

**DATE:** February 9, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 Impact on the Division from November 11, 2020 to January 26, 2021

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

**RESOURCE STAFF:** Laurie Barnstable, Anna Batchelor, Megan Normandeau, Carrie Rosa

**REFERENCE:** January 12, 2021 Caucus Committee meeting

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## ISSUE

The Board of Trustees received verbal and written updates on the Division's efforts to support students and staff and mitigate transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trustees asked that information be shared regularly at public Board meetings.

## BACKGROUND

An information report with the Quarter 1 impact of COVID-19 on the Division was presented to the Board of Trustees at the November 24, 2020, Board meeting. That day, the [Government of Alberta announced](#) new public health measures, including a province-wide move to at-home learning for Grades 7-12 starting on November 30, 2020. With the exception of some students requiring specialized supports, all students participated in at-home learning the week after the winter break (January 4-8, 2021), resuming in-person learning on January 11, 2021.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Division schools continue to do everything they can to mitigate risk by following safety guidelines outlined in the Government of Alberta's school re-entry plan and our Division's Re-entry Strategy. This includes: screening for illness, handwashing and sanitizing, physical distancing where possible, enhanced cleaning standards, strict illness protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE), masks and cohorts.

There continues to be incidences of COVID-19 cases in our schools—a reflection of what we are seeing across the city and province. From November 11, 2020 to January 26, 2021:

- We received notice that 799 individuals in the Division tested positive for COVID-19
- 181 out of 215 schools had COVID-19 cases
- 17,508 students were recommended or required to quarantine
- 2,040 staff were recommended or required to quarantine

The Division requested data around in-school transmission of COVID-19 from Alberta Health. Alberta Health has assured the Division that they are monitoring cases closely and will continue to make recommendations or provide orders to effectively control transmission in school settings.

The Government of Alberta indicated that the January 11, 2021, return to in-person learning was based on evidence showing that before the winter break, new case rates in schools plateaued and then dropped in December, once restrictions on social gatherings and group activities were in place.

In a January 8, 2021 [letter to parents](#), Education Minister Adriana LaGrange stated that, in total, 0.4 per cent of students and staff tested positive from the beginning of the school year until the winter break. An analysis of all cases in school-aged children concluded that six per cent of these cases across Alberta were determined to have been acquired at school.

On January 14, 2021, the Government of Alberta and the Chief Medical Officer of Health [advised that the provincial language describing COVID-19 case numbers in schools was being changed](#). The primary impact of this announcement was the removal of the *Watch* category for schools. As of January 18, schools with:

- One to four cases of COVID-19 are considered an *Alert*
- Five or more cases of COVID-19 are considered an *Outbreak*

Following approval from Alberta Education, M.E. LaZerte and J. Percy Page Schools transitioned to online learning on January 25, 2021, after a number of COVID-19 cases were identified in the schools from January 14-24, 2021. The move impacted approximately 2,000 students who had been learning in-person. The schools implemented a similar model of online learning that they used in December and early January when the provincial government directed a shift to online learning for Grades 7-12. Students returned to in-person learning on February 8, 2021.

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