



Aug. 28, 2020

**Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: Students, Parents/Legal Guardians, and Staff**

Another summer break has officially come to an end. I hope that you and your loved ones have had an enjoyable summer and that you found time to relax and rejuvenate, despite these challenging times. We are excited to welcome our students back to class, and we look forward to another year of learning.

**Dedicating the school year to God**

Our staff have been busy getting ready for the new school year. Part of this preparation includes our annual *Opening Mass and Blueprints Day*, which, this year, took place on Aug. 28. This is always an encouraging time of faith formation and inspiration, as well as a celebration of our Catholic Faith, which is at the core of who we are, what we do, and why we exist. It is an opportunity for us as a staff faith community to commit the coming year to God and to pray, learn, and grow together at the launch of another school year.

**School start-dates**

As I announced in the [special communication](#) that I sent out on Aug. 27, the start date for online education for K-9 students has been delayed. Please note the following start-dates for the 2020 school year:

- **Staggered start for K-9 face-to-face students:**
  - Aug. 31: only students whose last names begin with A-K will attend school.
  - Sept. 1: only students whose last names begin with L-Z will attend school.
- **Regular classes:**
  - Sept. 2: regular classes resume.
- **Delayed start for K-9 online students:**
  - Sept. 8: online education classes for K-9 students will begin, which is a delayed start for these students.  
*PLEASE NOTE: The delayed start only applies to K-9 online students. High school online courses commence Aug. 31.*
- **High Schools (Grades 10, 11, and 12) and MCHS (Grades 9-12)**
  - **MCHS:** Grades 9 and 10 return with a specific staggered re-entry schedule on **Aug. 31**. All Grades 9-12 students start on **Sept. 1**.
  - **SACHS:** All students will begin classes on **Aug. 31**. Initial classes will focus on safety protocols and health measures. New students have had an abbreviated safety and health measures review as part of their orientation on Aug. 27.
- **Pre-Kindergarten programs**
  - **Aug. 31 – Sept. 4:** Pre-Kindergarten Family Orientation Meetings – The Pre- Kindergarten teacher will contact the family with a time.
  - **Sept. 8 – 9:** Staggered entry
  - **Sept. 10:** All students attend

**Online education**

In response to the results of our School Re-Entry Online Education Survey, we have developed the *Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools Online Learning Pathway* for our students, which is accessible through your designated school as a choice for online education K-12. As promised, this week, we have been staffing our online courses.

To date, approximately 550 K-12 students have enrolled in online classes. As **today (Aug. 28) is the final day to register for online learning**, we will confirm the final numbers next week. If you have just registered your child(ren) in one of our schools, or if you would like to enroll in online learning, please contact your child(ren)'s school principal(s). If there is space in a particular online class, your school principal will enroll your child, if that is your preference.

Between Aug. 28 and Sept. 4, school principals will continue confirming online registrations and will communicate directly with families who have registered their child(ren) for online education.

**Online English programming**  
Currently, there is sufficient enrollment to enable us to provide online English programming to K-12 students. Unfortunately, we have not received enough registrations for us to offer Pre-Kindergarten online English programming.

**Online French programming**  
While we have sufficient enrollment to offer comprehensive Kindergarten-Grade 3 online French programming, at this time we do not have enough registrations to offer a full roster of online French Immersion courses for Grades 4-9 students. Therefore, students in Grades 4-9 French Immersion who would like to proceed with online programming will have the option to attend English online classes at their respective grade levels and participate in one block per day with a French Immersion teacher in French Language Arts (FLA).

Online teachers will work with Division staff to prepare for the start-up and will share important details regarding schedules, routines, and where and how to access materials.

Parents/legal guardians and students will have flexibility to move between the two learning pathways (face-to-face and online) at pre-determined notification periods (see 'Reporting and Notification Periods' in the *Parent Guidebook*). For more information, please see '[Programming Options](#).'

### **Federal funding to support safe school re-entry**

On Aug. 26, [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced](#) that the Government of Canada will transfer up to \$2 billion to provincial and territorial governments through the new federal [Safe Return to Class Fund](#). The federal funding will be allocated based on the student population in each province and territory; Alberta will receive \$262.8 million in two installments. This complementary funding will help our provincial government, as it works alongside local school boards to reopen schools safely and to implement measures that will help protect students and staff from COVID-19 throughout the school year. Examples of how the money may be used include adapting learning spaces, improving air ventilation, increasing hand sanitation and hygiene, and buying extra personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies.

