

LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DIVISION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COVID-19



INFORMATION ON COVID-19

As questions arise in regards to the COVID-19 virus and our Division's response, we will endeavour to share these common questions and answers at this location. The Division will update this Q and A as more information becomes available.

A. PROVINCIAL DIRECTION

QUESTION: Can Lethbridge School Division make its own decision to shift to Scenario 2 or Scenario 3?

ANSWER: No. The government of Alberta and Alberta Education will make the final determination in terms of what scenario schools will operate under in September, including the health protocols and guidelines that accompany the scenario.

B. LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DIVISION PLANNING

QUESTION: How is Lethbridge School Division supporting students and staff?

ANSWER: A link can be found here for the "[2020-2021 SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PLAN PARENT GUIDE](#)." The guide was updated August 4, 2020 with additional details, particularly in the delivery of learning sections so that parents have more information regarding what learning will look like at school or, if opting out of at school learning, what it will look like with "at-home learning" delivery.

Planning for re-entry is guided by the principles of safety, wellness, learning and achievement.

QUESTION: Can parents choose if their child(ren) attend school in the fall?

ANSWER: As indicated in the response above, Lethbridge School Division is preparing for an "at-home" learning delivery for those who choose to opt out of in-school classes. Details regarding what "at-home learning" will look like have recently been added to the "[2020-2021 SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PLAN PARENT GUIDE](#)"

This survey must be COMPLETED BY AUGUST 10, 2020. Please see Supt. Dr. Cheryl Gilmore's letter from [July 23 to Parents/Guardians](#) and the [July 31 Letter to Parents/Guardians](#).

QUESTION: What if I do not reply to the survey?

ANSWER: Your school will be contacting you after the survey closes. It is most helpful if you respond to the survey to save contact time. We will need to have accurate numbers to create a plan that supports our students. If you do not respond to the survey and the school is unable to contact you, it will be assumed that the opting out of in-school learning is being waived and the student will be assigned to in-school classes.

B. LETHBRIDGE SCHOOL DIVISION PLANNING

QUESTION: What if I completed the survey and have changed my mind because the province came out with new mask guidelines and the School Division has provided more information in the Re-entry Plan?

ANSWER: If you have changed your mind given recent information and the final date for the survey (August 10th) has not passed, you can complete the survey a second time. The Division will take into account your most recent survey entry. We would ask that parents/guardians not make this change more than once.

QUESTION: If I choose “at-home learning” can I change my mind and send my child to school after school has started OR if I choose “at-school learning” can I change my mind and put my child in an “at-home learning” class?

ANSWER: Pivot Points are times in the year when a student can change programs (move from “at-home learning” to “in-school learning” or from “in-school learning” to “at-home learning.” It is not feasible logistically to provide optimal flexibility with movement back and forth whenever a parent/guardian would like to move from one delivery to the other. Staff are assigned to students in school and different staff are assigned to students at home. It takes time and planning to re-assign staff. As well, consistency is necessary for quality delivery of learning. The dates of pivot points are below dividing the year into quarters. Parents/guardians will be notified in advance of the pivot point date to submit a request for change should one be desired. It is understood that parents may choose to remove their child(ren) from in-school learning due to a variety of circumstances. Should this be the case, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to provide “at-home learning” until the date of the next pivot point. If the “at-home learning” classes are full we do not have the resources to hire additional “at-home learning teachers,” and pulling an “in-school learning” teacher from their assignment before a quarter and proper notification for preparation does not provide for consistent instruction for either students in school or at home.

- Pivot Point One: Nov. 10 is the last day of the first quarter. Notification to parents before the end of October.
- Pivot Point Two: Jan. 29 is the last day of the second quarter. Notification to parents the first week of January.
- Pivot Point Three: March 31 is the last day of the third quarter. Notification to parents the first week of March.

QUESTION: On the survey, I selected I indicated I was willing to drive my children to school. How will this be confirmed?

ANSWER: You will receive a letter from the Division confirming that you are taking the responsibility to transport your child to and from school.

C. HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

Please see the [“2020-2021 SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PLAN – Parent Guide”](#) for detailed information regarding health protocols and guidelines that will be followed in all Lethbridge School Division Schools.

QUESTION: What does self-isolation mean and when is self-isolation recommended?

ANSWER: You are legally required to isolate if:

- You arrived in Alberta from travelling outside of Canada. You must isolate for 14 days from your return. If symptoms occur, you must remain in isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset of your symptoms or until you’re feeling better, whichever is longer.
- You have been identified by AHS as a close contact of a person(s) with COVID-19. You must isolate for 14 days from the date of your last exposure to COVID-19, plus an additional 10 days from the onset of any symptoms should they occur, whichever is longer.

C. HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

ANSWER (continued):

- You have a COVID-19 symptom (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat) that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. You must isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer. (Alberta Health Services - July 31, 2020)

QUESTION: Will masks be mandatory for staff and students?

ANSWER: Mask use for students in Grade 4 to Grade 12, as well as all school staff, will be mandatory when school returns for the 2020/2021 school year. Staff will be required to wear masks in all settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained, and students will be required to wear them in all shared and common areas, such as hallways and on buses. Mask use for Kindergarten to Grade 3 students will continue to be optional. If students are sitting and not facing each other, masks are not mandatory. If students are moving around and working on group projects, with teachers in close contact, masks will be expected. To assist with these new guidelines, the Alberta government will provide every Kindergarten to Grade 12 student with two reusable masks.

QUESTION: What protocols will be in place in terms of hygiene and illness?

ANSWER: All staff and students are requested to screen every day before coming to work/school. The required screening questionnaire link is in the [Parent Re-entry Guide](#). Parents/guardians are expected to assume responsibility for screening students who are not of an age/ maturity to be self-screening. There will be a strict stay-at-home policy for any students or staff with COVID-19 symptoms. Hand hygiene expectations will be clearly defined and staff and students will be regularly reminded of respiratory etiquette. Schools will also create a no-sharing policy, as all students should have their own supplies. Equipment will be cleaned between uses if staff and students share anything.

QUESTION: What responsibilities will parents assume in ensuring students are sent to school healthy?

ANSWER: As per the advice from Alberta Medical Officer of Health, every morning parents should check their children using the screening questionnaire Screening tool link provided in the [Parent Re-entry Guide](#). If their children display COVID-19 related symptoms, or their underlying symptoms have changed, their children should stay home and receive a COVID-19 test before they are sent to school again.

The Most Important Method of prevention is around education and supporting practices that promote clean schools and healthy students.

Enforcing strict hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene with plain soap and warm water is preferred in schools, as the mechanical action of hand washing is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes. If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol based hand sanitizers may not be effective at eliminating respiratory viruses. Students/children and adults in the child care setting should clean their hands:

- before leaving home and arrival at school
- after using the toilet
- after breaks and sporting activities
- before food preparation
- before eating any food, including snacks
- after contact with saliva or nasal secretions
- before using shared materials such as arts and crafts supplies
- before leaving school and on arrival at home

C. HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

Respiratory etiquette in schools/child care settings includes covering the mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow and disposing of used tissues in a plastic-lined waste containers, followed by hand hygiene.

QUESTION: What if there is a COVID-19 case in one of our schools?

ANSWER: The zone medical officer of health will work with school authorities to quickly identify cases through testing, identify close contacts and create isolation measures when needed. The medical officer of health will work with school authorities to provide follow-up recommendations and messaging for staff, parents and students. AHS may request the school close in-person classes to allow a public health investigation to take place. See “Responding to Illness” in the Parent Re-Entry Guide.

QUESTION: What procedure will be followed if students develop symptoms at school?

ANSWER: Students who develop symptoms at school may be asked to wear a mask and isolate in a separate room until a parent arrives for pickup. Parents must ensure their emergency contact numbers are up to date. If a separate room is not available, the student must be kept two meters away from other individuals. Student with underlying issues (persistent runny nose, cough due to allergies, etc.) will be allowed to attend schools as long as they have a negative COVID-19 test. Should symptoms change, a second negative COVID-19 test would be required before the student returns to school.

QUESTION: How will physical distancing and grouping be handled?

ANSWER: Students will be asked to practise physical distancing when possible. Emphasis will be placed on hygiene practices in classrooms, buses and during physical activities, when physical distancing may not be possible. Cohorts of students by class will be created. Schools will guide the flow of foot traffic through entrances and hallways by using markers on the floor. Large gatherings, such as assemblies, will be avoided.

QUESTION: What is the division doing to ensure schools are clean?

ANSWER: Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces (for example, door handles, water fountain push buttons) will help prevent the transmission of viruses. This will be done using school cleaning and disinfection protocols.

QUESTION: What precautions will be put in place for students on the bus?

ANSWER: Students will have assigned seating and a record of the seating plan will be kept to assist with contact tracing. Students who live in the same household should be seated together. Schools will develop procedures for student loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing. **MASKS ARE MANDATORY** on buses as per the City of Lethbridge requirement of masks when riding on all City of Lethbridge buses. Students must have masks (non-medical masks or cloth masks) when they are being picked up.

