Welcome back to the 2021-2022 school year with Edmonton Catholic Schools. Our theme for this year is “God Calls Us Each by Name”. We are guided by Jeremiah 29:12 - I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...plans to give you a future with hope. We are filled with a renewed sense of hope as we return to school this year. In order to continue on our journey toward a more “normal” educational experience for our students in light of COVID-19, we ask that you read the following information. Together, we can ensure that our students receive an excellent Catholic education that inspires them to learn and prepares them to live fully and to serve God in one another.

On August 13, the Government of Alberta shared its guidance for the upcoming school year:

- Alberta Education - 2021-2022 School Year Plan
- Alberta Health - Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools

Our Back to School Plan is designed to support our schools in reducing the risk of transmission of illness and maintaining safe and healthy environments for our students and staff. Some procedures we introduced in our schools last year will continue because we know they are good practices in minimizing the transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza, and common colds.

We have set September 27 as a date to review our plan. The date aligns with the Chief Medical Officer of Health’s scheduled update on the existing masking mandate for transportation. The health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff remain our first priority. We recognize that our plan must be flexible and we remain responsive to the direction and guidance of Alberta Education and Alberta Health.

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**Resuming for the 2021-2022 School Year**

Understanding that many of our students and staff are vaccinated, many of the restrictions which we have used over the past year will end.

**Resuming for the 2021-2022 School Year:**

- Local and provincial field trips
- Athletics and extracurricular activities
- All fine arts and options classes
- Assemblies and special events
- Provincial exams
- Graduation and School Farewell activities
- School Council meetings
Health and safety measures that will remain in place for September 2021:

**DAILY SCREENING FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS**

- Students are required to complete the Alberta Health Daily Checklist to determine whether they can attend or should stay home.
- Staff will also use the screening checklist before coming to work.
- At the direction of Alberta Health, **students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate and cannot attend school**. Contact 811 or refer to alberta.ca/isolation for isolation requirements.
- **Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or who is experiencing illness cannot attend school** and is directed by Alberta Health to stay home, seek health care advice, and fill out the AHS Online Self-Assessment tool to determine if they should be tested.

**ILLNESS AT SCHOOL**

- Should a student exhibit signs of illness at school, they will be moved to a designated private area within the school. Parents/guardians will be notified and advised to pick up their child as soon as practicable.
- Staff supervising symptomatic students will keep all students and staff out of the designated isolation area and wear recommended PPE.
- Schools will ensure the continuation of learning for students who are away from school due to illness.
- Students with a chronic health issue that is medically diagnosed and unrelated to COVID-19 should monitor for new, different, or worsening symptoms.

**POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS**

- At the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services will no longer notify close contacts of potential COVID-19 exposure including close contacts in schools.
- Parents of children who test positive for COVID-19 are encouraged to report cases to their school administration. All reporting continues to be confidential.
- Schools will continue to report an absence rate of 10% or higher or an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms to Alberta Health Services. *(This was established pre-pandemic and helps health officials monitor for illness that may not be related to COVID-19.)*
- Alberta Health Services will investigate outbreaks at schools and work with Division staff to determine if additional measures are required.
- AHS Public Health will not inform school authorities or administrators of individual cases of COVID-19 within their school setting.
WEARING MASKS

The Government of Alberta has made it clear that although masking requirements have eased in many settings, school divisions have been given the authority to take a more cautious approach. We want to continue to ensure we are doing everything we can to make our schools safe for our students and staff to focus on learning. The plan stresses our ability to continually review and adapt our safety measures with the goal of eventually removing all extraordinary protocols when it is reasonable and safe for everyone. The risks of COVID-19 will dramatically decrease as the public and students, 12 and over, get vaccinated.

100 Voices, Kindergarten to Grade 3
- Continuing from last year, masks remain strongly recommended.
- Masks are mandatory on the yellow school bus.

Grades 4-12
- Continuing from last year, students must wear masks in all common areas, the yellow school bus, and all Division provided transportation. Masks remain strongly recommended during class time.
- Students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but physical distancing is encouraged.

