



March 14, 2020

RE: IMPORTANT INFORMATION - COVID-19

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The safety of students in our school division is of utmost importance. As recent COVID-19 developments have been unfolding, we have been in regular communication with Alberta Health and Alberta Education. Our approach is to follow the direction of Alberta Health and Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw. As a result, STAR Catholic has:

- Directed staff to provide students with frequent instruction on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. New signage is in place at each school across the Division and frequent hand washing will be practiced by both students and staff.
- Asked students to not share food, utensils/dishes, water bottles, or personal care products.
- Directed our facilities department and custodial staff to give extra attention to high touch surfaces along with their regular cleaning and sanitization schedule at each school site.
- Directed schools, as per Alberta Health Services, to refrain from holding large gatherings such as assemblies until further notice.
- To cancel or postpone student trips, events, games, and other excursions where there may be large public gatherings of 250 people.

This morning Divisions across the province were given further direction and guidelines from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. I wish to communicate these with you.

Schools in Alberta will be taking a zero-tolerance approach regarding children displaying any respiratory symptoms and they will not be permitted to remain at school.

1. Teachers are being directed to closely monitor their classrooms, and if any student is having respiratory symptoms, such as cough or symptoms of a mild cold, the steps below will be followed. (Note: The same steps will be followed if a staff member begins to experience respiratory symptoms.)
 - A. If a student develops respiratory symptoms while at school, they will be removed from the school environment.
 - B. Schools will promptly separate the student with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and including symptoms that may seem like a mild cold) in an area separate from others, with adequate supervision until they can go home.

- C. To help prevent transmission, the ill student will be kept two meters away from others. If possible, the student will be placed in a separate room from other students with a closed door.
- D. Schools will notify parents/guardians and arrange for immediate pick up.**
- E. Students will be unable to travel on school buses.
- F. Students who develop respiratory symptoms will need to stay home for 14 days from the start of the symptoms.**

The above procedures, 1A through 1F, are obviously severe and may appear to be harsh. I want to reiterate that this is the direction that we are being given, from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Education, and that it is the current provincial strategy related to schools. To have a different approach, as a division, would be to disregard the direction from the province and Alberta Health, something we would not do.

As a division we have also been provided with the following information:

1. Should there be cases of COVID-19 in a community, the Medical Officer of Health or other public health officials, will provide us with direction specific to our community(s).
2. Should an ill student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case, we will receive guidance from Public Health.
3. If students are tested for COVID-19, those who test negative will be advised individually about returning to school.

Should you have specific questions regarding your children and implications related to your school, you are asked to please contact your school's principal.

Detailed information on COVID-19, the province's approach and regular updates can be found at Albertahealthservices.ca.

As we have observed in recent days, the province's approach to management of COVID-19 changes regularly and rapidly. We have been advised that this is the current strategy and that it may change at any time. I will endeavor to keep you apprised of significant changes as they arise.

Let us continue to pray for all of those impacted by COVID-19. Together, as community, we will get through this.

Sincerely,

Charlie Bouchard
Superintendent of Schools