



October 5, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

At the beginning of this school year, the Minister of Education mandated that all school jurisdictions in the Province return to in-class learning with enhanced health and safety measures in place. In order to support our parent community, Edmonton Catholic Schools was pleased to be able to offer an additional option to parents in the form of online learning for students. We also moved to a quartermester system to allow us to better cohort high school students and create defined opportunities for all students to move between the two learning options. During the last few months, we have heard from many parents and students and we appreciate the many complexities involved on your part in making the decision to choose either in-person or online learning.

It has become evident though that offering two options for learning (in-person and online) has stretched our human resources to their limits. We are experiencing difficulty finding qualified Catholic teachers, especially in specialized programs, as school jurisdictions across the province are all hiring additional teachers. For this, as well as a multitude of other reasons, we have made the difficult decision to only accommodate one further move between in-person and online learning at the end of this quartermester. **The choice that you make for your child's learning for the second quarter will be the way that they learn for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.**

We have created a video for you to view to explain the many factors that led to this decision. It is found by [clicking here](#) or by clicking on the "Learning Selection Fall 2020" banner on www.ecsd.net. Please take a few minutes to watch this very important video.

Next steps:

- From October 5th to October 15th, you will register your learning choice through the link on PowerSchool (<https://powerschool.ecsd.net>). The choice that you make will be the way that your child learns, in-person or online, **until the end of June 2021.**
- Your choice cannot be changed after October 15th. There is significant planning that needs to take place in preparation for the start of the second quarter on November 10th. We need to have all students committed to their learning option by October 15th to allow schools the time to adjust classes, timetables, and assign staff as required.

- You will receive communication from your child's school by November 9th outlining what your child's program will look like moving forward.

We understand that this plan is very different than what we had shared in August. We have made this decision in order to ensure that students are provided with the consistency of instruction and learning that can only be accomplished when there is stability for students and staff. If you are currently in online learning and are unsure about your upcoming decision, please review your school's re-entry plan on the school website to learn more about the health and safety measures that are in place. You can also contact your school principal with any questions that remain unanswered from that plan. We maintain that our schools are safe and in-person learning is going to provide the most complete learning experience for our students.

Thank you for your understanding and partnership as we continue on our mission to provide a Catholic education that inspires students to learn and that prepares them to live fully and to serve God in one another.

Sincerely,

Robert Martin
Chief Superintendent

Choosing a Learning Option for the Rest of the 2020-21 School Year

Questions and Answers

Beginning a school year is always an incredibly busy time. Timetables need to be created, staffing must be determined based on the number of students in programs, accommodating staffing preferences and areas of expertise where possible, budgeting, building a school culture and community, building relationships with parents... are all part of a school year beginning. Prior to the start of a school year, this extensive planning actually begins in the spring because of the depth of work that needs to occur to be ready for the first day of school. With choosing learning options every eight weeks, we are essentially having four different new school years all built into one year. This becomes an enormous task as we also have to ensure that the learning continues throughout the school year.

Q: Will this change who teaches my child?

A: *Your child's teacher might change. Schools will do their best to keep students with their current teachers. Starting November 10th, you will know who is teaching your child(ren) for the rest of the school year.*

Q: Will my child's class or class size change?

A: *There may be adjustments to classes at the end of this quarter; however, this will be the last time changes should occur. Schools will do their best to keep students in the classes that they are currently in. Because we will have stability in knowing who is in-person and who is online for the remainder of the school year, we have more control over balancing our class sizes.*

Q: Why do I have to make the choice so early? The first quarter doesn't end until November 9th.

A: *The amount of time to schedule and prepare for changes is very time-consuming. Schools need time to make these changes, and teachers and staff need time to prepare for any changes in teaching assignments in addition to the work they are already doing with their classes.*

Q: Will high schools go back to semesters now?

A: *No, they will not. We know that the quartermester system allows us to create cohorts in high schools that we cannot achieve with a semester approach. It remains very important that we minimize the mixing of our students and staff throughout the day.*

Q: My child is in high school. Why do we have to choose online or in-person for the rest of the year if they are still having quartermesters?

A: *High Schools also need the stability of planning for their teacher assignments and course offerings for the rest of the school year.*

Q: What happens if the “Second Wave” hits?

A: *Alberta Education and the Chief Medical Officer of Health will direct us to move to a different Scenario (we are in Scenario 1 right now) based on what the Provincial Covid situation is.*

Q: Will my child get complementary courses (options) if we choose online learning?

A: *Our online learning will continue to deliver the core subjects (which includes religion) for Pre-K to Grade 9. At the high school level, other courses are possible based on the modules available through Revelation Online.*

Q: If there is a Covid case at my child’s school, can I change from in-person to online learning for the rest of the year?

A: *No. We have a very sound plan in place to deal with continuing learning if a group of students has to self-isolate. Their teacher will facilitate instruction and learning online for the isolation period. It is expected that any student who has to self-isolate will return to in-person learning when they are medically cleared to do so.*