Staff and Visitors
- All school staff must wear masks in all common areas, the yellow school bus, and all Division provided transportation. Masks remain strongly recommended during class time.
- All visitors are required to make appointments, use the daily screening checklist, and remain masked for the duration of their visit.
- At this time, volunteers are not allowed to work directly with students.
HANDWASHING, SANITIZING, ENHANCED CLEANING, AND OTHER MEASURES

- Anyone who enters a school will be required to practice hand hygiene.
- Alcohol-based sanitizers will be available throughout the school and at designated entry points.
- Handwashing will be part of daily routines, including washroom use, recess, and lunch.
- Schools will have visible signage about hand washing and proper respiratory etiquette.
- Schools will continue with the enhanced cleaning practices that began last year, including regular cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces.
- At this time, microwaves will not be available to students.

TRANSPORTATION

- All students will be required to wear masks, given the potential for close contact on a yellow school bus. Exceptions will be made for students with medical conditions or special needs.
- School bus drivers will be required to wear masks or face shields when picking up and dropping off students.
- Cleaning of high-touch surfaces will be done before every run.

VACCINATION

The most important step we can take to ensure the health and safety of our community is to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Children aged 12 and up are eligible to receive a first and second dose of an approved vaccine in Alberta.

Edmonton Catholic Schools will support Alberta Health Services as it runs temporary vaccination clinics in our schools. Immunization is voluntary and will be available in September and October for eligible students in Grades 7-12 and staff. More information will be provided to parents and guardians, parental consent will be required for in-school immunizations.

Below are links to additional information about the COVID-19 vaccine to help you make an informed decision for your family.

- [https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine.aspx)

Due to privacy laws, we cannot ask or disclose if students and staff are vaccinated.
**VENTILATION**

ECSD schools will continue to meet or exceed the minimum requirements set out by the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

**Our systems:**
- are checked regularly and maintained so that they are functioning as intended;
- utilize a centralized monitoring station that alerts our staff in real-time, indicating if a piece of equipment is not functioning properly. If a mechanical fault is detected, repair or evaluation of the fault occurs rapidly; and
- are currently adjusted based on measured CO2 levels rather than on air changes.

Furthermore, natural ventilation is encouraged in schools by opening the doors and windows to increase ventilation and bring in fresh air. We will also support classes and activities to be held outside when possible.

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**Targeted Instruction to Maximize Learning**

At the beginning of September, teachers will be focusing on welcoming students back to their school communities, whether online or in-person. As part of getting to know students as individual learners, teachers in K - 6 will be screening students in numeracy and literacy. They will determine student knowledge and skill based on previous curricula and target instruction for any missed learning. In addition, the Division is preparing post-assessments to help teachers measure learning growth.

In junior high and high school, subject-area teachers will also be targeting their instruction to support students in their transition back-to-school.

All teachers have the opportunity for further professional development in the week before school to learn more about screeners, student assessment, and targeted instruction.

Parents who are concerned about their child’s learning are encouraged to contact their school.
Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being

Edmonton Catholic Schools supports student mental health through a comprehensive Mental Health Strategic Plan. It is an internationally recognized approach to supporting our students. Student mental health and well-being are critical to academic and personal success. By focusing on a comprehensive and collaborative continuum of support, we will be responsive to the needs of our students, staff, and families within Edmonton Catholic Schools.

Our whole-school model builds capacity to incorporate well-being as an essential aspect of student achievement. Actions address four distinct, but inter-related components that comprise a comprehensive school health approach:

- Social and physical environment
- Teaching and learning
- Healthy school policy
- Partnerships and Services

When actions in all four components are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners – and as healthy, productive members of society.

To learn more about our Mental Health Strategic Plan, visit https://www.ecsd.net/page/7819/mental-health.

For additional supports, parents can also access:

- Mental Health Helpline: Phone: 1-877-303-2642
  - This Toll-free helpline provides confidential and anonymous services, crisis intervention, information about mental health services and referrals to other agencies.
- French Mental Health Help Line: Phone: 1-800-567-9699
  - Same services as above
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
  - www.Kidshelphone.ca
  - Text CONNECT to 686868
- French Kids Help line:
  - www.jeunessejecoute.ca
- Health Link: Phone: 811
- Alberta Health Services
  - Help in Tough Times
  - Healthy Together
- The federal First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310
  - 24-hour availability, 7 days a week, or chat online at Hope for Wellness