

March 12, 2020

Dear parents, guardians and families,

Earlier this week, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health provided information to school divisions about families who might be travelling during spring break, and a reminder about preventative health measures we can all be taking as the COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation continues to quickly evolve.

In the interest of transparency, I wanted to share this update directly with you. Please take time to review the attached letter from Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Keeping our schools healthy and safe is our collective responsibility. I know you share our concerns and our desire to keep everyone healthy.

While decisions regarding whether or not to travel remain the responsibility of families, we strongly encourage you to stay up to date with the most recent information released by [Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services](#) and travel advisories from the [Government of Canada](#). For example, yesterday Dr. Hinshaw recommended that individuals returning from Italy self-isolate for 14 days.

Any student feeling ill or showing any symptoms, particularly after travelling, should stay home from school, contact 811 and follow the advice and instructions of AHS.

If your child is at home and concerned about coursework, we encourage you to check SchoolZone, which includes a number of online learning resources and any other sharing site that your child's teacher may use. While students are away, we also encourage them to continue with their home reading. We are also looking into options for additional online learning resources.

Action Edmonton Public Schools is taking

The Division and every one of our schools is actively working to prevent spread of the virus in our schools, and planning for any challenges that might come our way. In an effort to ensure our school environments remain safe, we are 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, such as:
 - frequent handwashing
 - cover coughs and sneezes into your elbow or a tissue, dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands



- avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- avoid sharing items such as drinking glasses and water bottles
- contact your primary health provider or [Health Link 811](#) if you have questions or concerns about your health
- 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.

Thank you for your help keeping our schools and students healthy. Our Division will continue to keep you updated about what additional actions we are taking as we receive more information from provincial and federal health and travel authorities as the situation continues to evolve.

We are working closely with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education about further planning for school operations. Please work with your child's school to ensure your contact information is up-to-date, should there be a need to contact you. Additional information will be posted to epsb.ca as it becomes available.

Sincerely,



Darrel Robertson
Superintendent of Schools
Edmonton Public Schools

Enclosure

Memorandum

March 10, 2020

Dear Alberta School Superintendents/Colleagues:

Subject: Spring Travel and COVID-19

This time of year, many families are planning travel during the March break. It is also a popular time for school trips outside of Alberta.

Decisions regarding whether or not to travel remain the responsibility of families and schools. The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly with increasing global spread, so it is important that people have up-to-date information to inform these decisions. All Albertans are encouraged to visit www.alberta.ca/COVID19 or www.ahs.ca/covid for guidance around prevention, testing and other useful information.

Travel advisories are issued by the federal government and can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>. In addition to travel advisories, this site also offers information on the health risks of travel specific to the evolving COVID-19 situation. Schools and families are encouraged to visit this site to help guide their decision on whether to continue with travel or adjust their travel plans. It is also important to know that decisions made by travel companies, airlines and other countries may affect your travel plans.

While the current risk of catching the virus in Alberta remains low, this may change in the coming weeks. We will continue taking whatever steps are necessary to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe. The following steps are important in preventing the spread of common respiratory illnesses (such as influenza) as well as COVID-19 whether at home or while travelling:

- use good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing
- cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Dispose of tissues immediately and wash your hands
- avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- don't share items that may have saliva on them such as drinking glasses and water bottles
- clean high touch surfaces such as taps, door knobs and counter tops frequently

- contact your primary health provider or Health Link by calling 811 if you have questions or concerns about your health

You may have questions about what it means when a student or staff member at a school is asked to self-isolate after being in close contact with a case of COVID-19. Self-isolation is a cautious approach and if that person has no symptoms, they are not considered to have exposed others to the virus. Other students do not need to be kept home. Health officials will already be ensuring that all appropriate precautions are being taken.

Yours truly,



Deena Hinshaw, BSc, MD, MPH, CCFP, FRCP
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc: Andre Corbould, Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
Michael Walter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Education
Paul Lamoureux, Executive Director-Field Services, Alberta Education
Ronald Taylor, Director, FNMI Services, Alberta Education
Clint Vair, Branch Continuity Officer, Alberta Education