions on how to use myBlueprint to support distance learning. myBlueprint can be used by students to collect evidence of their learning in relation to curricular outcomes, set goals, create portfolios, and explore careers and educational opportunities.
  - Online professional learning opportunities identified and created by the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Consultants that build foundational knowledge and support the Teaching Quality Standards
  - Professional learning regarding the provision of tele-services and ensuring that this service delivery is acceptable within individual discipline/college requirements (e.g., College of Alberta Psychologists, Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists) was provided to Inclusive Learning consultants
  - *COVID-19 Pandemic Control - Custodial Staff*, a document to support Custodians during COVID-19. The document covers essential cleaning requirements, personal protection protocols and contains links to Alberta Health Services updates and Division-specific information.
  - *Infection Control and Personal Protective Equipment for Custodial Staff*, a reference manual. Personal protective equipment was supplied to custodial staff as needed, depending on their place of work and role.
  - A reminder about the Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP), available for any staff who may have concerns.

Support was also provided to staff identified for temporarily lay off due to the redirection of education funds to the province's COVID-19 response. Human Resources (HR) and Finance staff collaborated to first find any ways to redistribute funding to minimize the staff reduction. Once those options were exhausted, they then worked to calculate the level of staff reduction needed to adapt to the almost \$14 million funding reduction. Prior to any layoff decisions, HR staff spoke with each principal and central decision unit leader, ~~many~~ multiple times, to review staffing plans, answer questions, and provide guidance. HR staff also spoke with leaders from staff union Locals to keep them abreast of Division plans and gather their input.

Once plans were finalized, scripts were provided to leaders to help them deliver the information to staff. A video with Superintendent Robertson discussing the staffing decisions, a letter on SchoolZone on behalf of Superintendent Robertson to share information with parents, a template for use by principals to share specific staffing information with their communities, and key messages for leaders were also shared.

Each affected staff member also received a letter with links to Q&As, benefit information, information about the provincial and federal emergency response benefits being offered to individuals as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and information specific to their staff group such as the Identification for Transfer process.

The Division's tenants, renters, contractors, and partners have also been impacted by COVID-19. The Division has collaborated with them by:

- Working with schools and vendors to manage services contracts (e.g., artist-in-residence, athletic therapists, etc.) for situations where those services will not be able to be used in a distance learning setting.
- Working with schools and tenants to navigate the cancellation or suspension of programs, including facilitating access to sites for tenants to retrieve items.
- Working with stakeholders and the City of Edmonton on rental and Joint Use Agreement cancellations.

Construction projects across the Division have implemented new practices related to COVID-19. All construction sites have added additional handwashing stations and policies. Workers are kept apart as much as possible and additional personal protective equipment has been added. Any worker showing signs of illness is asked to go home. All contractors are working with AHS guidelines to ensure safety.

The Division's pandemic response has also meant that some Division activities and events have had to be cancelled, postponed or modified.

- Sport tournaments, bikeathons and other fundraisers scheduled at schools have all been cancelled
- The Division Feedback Survey will not be implemented this year, to reduce the requests already being made of staff, families and community members
- The Foundation's Ready for Life Fundraising Breakfast has been reimaged as the Reading for Life virtual event.
- High school principals and central staff are discussing alternative plans for graduation
- The Division Retirement Banquet has been cancelled, with retirees being invited to join next year's event
- Division Student Awards and Community Sponsored Awards deadlines were extended to May 8

### **Actions Planned for Implantation for Students and Families**

In addition to the work that will continue to ensure students have what they need to be safe, healthy and fully engage in distance learning, plans for future initiatives for students and families include the following:

- School fee refunds. School Accountants are currently working with schools to calculate fee refund amounts and refunds to families are expected to begin being issued on May 4.
- A parent purchase program for Chromebooks that would reflect the high-volume discount pricing received by the Division. Once the details of the program are finalized, it will be communicated to parents via SchoolZone.
- Working with school facilitators to explore their capacity for transitioning the Community Helpers Program to run online.
- Development of an online transportation application. Previously, students who were new to busing were required to submit a paper application form at schools.

- Online enrichment camps to replace Metro Continuing Education summer camps for junior high students. Metro is also planning for online delivery of summer courses.
- Changes to the Online Student Course Request (OSCR) system to make it available remotely. (The system was intended to be used with students at school.)

### **Actions Planned for Implantation for Staff**

The majority of future projects for staff are centred around providing additional technical and instructional supports for the delivery of online education. Several central departments are in the process of creating instructional videos on topics such as virtual games to enhance vocabulary and numeracy, storytelling, and activities using Alternative and Augmentative Communication systems. Information on best practices in online instruction will continue to be shared, as well as technology tips.

In addition to this focus, supports for other areas of Division work are being developed.

- Financial Services, Inclusive Learning and District Support Services are collaborating to develop new guidelines for coding applications for students requiring specialized supports given that staff from Inclusive Learning will have a difficult time completing assessments remotely.
- Diversity consultants supporting gender and sexual minorities are gathering resources to share with school GSA facilitators and are developing a secure online GSA platform that schools can use.
- Student Transportation is working with industry and other metro school boards across the Province to ensure drivers and buses are in a state of readiness to return once classes resume.
- Custodial and maintenance staff are finalizing logistics for deep cleaning and work in schools that may be possible now, rather than the summer, given the absence of students in schools.

Division staff are also beginning to plan for the return to in-person classes and are creating contingency plans in the event that in-person classes are not possible for the start of the new school year. While the former scenario is preferred, if the latter is required to keep everyone healthy, it has been demonstrated that Division staff have the creativity, dedication and resiliency to adapt and maintain the focus on doing what is best for students.

### **KEY POINTS**

- The health and safety of students and their families is the Division's priority during the pandemic.
- The Division is complying with the directions of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health to keep staff, students and their families safe.
- On March 15, the Alberta government cancelled all Kindergarten through Grade 12 classes indefinitely to help contain the spread of COVID-19.
- Due to the declaration of a State of Public Health Emergency by the Government of Alberta on March 17, 2020, as of March 18 staff were asked to work from home where operationally feasible.
- Division staff transitioned to online delivery of instruction very quickly, creating a multitude of learning resources for families and staff, as well as coordinating nutrition and mental health support.
- Ongoing support for staff, students and families is planned and the Division will continue to be responsive to advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health in preparations for the next school year and a return to in-person classes.

KM:km