

January 9, 2023

Parents, families and guardians,

As we return from the winter break I want to welcome students back and celebrate the optimism and possibility that comes with the new year.

As we have throughout the year, Edmonton Public Schools remain committed to creating safe and healthy school environments that continue to support in-person learning. We continually monitor illness in our community, including the evolving nature of COVID-19. To help mitigate the spread of illness we have [multiple safety protocols](#) in place, based on lessons learned during the pandemic and ongoing information and guidance from Alberta Health Services (AHS) around mitigating the risk and spread of illness. These measures include:

- Staying home when sick. Staff and students with symptoms of illness are asked to stay home.
- Continued use of sick rooms at schools for students who develop symptoms of illness
- Though masks are a personal choice, AHS states, **“Wearing a mask is a tool to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. Wearing a mask can help reduce your risk of infection and help protect people from being exposed to your germs.”**
 - Based on current and emerging illness trends, the Division highly encourages the use of masks in schools, though each person’s individual choice will be respected.
 - Schools will maintain masks on hand at the school office for any staff or students who want to wear a mask, but forgot to bring one.
- Continued encouragement of good hand hygiene practices
- Enhanced steps to support air quality in schools
 - providing portable air filtration (HEPA) units for every classroom and learning space in the Division
- Continued enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols
- Continued commitment to transparently reporting general illness and self-reported COVID-19 illness [on epsb.ca](#)
- Schools will continue to monitor daily rates of illness. If there is a sharp increase, schools will consider what additional proactive steps may need to be taken temporarily to help mitigate the spread of illness within the school community.

As we head into the second half of the school year, the health and safety of students and staff is our top priority and we remain committed to creating learning and working environments that keep everyone as safe as possible. Thank you for your continued partnership and support in this work.



Darrel Robertson
Superintendent of Schools