

August 31, 2020

Dear parents, families and guardians,

As we get closer to the start of school, the Board of Trustees wants to provide you with an update on how we're getting ready for the return of students online and in-person.

### Online and in-person return

We are looking forward to welcoming our students back later this week, both in-person and online. Staff within our Division have been working hard over the summer to prepare. If you haven't already, please read your school re-entry strategy by visiting [SchoolZone](#) or your [school's website](#). I encourage you to have a look at those documents if you want to know more about what attending school in-person will look like this year.

If you have chosen online learning, please review [this information](#) about what that will look like. Your school and online teacher will be reaching out to you soon.

### Family choice

Thank you to our families for making the choice for whether your child(ren) is returning to in-person classes or online for the first quarter of the year. This choice is an important part of our re-entry strategy. As of August 24, the numbers are as follows:

- 63,873 (70.4 per cent) students are returning to in-person instruction
- 26,832 (29.6 per cent) students are returning to online instruction

We know these numbers will change in the coming weeks, but if you have specific questions about the choice you've made, please contact your school.

### Funding

Last week the federal government announced that \$2 billion will be provided to provinces across the country to support school re-entry. Alberta's share is about \$262 million.

At this time, we don't know what this means for Edmonton Public Schools. Once we learn how much our Division will receive, we will develop a plan to determine how to best use these additional funds.

Earlier this month, the [Board of Trustees](#) asked the province to invest the dollars we need to strengthen our Division's current re-entry strategy. Specifically, we asked for \$30 million to hire additional staff to assist with online learning or teach smaller cohorts of students, including students who require specialized supports, and additional custodial time required for extra cleaning. We are still waiting on a response to this request.

Questions about public education funding can be directed to [Alberta's Minister of Education, Adriana LaGrange](#).

### **Class sizes**

Although we have approximately 27,000 of our students receiving instruction online, the impact on in-person class sizes will be minimal. We do not have funds to hire more teachers, so we will use our existing staff base to cover both online and in-person instruction. Any additional federal funding we receive will not be enough to reduce the number of students across all Division classrooms to allow for recommended physical distancing.

We know this isn't ideal. That is why the Division has developed a [comprehensive plan](#) that prioritizes multiple safety strategies to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 as much as possible, including requiring all students who are physically, psychologically and developmentally able to wear a mask.

### **Preparing for 2020-2021**

I know many of you have questions and concerns about what this school year will bring. I encourage you to reach out to your school principal to get answers to your questions about what school will look like. Your publicly elected [Trustee](#) is here to serve you and also answer any questions you may have. I also know you may be wondering how you can stay involved in your child's school this year. Please contact the principal directly to discuss opportunities to support your child's learning.

We know the start to this school year is going to be different than any we've had before. We will be working hard to support your family and your child's learning this year and provide a warm welcome back to school.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks  
Board Chair  
Edmonton Public Schools