QUESTION: Will schools be open for parents/guardians, visitors and other service providers?

ANSWER: Lethbridge School Division is restricting all non-essential visitations. Parents/guardians can attend the school if they are required (e.g. scheduled meeting). Visitors entering a school will be asked to use the self-screening tool before entering. If a visitor answers YES to any of the questions, the individuals will not be admitted. A record of all visitors will be kept.

C. HEALTH PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

QUESTION: I tested negative for COVID-19. Do I need to continue to self-isolate?

ANSWER: Yes, if you are a returning traveller or a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19. No, if you have no known exposure to the virus, or if your pre-existing symptoms have not worsened. However, if your symptoms worsen, or new symptoms develop, the student would be sent home.

D. DELIVERY OF LEARNING

QUESTION: I have heard the term cohorting. What will this mean for students?

ANSWER: A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. The purpose of cohorting/grouping is to limit the mixing of students and staff so that if a child/youth or employee develops infection, the number of exposures would be reduced. Details regarding cohorting at each level (elementary/middle/high) is described in more detail in the “Learning in Scenario 1” section of the [“2020-2021 SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PLAN – Parent Guide”](#)

QUESTION: Will cohort sizes be limited to 15 students in a class?

ANSWER: No. Scenario One does not limit cohort sizes because all students have full-time access to in-school learning. Only Scenario 2 limits cohort sizes which is possible because students would not be in school full time (students would rotate attendance days so that cohort sizes are 15 or less).

QUESTION: If a number of students in my child’s class choose to have “at-home learning,” will the size of the class in-school be smaller?

ANSWER: No. It is expected that classes will be “near normal” size. Classes will not be smaller because students who enroll in “at-home” learning will be assigned teachers. The existing number of staff will be re-assigned/re-configured with some teachers delivering “at-home” learning and other teachers delivering “in-school” classes. We do not have extra funds to hire additional teachers to deliver curriculum to the students in the “at-home” context. The process of assigning staff will be somewhat complex, but an example is provided below to illustrate why re-assigning and re-configuration will need to occur.

EXAMPLE: If a school has 60 Grade 2 students with three teachers, and 20 of the Grade 2 students choose learning at home, one of the Grade 2 teachers would be assigned to deliver “at-home” learning. It is not necessarily this simple, but the example illustrates how re-assignment works and classes in school remain ‘near normal’ in size.

QUESTION: Will schools still be running extra-curricular programs and clubs?

ANSWER: Unfortunately, not at this time. Lethbridge School Division is following its Pandemic Plan and will monitor the reopening of schools first. The goal is to reduce contacts for students and staff during the reopening. We want our students and staff to feel comfortable before any of these activities resume. Schools will be required to have all students and personnel out of the buildings by 5 p.m. so that appropriate cleaning protocols and sanitization can occur. Should the Division move to providing limited extra-curricular activities/ athletics, it will be following a review of the Division’s Pandemic Plan, the requirements set out by Alberta Health Services, and for high school athletics, directions as laid out by the Alberta Schools’ Athletic Association.

D. DELIVERY OF LEARNING

QUESTION: How can I support my child as they return to school during a pandemic?

ANSWER: It is best for parents to provide rational explanations about COVID-19 and help maintain an appropriate calm. Explain how the school will be different and what to expect. Here is a great resource: [Parent Resource](#). Do your best to protect your child and family members from COVID-19 and let your child know how they can protect themselves and others. Guides and rules for social distancing and hygiene and consulting with healthcare professionals should be followed.

QUESTION: Will students have access to the wellness team and supports as we move through the school year?

ANSWER: Our Wellness Teams work closely with Administrators, Learning Support Teachers, family members and Classroom Teachers to best support students who are struggling to function within the educational context. Teachers understand the importance of universal teaching strategies such as self-regulation opportunities in the classroom, assessment to guide instruction, accommodations/adaptations and visuals (i.e. schedules, if then statements), behavior plans, ISP/IPPs, classroom expectations, peer mentoring/support) that help all learners to be successful. If students continue to present with social emotional concerns that impact learning, referrals are made to the school Wellness Team.

QUESTION: Will schools be sending home all the general school provided materials and resources typically used in the classroom (such as base 10 blocks and science equipment) for at-home learning?

