



COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

September 16, 2021

To: All Parents/Guardians

From: Cheryl Gilmore, Superintendent

Dear Parents / Guardians of Lethbridge School Division

Re: New Provincial COVID-19 Public Health Measures for Schools

On Wednesday, September 15th at 6:00 p.m., Premier Kenney declared a state of public health emergency. New temporary health measures that apply province-wide were announced to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Some of the measures currently in place for Lethbridge School Division align with the revised health measures, and some of our measures have been refined as outlined below. All measures as described below are in effect Friday, September 17, 2021.

1. Masks Order.

The provincial measure states that, "There is mandatory masking for students in Grades 4 and up, plus staff and teachers in all grades." Alberta Education Deputy Minister Andre Tremblay clarified today in a meeting with superintendents across the province that the masking mandate does *not* include when students are sitting at their desks working independently. Mr. Tremblay explained that this is in keeping with the provincial mask order put in place for the 2020-21 school year.

What is the impact for Lethbridge School Division?

Our current measures regarding masks from grades K-12 require students to wear masks coming in and out of the school, in common areas and hallways, and when they are out of their assigned seating plan engaged in close-contact activities. This WILL CONTINUE. Staff are asked to be vigilant in adhering to allowing removal of masks breaks **only** when students are working independently at their desks. All staff are required to wear masks in all areas of the school, including classrooms, at all grade levels.

2. The provincial measure states that, "elementary schools to implement class cohorting."

What is the impact for Lethbridge School Division?

Class cohorting at the elementary level (grades K-5) is currently in place.

Grade 6 students in our middle schools have some cohort strategies in place, but we will be working with middle schools to review if the cohort model can be applied further.

3. Sport and Performance

The provincial measure states that:

- "Indoor sports, fitness, recreation, and performance activities are permitted in schools, with requirements to maintain 2 metre physical distancing where possible;

- Spectator attendance restricted to 1/3 fire code capacity and limited to households or 2 close contacts for those living alone. Attendees must be masked and distanced.”

What is the impact for Lethbridge School Division?

- All secondary administrators (high school and middle school) and the Education Centre leadership team spent time to review the requirements and feasibility of implementation. Safety and well-being of students (physical, mental and social) came to the forefront of decision making. Student wellness as a guiding principle is in keeping with the Board’s plan last year and the guiding principles in the 2021-2022 Re-entry Plan. The priorities are to keep students physically safe in the context of a provincial “state of emergency” **and** keep our youth well through their engagement in sport and performance activity. Operational concerns surrounding the implementation of capacity and distancing requirements were reviewed and schools determined that, at this time, there were too many operational concerns to make management of spectator measures feasible. As such, the school administrators and division leadership team were fully unanimous in the decision to not have spectators at indoor sport and performance events until further notice. The Board is fully supportive of this decision. School administrations have committed to trying to ensure that sporting events and performances are live-streamed for spectator virtual viewing.

I appreciate that we were all hoping that the experience of our children and youth in school this year would be as close to normal as possible. I know that many of you may feel frustrated with the new protocols while others may feel that they provide an extra layer of safety and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19. Lethbridge School Division is committed to our students, staff, and parent community. Our staff will continue to provide quality instruction and personal care for the well-being of our students. Like you, the division is hopeful that the new protocols will provide the necessary relief on the health system the province is needing and keep our children, families, and staff safe.

Take care,

Cheryl



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