



Lethbridge School Division

School Re-entry Brief

June 3, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 12 weeks students, parents, and school staff have been incredibly challenged in the COVID-19 social context. There are many families experiencing stressful circumstances that are not within their control. Students, along with their parents and caregivers, are finding themselves in a new learning situation that demands different roles. Teachers and support staff have experienced the steepest learning curve of their careers in the delivery of learning that demanded change within a week.

What we all have in common is the moral imperative to support our children and youth. Supporting students includes consideration of mental and physical well-being, and their ongoing growth as learners. It calls on the entire community to work together to problem-solve and find the best solutions possible in our new circumstance. Parents, students, and staff can be applauded for their ongoing efforts, and I know that with the will to put students at the center of decision-making, the patience to understand mistakes, and the recognition that change is swift and inevitable, we can work together to establish structures within which children have the opportunity to thrive.

The Re-entry Plan for Lethbridge School Division is based on assumptions that may change. It is recognized that the lack of clear direction and assuredness for the fall is stressful and unsettling. The Division will do its best to respond to government directives in a timely manner, and keep families apprised of direction as it unfolds.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RE-ENTRY PLANNING

- The safety and well-being of students and staff is a priority.
- The School Division will attend to the protocols established by Alberta Health Services in all aspects of schooling including structuring face-to-face instructional delivery and extra-curricular activities.
- Parents are the primary decision-makers with respect to what they believe is in the best interest of their children.
- Students and staff who are vulnerable require attention to accommodations.
- Students will have quality learning opportunities that are guided by Alberta Education mandates and the provincial Programs of Study in all potential methods of delivery.
- Staff will have access to the professional learning, collaboration, and support they need to grow instructional practice in all potential methods of delivery.
- Consistency of program delivery over time is important for sound allocation of staffing and resources.

PLANNING FOR 2020-2021 RE-ENTRY

With less than a month left in the current school year, planning is well underway for what the 2020-21 school year will look like for our students, staff and families.

Background and Direction from Alberta Education and Alberta Health Services

In May, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange announced that the provincial government is considering three different scenarios when classes start again in the fall:

1. A return to normal operations and routines in schools. Lethbridge School Division is calling this **REGULAR OPERATIONS**.
2. Schools are partially re-opened, with some level of restrictions. These restrictions will be determined by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education. Lethbridge School Division is calling this **BLENDED OPERATIONS**.
3. Schools remain closed and students continue learning from home. Lethbridge School Division is calling this **AT HOME LEARNING**.

Description of Scenarios

First, it must be recognized that the descriptions of the scenarios below are based on current understandings of possibilities. The purpose of describing the scenarios based on what we know now is to help parents understand potential impact on their family structures, consider potential options and have an informed perspective for the Parent Survey. Another purpose is to keep all staff apprised of potential structures, inform consideration of their roles, and provide a context for planning.

Scenario 1 – Regular Operations

- At the **CURRENT TIME**, regular operations is not looking likely. This may change if the spread of COVID-19 is curbed significantly or there is a vaccine.
- Regular operation means that all students will have access to school every student day on the calendar.
- All public health measures will be followed. Some protocols, such as handwashing, hand sanitizing, restrictions on large group gatherings, and restrictions on some close contact activities may be in place.
- Regular operation assumes that distancing protocols are **not** in place in school buildings or on school buses.
- At this time, regular operation assumes delivery of all curriculum.
- At this time, regular operation assumes implementation of provincial assessments (diploma and achievement tests)
- What does the school division need to know to plan?
 - o If Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education declare regular operations for schools without social distancing protocols, how many parents will decide to keep their children at home?
 - o We need to know how many children will be kept at home so that we can organize and plan for an at home delivery system. For example, the students who are at home 100% of the time may be assigned a teacher who is responsible for at-home learning for a grade level across a number of schools.

Scenario 2: Blended

- At the **CURRENT TIME**, blended operations are looking likely. This is the most difficult scenario to plan for and will be challenging for families.
- Blended operation means that schools must be structured in a manner that adheres to the health protocols put in place by Alberta Health Services.

- o These protocols may include hygiene practices such as hand washing and hand sanitizers, personal protective equipment depending on roles of staff, protective guards for desks of some staff such as office staff, and social distancing. Social distancing is the most challenging protocol because schools will not be able to house the regular number of students.
- Schools will have to construct schedules that maintain class sizes, routines, and movement in the school that adhere to social distancing mandates.
- The most likely structure for maintaining class sizes that adhere to social distancing is splitting students into groups (cohorts) that attend full days on a rotation basis.
- Other structures that are possible include staggered start and end times or half days (a.m. and p.m. cohorts); these structures come with the most costly and challenging transportation scenario.
- During the time that students are not in school, learning at home strategies will be put in place.
- Because students will have face-to-face direct instruction half of the time, the goal will be to minimize the role parents or caregivers need to assume during the at-home time.
 - o Learning at home will reinforce the learning that happened in the classroom. Every effort will be made by teachers to plan learning activities that require minimal assistance.
- **What does the School Division need to know to plan?**
 - o If Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education declare operations for schools with health protocols in place, including social distancing protocols, how many parents will decide to keep their children at home?
 - Once again, we need to know how many children will be kept at home so that we can organize and plan for an at home delivery system.

Scenario 3: At-Home Learning

- This structure of delivery is what students and families are experiencing at the present time.
- Schools remain closed to classes and learning is delivered using at home strategies, such as on-line learning.
- As we grow in our capacity to deliver learning at home, the delivery system will more closely examine how the needs of students who do not have technology are met in an ongoing manner.
- The delivery system will also examine a more comprehensive delivery of outcomes in the Programs of Study and outline ongoing learning feedback and assessment strategies at the beginning of the delivery.
- What does the School Division need to know to plan?
 - o Feedback from parents regarding the challenges their children and family have experienced with this method of delivery in order to be precise in how we support staff learning and the provision of resources.

Transportation

Transportation will be a challenge if there are protocols in place that require distancing of students. It will significantly restrict the number of students on a bus. If bus restrictions are in place (a strong possibility if the blended scenario occurs, and a possibility if the regular scenario occurs). This is a challenge that operations of the School Division may not be able to meet given the number of buses and cleaning protocols that will likely be in place between student groups boarding the buses. If this occurs, we are hopeful that there are parents and/or other family support individuals (e.g. older siblings/ grandparents) who will be willing to drive their children to school as an alternative to taking the bus. The parent survey that will be distributed will ask parents if this is a possibility for their family.