We are grateful to the federal government for this important measure it has taken to address the many significant challenges that both provincial governments and school divisions are facing due to COVID-19. We eagerly look forward to finding out what this means for our Division. Any supplemental funding that we receive will be used to address the increased costs to offer expanded online learning opportunities and to help cover additional or ongoing costs related to school re-entry and the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Safety is our top priority**

The safety of everyone in our faith and learning community continues to be our first priority; it is at the forefront of all of our decisions, protocols, and actions. Our [School Re-Entry Plan](#), which was developed collaboratively with our community partners and health and government authorities, complies with the [directions and guidelines](#) of the Alberta government and the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Multiple [measures](#) have been put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 and to help keep our students, staff, and communities safe. These protocols are described in detail on the [School Re-Entry](#) pages of our website, as well as in our just-updated [Parent Guidebook for School Re-Entry: 2020-2021](#) (which can be read [interactively online](#) or [downloaded](#) directly to your computer or mobile device). This valuable resource provides essential information for parents/legal guardians about programming, health and safety, sports and recreation, transportation, communication, and other important logistical matters so that they will be ready for the new school year.

The *Parent Guidebook* and our website will continue to be updated as new information is available from federal and provincial governments, the Minister of Education, and Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we, as a Division, will be responsive and flexible.

### **Preparing for school re-entry**

- Anyone entering a school must complete the prescribed COVID-19 Information Screening Questionnaire (available in [multiple languages](#)) before arriving at school. Parents/legal guardians are expected to conduct this checklist daily with their child(ren) to determine if the child(ren) should come to school or stay home.
- If a child shows any signs of illness, he/she should not come to school, unless the symptoms are related to a pre-existing health condition.
- If a student becomes ill at school, he/she will be supervised in a designated area until he/she is picked up.
- Your child's principal will share specific details about student drop-off and pick-up routines.
- Signage and directional foot-markers placed throughout the school will remind students and staff about physical distancing, hand-washing, hand-sanitizing, staying healthy, and other health and safety protocols and standards.

### **Keeping safe – indoors AND outdoors**

Although it may seem like we can relax our standards when we are outside, where transmission is less likely, transmission of COVID-19 can still occur if public health guidance is not followed. We must all remember – and follow – the key strategies that mitigate risk in both indoor and outdoor activities: physical distancing, wearing masks, and washing and sanitizing our hands frequently. The safety protocols set in place are intended to help keep everyone safe, whether that be in classrooms and hallways or on playgrounds or when lining up outside at the start of a school day or after lunch/recess. These guidelines apply to both indoor and outdoor environments.

## Testing

As another measure to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the [provincial government recommends](#) that all teachers and staff voluntarily participate in asymptomatic testing before the start of the 2020-2021 school year. The province has indicated that sufficient capacity will be in place for regular testing of teachers and staff throughout the fall.

## Treaty 6 Acknowledgment and Recognition Day

On Monday, Aug. 24, Her Worship, Cathy Heron, mayor of the City of St. Albert, [proclaimed](#) Aug. 23, 2020 as “[Treaty 6 Acknowledgment and Recognition Day](#)” in St. Albert. [Treaty 6](#) was signed by Crown representatives and the Plains, Wood Cree, Nakota, Saulteaux, and Dene peoples on August 23 (and Sept. 9), 1876, with further signatories added at later dates. As St. Albert was founded within Treaty 6 territory, we acknowledge and recognize our connection with the First Peoples of this land. Indigenous peoples of Treaty 6 have played a significant role in St. Albert’s founding and growth, have celebrated many achievements, and continue to make many ongoing contributions to our communities.

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools acknowledges that we meet on the original lands of the Cree, those of Treaty 6, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation. “Kinanâskomitin, Manito” (“Thank you, Creator”). But [our reconciliation efforts](#) go beyond acknowledgment; they also strive for true understanding, followed by action. The contents of the Treaty, the history of the signing, and the land and peoples it represents are all significant to this understanding.