ANSWER: In an online learning environment, it is not uncommon for concepts to be taught in different ways. For example, there may be digital alternatives to base 10 blocks). The “at-home” teacher will plan instruction in a manner that recognizes students are in the home and as such, may have limited access to traditional classroom materials. It may be, however, that “at-home” learning teachers would plan instruction that include common household resources or individual student supplies.

QUESTION: What happens to a student’s education if the student contracts COVID-19 and is in “at-school” learning delivery?

ANSWER: They would work with current teacher(s) to develop a learning plan. Each student may react differently to COVID-19 and can communicate directly with the teacher. Each plan will have to be tailored to the student depending on their ability to work while isolating for 14 days. The student may return after completing the isolation period.

QUESTION: What courses will be present for the learning at home option?

ANSWER: See the “2020-21 School Re-entry Plan Parent Guide” for more detailed information regarding course offerings at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

QUESTION: Will students have access to lockers?

ANSWER: No student should be self contained as much as possible for their day. Students will be allowed to have backpacks in room and will travel with their supplies.

D. DELIVERY OF LEARNING

QUESTION: Will extra staff be on hand for cleaning the schools?

ANSWER: Lethbridge School Division has extended and altered the caretaking hours and daily tasks to address needs of cleaning.

QUESTION: What is the School Division's plan for delivery of learning for students with exceptional needs?

ANSWER: Regardless of the option chosen by parents (in-school or at-home learning), accommodations and adaptations for individual students with exceptional needs, including those who are medically fragile, will continue to be addressed in each student's Instructional Support Plan (ISP) and supported by the Learning Team (school and division staff). The division must ensure that government guidelines are being followed to mitigate risks to both staff and students, so all face-to-face programming will only take place in the school setting.

QUESTION: Will students have access to specialized programs such as French Immersion, Spanish Bilingual, Montessori and International Baccalaureate?

The ability to deliver specialized programs depend on three linked factors: the number of students who are requesting at-home learning in specialized programs, availability of staff and required resources. Given the fairly large number of students in French Immersion at the elementary level, it is anticipated there will be sufficient numbers of students requesting at-home learning in French Immersion to designate staff to teach the at-home learning program. At this time, it is not anticipated that there will be sufficient numbers to allocate staff in small-enrollment programs such as International Baccalaureate, Spanish Bilingual and Montessori. It is difficult, at this time, to determine whether or not there will be sufficient numbers of students at the middle school and high school French Immersion programs to deliver at-home learning.

**More information regarding COVID-19
can be found on the Lethbridge School Division website
www.lethsd.ab.ca**

**The website information includes daily updates
from Alberta Health Services,
along with information from the Government of Canada
and the World Health Organization**



**Lethbridge
SCHOOL DIVISION**

E. August 20 Government of Alberta Q and A Update

QUESTION: Does everyone in the class need to be quarantined if there is one symptomatic child/staff/visitor/volunteer?

ANSWER: No, everyone in the class does not need to be quarantined. If a child/staff/visitor/volunteer has one of the core symptoms of fever, cough (new cough or worsening chronic cough), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (new or worsening), runny nose or sore throat, they must stay home and isolate for 10 days. If they have any other symptoms of illness, they should stay home until their symptoms resolve. Any individual with symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested as soon as possible, which can be arranged through the AHS online self-assessment tool. Contacts of someone who IS NOT a case of COVID-19 are not required to isolate or quarantine. Please see Appendix E for isolation and quarantine requirements.

QUESTION: Do we need to send the whole class home if the teacher becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19?

ANSWER: If a teacher or staff member becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19, Alberta Health Services Public Health will work with the school community to identify close contacts and ensure that they follow the appropriate quarantine restrictions. The specific details of the case will determine who is considered to be a close contact.

QUESTION: How many confirmed cases in a single school will result in closure of the school?

ANSWER: Any one confirmed case will result in an investigation by Alberta Health Services Public Health. It is likely with a single case that exposure is limited to a single class or group. Closures of specific classes, cohorts or schools may occur dependent on the outcome of an investigation. Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.

QUESTION: What does the school administration do if a staff member or parent/guardian of a student/child calls the school to say they/the student or child are COVID-19 positive and the school has not been previously notified by AHS?

ANSWER: Alberta Health Services (AHS) receives all of the case notifications directly from the lab. If there is a confirmed case in a school, the school will be contacted by AHS. It is not necessary to contact AHS to confirm. The appropriate individuals and schools will be notified. Parents and staff with general inquiries can be directed to call Health Link at 811 or can visit the Alberta Health website: [HEALTH LINK](#)