

DATE: November 24, 2020

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Impact on the Division during Quarter 1
(Response to Request for Information #83)

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

**RESOURCE
STAFF:** Laurie Barnstable

REFERENCE: October 20, 2020, Special Caucus Committee meeting (Trustee Janz)

ISSUE

At the October 20, 2020, special caucus meeting, Trustee Janz requested the following information: That the Administration provide a first quarter COVID-19 impact report for the Division related to absences, isolations, and number of affected schools per quarter.

BACKGROUND

On July 21, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced that in-person classes would resume in September with health measures in place. Our Division introduced our [COVID-19 Division Re-entry Strategy](#) on August 4 to help families understand what school would look like this year. Our strategy follows the guidance and direction from the chief medical officer of health and Government of Alberta and focuses on three themes: family choice, mitigating risk and continuity of learning.

CURRENT SITUATION

Our schools are doing everything they can to mitigate risk by following the 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.

All staff and students in Grades 4–12 are required to wear a mask when physical distancing at school and in the classroom is not possible, as one way to help reduce the risk of spreading the virus. We are also asking K–3 students who are physically, psychologically or developmentally able to wear a mask, to do so.

Even with these precautions, there have been incidences of COVID cases in our schools as the community transmission rate is mirrored in our classrooms. In the first quarter of this school year (September 3 to November 10):

- we received notice that 450 individuals in the Division tested positive for COVID-19
- 111 of our 215 schools have had COVID-19 cases
- 10,500 students were recommended or required to self-isolate
- 1075 staff were recommended or required to self-isolate

Alberta Health confirmed that as of November 9, there were 60 schools in the Edmonton Zone where in-school transmission has occurred. To date, there have been 124 schools total in Alberta. The Edmonton Zone includes the entire Capital Region. Alberta Health is not releasing the information by Division; however, Alberta Health Services has made us aware that from September 1 to November 8, there were 54 cases from 26 different schools, showing as having likely been acquired at school.

On November 11, 2020, Dr. Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, stated that, "I do not see evidence in Alberta of schools driving that increasing community transmission. It does seem to be the reverse, with community transmission causing increased pressure in schools."

Alberta Health inspectors have reviewed several of our schools and have commented on how impressed they are with the Division's Re-entry Strategy and its implementation. They have commended schools on their work with students, staff and families to ensure that protocols are well understood and adhered to.

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