

COVID-19 Update

March 15, 2020

St. Paul Education's top priority continues to be student and staff safety in this unique global situation. Our provincial government has not directed school closures at this time; therefore, our schools will remain open. With this, we will continue to heighten our focus on health and wellness.

Yesterday, school authorities had the opportunity to receive clarification from and ask questions of Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Alberta. With this further information, as well as the release of the [Alberta Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#), St. Paul Education is implementing the following actions immediately:

- **Dr. Hinshaw's recommendations are intended to limit the transmission of the Coronavirus. This means that schools will have a zero tolerance for any illness. If students or staff are exhibiting any symptoms, they will NOT be allowed in school.**
- Teachers will monitor their classrooms, and if any student is having respiratory symptoms such as a cough or mild cold, the steps below will be followed:
 - If a student, child or staff member develops respiratory symptoms while at school, they will be removed from the school environment.
 - Schools will promptly separate the student or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, headache, muscles aches, and including symptoms that may seem like a mild cold) to an area away from others, with adequate supervision, until they can go home.
 - To help prevent transmission, the most important steps are to reinforce strict respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene-practices and to have the ill students or staff stay two metres away from others. If possible, the student will be placed in a separate room away from other students with a closed door. Any rooms that have been in use by students while symptomatic should be cleaned and disinfected before others enter them.
 - Schools will notify parents if their child begins to experience respiratory symptoms while at school and arrange for immediate pick up.
 - Students who begin to show respiratory symptoms while at school should be picked up by a caregiver and avoid travel on the school bus. If no alternative is possible, it is recommended that the student sits on a seat by themselves. There is no need to take further special precautions or to close the school.
 - Students and staff who develop respiratory symptoms are to remain home for 14 days after the start of the symptoms.

- If students are tested for COVID-19, those who test negative will follow their doctor's instructions about returning to school.
- Visitors will be required to identify if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever or difficulty breathing) and assessed by office staff if they are showing any symptoms. If any of the symptoms are shown or they express that they are experiencing symptoms, they will not be granted permission to visit the school. If they are clear of symptoms, they are to be asked to proceed to the nearest washroom to wash their hands with soap and water and are welcome.

As a school division, we are echoing Alberta Health Services' advice to everyone in Alberta to not travel outside the country at this time because it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of trips and it puts others at risk upon return.

- Students/staff who have travelled outside of Canada and returned before March 12, should self monitor for 14 days. This means that they can attend school as normal, but monitor for any symptoms of COVID-19. If they develop any symptoms (eg. cough, fever or difficulty breathing), they are to stay home and call [Health Link 811](#) for assessment and testing.
- Students/staff returning from out of country travel after March 12, must [self-isolate](#) for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. Health officials are not requiring staff or families who are living with someone who has traveled outside the country to self-isolate unless the person who traveled begins to exhibit symptoms
- Please see below Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Self- Assessment tool.

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>

As a school division, we will continue to focus on zero tolerance for sickness in schools in combination with preventative measures, such as good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing to reduce the spread of respiratory illness.

We urge families to refer to official information sources for medical advice on illness and travel outside of Canada from Alberta Health Services.

We continue to receive many important questions from families and most often about why schools are staying open. Dr. Hinshaw noted that if we close schools they would need to close child care centres as well. She acknowledged that our kids will gather regardless if school is closed, in places like the mall. By being in a structured atmosphere like a school, there will be measures in place to control the spread, such as hand washing products, etc. Having kids in unstructured places could in fact increase the spread. Dr. Hinshaw further noted that keeping schools open will limit the emotional stress on students as well as reduce the impact on their learning. She believes that school closures of two weeks will not stop the spread. If she closes schools, it would be for a much longer duration of time.

While schools remain open at this time, families have every right to keep their children home from school if they choose. Families are asked to advise the school when their children will stay home.

This is a rapidly changing situation, and we appreciate the patience and trust of our school communities as we navigate this pandemic. We will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools will be open Monday, March 16.

At any point, please visit our <https://www.stpauleducation.ab.ca/> website, as this web page will be updated as significant changes occur 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

A new virus such as COVID-19 can create anxiety and be difficult for children to understand, especially if someone in their school or family is sick, or if they see or hear troubling information around them. Our teachers and staff are committed to creating a calm and caring environment where students can ask questions and get support. Families can access information on how to talk to kids about COVID-19 on our website or by visiting alberta.ca/COVID19.

We appreciate your patience and trust as we work together to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on everyone's well-being. We will continue to keep you updated through our website and social media.