

December 3, 2020

Dear Westwind Families,

**RE: COVID-19 in Westwind**

I wanted to reach out personally and thank all of you for your help and support in making the start of this school year as positive as possible. I have noticed and appreciated your efforts to observe all AHS directives and protocols to keep our schools and communities safe. I also want to highlight and express gratitude to our school admin teams, teachers, support staff, band teachers, and athletic directors, who have all worked tirelessly to do all the little extra things that have set Westwind apart. Our students are fortunate to have the teachers and leaders in our schools that we do.

Parenting is a tough job! This fact is beyond debate or argument. As a parent myself, I know that parents love their children beyond anything that can accurately be written, and we want to keep our little ones safe at all times, every time. With this in mind, I want to address a topic that has frequently come across my desk this week.

In my employment and everyday association circles, people often seek me out to share ideas, thoughts, and what they are hearing. A consistent message I'm hearing from grandparents, parents, and teachers of elementary students is that there seems to be a growing fear of COVID-19 cases in our schools and that parents may be feeling the need to keep their children home to keep them safe. **I want to assure you that our children are safe in their schools.** We feel strongly that students should be in the classroom and working with their teachers. I want to share our Westwind data to date with you to help you understand the accurate picture of what we know and where our division is at with COVID-19.

**Our data**

Currently, Westwind has 4538 total students. Since the beginning of the school year, we have had four students test positive for COVID-19. Of these four, one was asymptomatic, and the other three had symptoms. This math tells me that 99.91% of our students have not tested positive for COVID-19. This data reconfirms to me that our principals' and teachers' significant efforts and detailed plans to keep our schools safe are working and that our schools continue to be a safe place for your child to learn.

At present, Westwind has had 11 staff members test positive for COVID-19. Of these 11, six are connected with one classroom in one school. One other school has had three staff members test positive, and two other schools have had one staff member each. These staff COVID-19 positives represent only 1.41% of our entire employee group.

Of our 13 schools, we have seven schools with no confirmed cases and no direct resulting quarantines (although some youth group activities and family gatherings have added indirect quarantines to these seven schools). The other six schools with at least one positive confirmed

case have had close contact quarantines totalling 596 people (this number captures students and staff required to quarantine). To my knowledge, there have been five cases of our 596 close contact quarantines develop into a confirmed positive case of COVID-19.

Based on this data, I believe that our current plans for our schools are working. Our elementary schools are safe and open for business as usual. Our junior and senior high schools are delivering online learning as required by the Alberta government. Our teachers remain on-site at our junior high and high schools and are available for short scheduled meetings with students who may require assistance when a topic becomes confusing, and a student needs some extra help.

I'm asking that all parents continue to send their elementary students to our schools so that their learning can continue unimpeded. I'm also asking our junior and senior high parents to keep pushing and leading in your homes with the message that online school is important and required for your child's learning success and graduation. All members of Team Westwind can do tough things. This is no exception.

We've been told that all students should be back in classes on January 11. Let's all commit to doing our part to ensure that every child continues with their learning regardless of what scenario we find ourselves in. Let's also do our part to follow all government directives to reverse the growing numbers of COVID-19. Our goal in Westwind is to return to as normal of a school year as quickly as possible, but we all have an essential role to play to make that happen. I firmly believe that public education has lots to offer and that our students deserve every part of it.

Thanks for reading.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darren Mazutinec".

Darren Mazutinec  
Superintendent  
Westwind School Division