



**Nicole Buchanan**

*Board Chair*

**Chad Erickson**

*Superintendent of Schools*

November 13, 2020

Dear Families,

As we continue to see a rise in reported cases of COVID-19 in our communities, we want to emphasize the need for all of us to follow health guidelines in order to flatten the curve.

To date, there have been 27 cases of COVID-19 reported in 10 of our schools. The impact of that has been significant with almost a thousand students and staff needing to self-isolate and stay at home as a precaution.

Recent news coverage has made it clear that we are in the second wave. We are not aware of any in-school transmission. That means we all need to be diligent in minimizing contact with others and following health protocols. We know this presents challenges, but it is essential that we minimize contact with others.

Although we have tried to keep disruptions in learning to a minimum for students that have been required to isolate, it does not mean that learning from home has been easy. Teaching and learning to kids at home is inherently more difficult. Most times this cannot involve live teaching. That is why we want to try to keep as many students as possible learning in our classrooms.

As the pandemic has evolved and Alberta Health Services has faced significant challenges and delays with contact tracing, our Division and schools, using AHS criteria, have been reaching out and speaking with parents personally to make them aware their child needs to isolate as they have been deemed a close contact. By making earlier contact, we are confident we are assisting in reducing further transmission. We are also able to answer and clarify any questions families may have. Please note, if cases continue to rise in schools we may have to rely on email, text or automated phone calls for communication. To maintain this support we ask for parent help with the following:

- As soon as parents become aware of a positive test, please alert the principal of your child's school so that we are able to notify the general school population, and also students and families deemed to be close contacts who need to self isolate.

- Make sure that your child's school has the most updated phone number and email address to contact you. We ask that parents make it part of their routines to check voicemails, answer phone calls from your child's school and check your email. These are ways your child's school will notify you if there is a positive case in the school community. To ensure your information is up to date, please visit [here](#) for instructions on how to update your contact information through the PowerSchool Parent Portal.
- We encourage parents to speak with their child about not posting positive results on social media. We also encourage parents to speak with their child about falsely posting they have tested positive for COVID-19 on social media.

Now more than ever, we encourage students and their families to remain vigilant and ensure everyone is following public health guidance, **both at school but even more importantly in other areas of our day-to-day lives**. Alberta Health Services has just mandated [Enhanced Public Health Measures](#) for Red Deer which include:

- No social gatherings inside your home or outside of your community
- 15-person limit on family and social gatherings
- Limits of 3 cohorts, plus child care
- Mask use encouraged in all indoor workplaces
- Employers in office settings to reduce employees in the workplace at one time
- Restaurants/pubs stop liquor sales by 10 p.m., close by 11 p.m. (November 13-27)
- Ban on indoor group fitness classes and team sports (November 13-27)
- Ban on group singing, dancing and performing activities (November 13-27)
- 50-person limit on wedding and funeral services (indoor and outdoor)
- Faith-based gatherings limited to 1/3 capacity

We understand that people are growing tired of following COVID-19 protocols as they can be taxing both physically and mentally; however, tighter restrictions would be much worse. That is why we are strongly urging parents, teachers and students to continue practicing safe COVID-19 protocols outside of school time to further reduce opportunities of bringing the virus into a school setting.

Our schools have been nimble and quick to respond, ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff continues to be a top priority. By being diligent and following self isolation rules, we have reduced the number of students who have had to self-isolate. Let's continue to be vigilant in following the [revised daily screening checklist](#) and staying away from school if you have any risk of exposure or are exhibiting symptoms.

As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic is a dynamic situation. We must remain vigilant. We continue to encourage you to visit the [Red Deer Public School Re-entry Webpage](#) for the latest information as well as the [2020-2021 Handbook for Students and Families](#).

Sincerely,

Nicole Buchanan  
Board Chair

Chad Erickson  
Superintendent of Schools

