

February 8, 2021

As a division, we are committed to earning and maintaining the confidence of the communities we serve through transparency and open communication. We are sharing this statement to provide an update about COVID-19 cases in our schools while also reassuring students, parents, and community members that we are taking COVID-19 very seriously and our schools continue to be safe places for students to learn.

Since our return from Christmas break, eight confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been identified in our schools; four at Cardston Elementary School and four at Cardston Junior High School. Close contacts have been notified and directed by AHS to self-isolate for fourteen days. AHS has determined that the risk of the general population in the school becoming infected because of these cases is low. Our schools remain open and operational with enhanced clearing measures in place, and we have not been notified of any cases involving in-school transmission.

We understand that many of our Westwind families have concerns about COVID-19 and that reports of cases in our school can create worry and anxiety. We appreciate you trusting us with your children and assure you that we are committed to following all AHS, Alberta Education, and Government of Alberta directives and protocols to protect our students and create safe learning environments for them. Based on these guidelines, the measures [we currently have in place](#) include:

- Requiring all staff and students to complete the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before entering the school.
 - Schools have stay-at-home policies for students or staff with symptoms of COVID-19.
- Implementing enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices on our buses and in our schools.
- Hand hygiene expectations for staff and students when entering and exiting the school and classrooms.
- Mask requirements for grade 4 to 12 students and all staff, including on school buses and shared areas such as hallways.
 - Masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction.
- Cohorting of students by class and/or grade where possible.
- Seating plans on buses to assist with contact tracing efforts.

We can assure you that your children's health and safety continues to be our top priority. As an educational institution, we firmly believe that students belong in the classroom. We encourage

all parents to prioritize their children's learning and continue sending their students to school to ensure no child falls behind in their education and development.

We recognize there is strong emotion connected to COVID-19 and our current circumstances. It has been almost 11 months since COVID-19 arrived in Alberta, and we are all tired, stressed and frustrated. All members of our school division and broader communities have been affected – in both big and small ways – by this pandemic. It remains more important than ever that we all do our part to follow the guidelines and measures in place to prevent COVID-19 cases from spreading and ultimately negatively affecting our students, schools and communities.

Keeping students safe and schools open is a collaborative effort that requires the cooperation of students, staff, parents/guardians, and communities. As we continue our fight against COVID-19, our sincere hope is that we can continue to work together to make safe, responsible choices to help keep our local case levels low, our schools open, and our students safe and learning.

Westwind School Division