## Community survey: formal name change of SACHS

At its regular meeting on June 22, our Board of Trustees approved a motion to change the formal name of [St. Albert Catholic High School](#) (SACHS) to reflect its growing [French Immersion](#) identity and programs. The Board is considering two options and would like the community’s input before it makes a final decision. A name change is required to reflect the bilingual focus of the school. It is a common practice in all school jurisdictions throughout Alberta – including our Division – to name schools that provide French Immersion programs to reflect such a dual-track focus.

Although the school’s signage will be revised to reflect the new name, once it is formally approved, no significant re-branding to the school’s corporate identity will be required (e.g. the abbreviation ‘SACHS,’ school logo, sports team name, etc. will remain SACHS). Please share your opinion by [completing this brief online survey](#). Survey results will be shared with the Board before a decision is made. Thank you for providing your input.

## Updated provincial School Re-Entry Plan

The newly revised Alberta Government [School Re-Entry Plan \(Revised Aug. 27, 2020\)](#) includes a [COVID-19 Status Map](#) that shows the level of risk in regions across the province as well as information about local health. It also shows the rate of COVID-19 cases and the number of active cases. The government will monitor confirmed cases in real time to inform proactive responses in localized areas of the province. Municipalities, counties, and municipal districts with active cases over 50 per 100,000 population may have additional measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This resource will help inform school re-entry and subsequent school operations.

## Laura Bird Beacon of Hope Award

Congratulations to Mary Richard, a school counselor at Ecole Notre Dame, on receiving the [2020 Laura Bird Memorial Beacon of Hope Award](#). The annual award is bestowed by our Board of Trustees on staff who are active, articulate witnesses to Jesus Christ and who demonstrate dedicated, selfless service to further the hope and future of others. The Board established this award in 2017 in memory and honour of Laura Bird, a teacher in St. Albert in the 1960s and ‘70s, who served students through a spirit of inclusion and advocacy for their needs.

## A call to prayer

As we consider the many challenges that we are facing these days, and as we start a new school year, let us unite in prayer. Our partners at [GrACE \(Graceful Advocates for Catholic Education\)](#) have planned a province-wide [novena](#) from Aug. 28 to Sept. 5. A novena is an ancient tradition of devotional praying; it is a form of worship consisting of special prayers repeated for nine successive days. As prayer is at the heart of Catholic education, I encourage everyone to join all like-minded stakeholders in Catholic Education across Alberta in [praying this novena](#) for a safe, healthy, and successful return to school.

## Communication

Our goal is to answer any questions that you may have so that you are ready for school re-entry this fall. We will continue to keep you informed through these weekly Superintendent's updates. Furthermore, detailed information about School Re-Entry is available on our [website](https://gsacrd.ab.ca/schoolreentry) ([gsacrd.ab.ca/schoolreentry](https://gsacrd.ab.ca/schoolreentry)), which is updated regularly, and following our official social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)) is a great way to stay in-the-know. If you have any questions, please reach out to [your child's school](#) directly, or [send us an email](mailto:schoolreentry@gsacrd.ab.ca) ([schoolreentry@gsacrd.ab.ca](mailto:schoolreentry@gsacrd.ab.ca)).

## Stay informed

Just as we continue to follow and implement the direction of Alberta Health Services, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and all levels of government, we encourage you to do the same. Credible information about COVID-19 is available at:

- [Health Canada](https://canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-COVID-19.html): [canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-COVID-19.html](https://canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-COVID-19.html)
- [Alberta Government](https://alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx): [alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx](https://alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx)
- [Alberta Health Services](https://albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx): [albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx](https://albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx)
- [City of St. Albert](https://stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources): [stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources](https://stalbert.ca/city/eps/preparedness/resources)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](https://who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019): [who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

I encourage you to visit these websites often and to follow the suggestions to keep you and your family healthy.

## Joy, peace, and hope

I look forward to another exciting year of learning and growing in knowledge and faith together and would like to leave you with words from the Letter of Paul to the Church in Rome:

***“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”***  
~ Romans 15:13 ~

Joy helps us deal with stress and boosts the immune system, peace assists in facilitating patience, and hope generates courage and strength. May we all choose to seek and share joy, peace, and hope, as we journey together through these challenging times.

I wish you all many blessings for a safe and healthy school re-entry.

Sincerely,

Dr. Clint Moroziuk  
Superintendent of Schools