



**March 12, 2020**

**To: All Parents**

**From: Cheryl Gilmore, Superintendent**

The purpose of this communication is to convey information regarding COVID-19 that is relevant to the health of your child(ren) and family, staff in schools, and the overall health of the community. Three areas of information will be covered: (1) General Information and School Division Actions; (2) What is Lethbridge School Division Doing in Response to COVID-19 classification as Pandemic? And (3) Returning from travel and/or known contact with COVID-19.

### **1. General Information**

With respect to school operation, Lethbridge School Division aligns actions delineated in our Pandemic Plan with health authorities including prevention, recommendations for travel, and response to potential spread of the virus.

As many of you are aware, health authorities have confirmed that there are instances of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Alberta. On the date of this letter, there have not been any confirmed cases in the south health zone (Lethbridge and area). The World Health Organization (WHO) classified the spread of coronavirus as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As such, we have activated the Lethbridge **School Division Pandemic Plan**.

**Symptoms.** Although the symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu (Influenza) look similar (both are respiratory illnesses), they are not the same infection. COVID-19 is caused by one virus, the novel 2019 coronavirus, now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2. What is commonly referred to as the flu is caused by any of several different types and strains of influenza viruses.

How the flu and COVID-19 are similar:

- Both cause fever, cough, body aches, fatigue; sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.
- Can be mild or severe, even fatal in rare cases.
- Can result in pneumonia.

At this time, the Alberta Health Services tells us students and staff who are not ill can safely come to school. The schools will remain open. Lethbridge School Division is providing **up-to-date information from health services on our website (<https://www.lethsd.ab.ca>)**. We will also maintain any information specific to Lethbridge School Division on our website.

**Prevention.** Prevention or controls over the spread of the flu and COVID-19 are the same. To keep both the flu and COVID-19 from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep your children home if they exhibit the symptoms of COVID-19. If your child becomes sick at school, the school will contact the parent/guardian to pick them up. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness that you can emphasize with your children:

Teach them the importance of washing hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.

Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.

People who are sick should stay home from work or school and stay away from other people until they are better.

Stay away from shopping malls or other places where there are large groups of people.

If you have questions, please contact **811 Health Link**. You can get more information from Alberta Health Services by calling **403-388-6111** or visiting their website at [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca).

### **Preventative Measures of Division Pandemic Plan and Alberta Health Authority.**

**Travel Restrictions** – The Pandemic called by the WHO is stage 4 and beyond. As such the Division Pandemic Plan calls for discontinuing all student travel out of the City of Lethbridge. This includes all planned trips and excursions, whether they are international or local. It is recognized that this is very difficult for some students and staff because a lot of hard work and passion has gone into the planning and preparation for some trips. I am sorry for this, but staff and student health are at the forefront of the Pandemic Plan. Alberta Health Services has advised no travel outside of the country.

**Gathering Restrictions** – Alberta Health Services has mandated cancellation of all large gatherings of over 250 people. As well, the Lethbridge School Division Pandemic Plan recommends that schools do their best to enforce social distancing. This means that schools are compelled to cancel all events that have large numbers of individuals (e.g. assemblies, sports events, concerts, plays, etc.) and/or individuals who are forced to be in close proximity because of the limited availability of space or nature of the interaction (e.g. Science Fairs [depending on structure], elementary school Celebrations of Learning [depending on structure], etc.). It is understood that the nature of a school is such that students will be in classrooms together, and will engage in activities together, but will be reminded about social distancing.

### **Staff Responsibilities to Students if Student is at Home.**

During a pandemic event, students may be at home for a variety of reasons: self-isolating circumstances applied and the parent decided that the student should be at home [or an independent student may have made that decision], Health Services compelled isolation or quarantine, confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, or the parent has decided that they do not want to send their child to school until post-pandemic times. It may be that some teachers have seamless online access to learning because of the nature of their instruction, but it is not the expectation that teachers will put together packages of homework for students and it is not the expectation that teachers must establish or keep up some sort of online learning system. Due to the nature of a pandemic outbreak, teachers will advance curriculum programs where possible. The Division will consider providing tutorials for senior high students. Programming will be adapted to assist returning students that have been absent. Parents may wish to support students' learning at home by having their students play card and dice games, work on basic facts, read, write stories, and do research projects on topics of interest.

**School Closure.** If the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold in southern Alberta and spreads, **school closure is guided by Alberta Health Services.** This is not a probable outcome, but it is a possibility. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children and staff from getting sick. If schools are closed, staff and children are to stay at home. Parents may want to begin thinking about what is necessary for child care purposes in the event that a school is closed.

**2. What is Lethbridge School Division Doing in Response to COVID-19 classification as Pandemic?**

Lethbridge School Division has a Pandemic Plan that was structured and is guided in its implementation by Alberta Government through the department of Alberta Education as well as Alberta Emergency Services, Alberta Health Services, and the Canadian Health Authority. We have instituted measures for control of the virus: travel restrictions, event size restrictions, clarity of information regarding self-isolation and self-monitoring, provision of resources for teaching children handwashing and other preventative strategies, ongoing and updated information on the Division website, plan to in-service caretakers regarding procedures and supplies to be used in Pandemic context, hand sanitizer installations and ordering of supplies, communication with Transportation services regarding cleaning of busses. We are committed to keeping staff and parents as informed as possible.

**3. Returning from Travel or Known Contact with COVID-19**

You may have holidays planned over the Easter break that take your child(ren) out of country or to a region in Canada that becomes one of substantive risk of contraction. As such, all parents/guardians are encouraged to review the guide below regarding self-monitoring and self-isolating. Parents/guardians are reminded that circumstances associated with risk and exposure change rapidly, including travel advisories. The chart below is a guide, but please keep in mind that the list of destinations/locations signalling self-isolation will likely change over time. You can link to information updated information on Lethbridge School Division website under 2019-nCoVid.

<p><b>Self-Monitor for 14 days and assume regular work schedule and duties:</b></p>	<p>○ <b>Self-Isolate, even if feeling well, for 14 days IF you:</b>  <a href="#"><u>monitor LSD website for updated information</u></a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• watch for symptoms like fever, cough or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member</li> <li>• call Health Link 811 at first sign of symptoms</li> <li>• If you are well and have not been advised to stay at home by a medical professional, please report to work as usual.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are returning from a Grand Princess Cruise Ship</li> <li>• are returning from Iran; Italy or from Hubei province, China</li> <li>• were in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19</li> <li>• have been advised to stay home by a medical professional</li> </ul> <p>Self-Isolation means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors</li> <li>• do not attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings</li> <li>• watch for symptoms like fever, cough, or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member and call Health Link 811 if symptoms begin</li> </ul>