

DATE: May 11, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Impact on the Division from March 31 to April 27, 2021

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE

STAFF: Laurie Barnstable, Anna Batchelor, Megan Normandeau, Carrie Rosa

REFERENCE: January 12, 2021 Caucus Committee meeting

ISSUE

The Board of Trustees are receiving ongoing verbal and written updates on the Division's efforts to support students and staff and mitigate transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trustees have asked that information be shared regularly at public Board meetings.

BACKGROUND

Information reports about the impact of COVID-19 on the Division were presented at the November 24, February 9, March 9 and April 13 Board meetings. Every weekday, updates on the number of COVID-19 cases in schools are provided to Trustees via a transmittal memo, to students and families via a [page](#) on the Division website, and to the media via a direct report. Each week, the Superintendent emails an update to all staff.

Division schools continue to do everything they can to mitigate risk by following safety guidelines outlined in the Government of Alberta's school re-entry plan and our Division's Re-entry Strategy. This includes: screening for illness, handwashing and sanitizing, physical distancing where possible, enhanced cleaning standards, strict illness protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE), masks and cohorts.

CURRENT SITUATION

There continues to be incidences of COVID-19 cases in our schools. From March 31 to April 27, 2021:

- We received notice that 221 individuals in the Division tested positive for COVID-19
- 112 out of 215 schools had COVID-19 cases
- 5,427 students were recommended or required to quarantine
- 663 staff were recommended or required to quarantine

A comparison of the COVID-19 case data to previous reporting periods is provided:

	Nov. 11, 2020 to Jan. 26, 2021	Jan. 27, 2021 to Feb. 23, 2021	Feb. 24, 2021 to March 30, 2021	March 31, 2021 to April 27, 2021
Number of positive cases	799	90	118	221
Number of schools with cases (out of 215 schools)	181	52	68	112
Students recommended or required to quarantine	17,508	2,200	3,067	5,427
Staff recommended or required to quarantine	2,040	264	385	663

Variant cases update

In mid-April, Alberta Health Services (AHS) shared that more than 50 per cent of the province's cases are variants of concern, the majority of which are the variant originally identified in the United Kingdom. As such, AHS will only notify the Division if a COVID-19 case is the variant originally identified in South Africa or Brazil. Since March 31, seven COVID-19 cases in Division schools have been confirmed as a variant by AHS. The last variant case AHS informed the Division about was on April 19.

Shift to online learning for Grades 7-12

On April 20, 2021, Alberta Education approved a request from the Division to shift junior high and high school students to online learning, due to the increasing COVID-19 case numbers in our schools and communities. The Division made the request to the province based on a significant number of students and staff in quarantine or isolation, substantial COVID-19 cases in the community and a substitute teacher shortage. Students in Grades 7–12 who chose in-person learning for Quarter 4 shifted to online learning on Thursday, April 22, with an original planned return to in-person learning Thursday, May 6.

Targeted regional measures

The [province announced](#) targeted regional health measures for hot spots in Alberta, including Edmonton, on April 29, 2021. These measures included transitioning students in Grades 7-12 to online learning starting Monday, May 3. Junior high and high school students in the Division will continue learning online, having already transitioned to online learning on April 22. The province plans for students to return to in-person learning on Monday, May 17; however, the situation will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

Transition to online learning at Kenilworth School

Following approval from Alberta Education, in-person learners at Kenilworth School transitioned to online learning on April 20, 2021. Three cases of COVID-19 were reported in the school in mid-April and 86 students and 19 staff members were asked to quarantine due to potential close contact with a positive case.

Rapid COVID-19 testing program at Division schools

Alberta Education identified three Division schools to take part in the rapid COVID-19 testing program:

- Donald R. Getty School (Tuesday, April 27)
- Dr. Lila Fahlman School (Wednesday, April 28)
- Victoria School (Thursday, April 29)

Participating schools received information and consent forms from the province. The testing is open to all in-person students in Kindergarten through Grade 6 whose families provided consent. All school staff working in-person are also eligible to participate. Testing is conducted by a third-party service provider contracted by the province, who collaborated with Alberta Health and Alberta Education to set the testing schedule.

Each school will have two rounds of testing—first at the end of April, followed by a second round eight days later. The province indicates their intention is then to move on to a new set of schools.

To identify schools, the province looked at the number of most recent cases in a school community and the particular COVID-19 variant identified with the cases. In future there may be additional criteria used to determine the prioritization of schools for rapid testing.

CR: pd