

January 14, 2022

Dear Families,

We hope this letter finds you with the support you need to manage the latest surge in COVID cases in our communities. This surge is affecting various parts of our lives in different ways. As we manage schools with significant presence of the highly transmissible COVID-19 Omicron variant, we continue to work closely with the local Health team. This variant has pushed us towards learning to live with COVID's pervasive presence and we are thankful to be working together with Health and with you to manage our response.

It is important for all of us that each of us remain diligent in using the layers of protection. Schools will continue to notify parents of significant exposures, but please be aware that the process depends on those who have tested positive to inform the school. Regardless of whether or not you receive notification of an exposure in school, it is prudent to minimize your risk and protect those around you. Important measures include:

- Monitor for symptoms daily, and **do not send your child to school if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or cold or flu symptoms.**
- Continue to **use Rapid Antigen Tests to detect positive cases as early as possible.** Inform the school if your child tests positive and call 811 for guidance. Rapid Test Kits are available for free from your child's school or at many locations in communities. See this link for locations for rapid test kits:
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/testing-information/rapid-testing/locations-for-rapid-antigen-self-test-kits?userLat=50.454722&userLong=-104.60666>
- **Maintain an effective vaccination status.** Vaccination clinic dates and times are widely available in the community via pharmacies and pop-up clinics and many schools will be hosting clinics in the coming days.
- **Continue to use all the layers of protection,** such as practicing proper hand hygiene, maintaining physical distancing, and wearing a mask whenever appropriate.

One significant change in Health processes is related to declaring a school outbreak. The declaration of an outbreak will now depend more on the level of absenteeism due to illness in schools. Please let the school know the reasons for your child's absence. Schools will report to Health when there are 10% or more of its students absent due to illness. Health will investigate and then determine outbreak status. Although we will not know if the illness is actually COVID, if an outbreak is declared in a school, parents will be informed. Schools will remain open, and it is likely that additional measures of protection are already in place or will be initiated.

As you might expect with the increase in the presence of COVID, schools may need to make various adjustments to school procedures to sustain learning as much as possible. Please be prepared for these and other changes:

- **School routines may change** on a day-to day (or shorter cycle). Things like recess schedules, class schedules, special events, lunch or snack programs, and other school procedures may need adjustment to respond to different circumstances.
- Moving to **remote learning may still be required in certain circumstances**. This will not be a first-choice option for restrictions (or even a second or third choice) but perhaps necessary. Please support your child and your child's teacher as much as possible. This is not the same as in-person learning but it can sustain some learning and connection.
- **Communication on various channels will continue to be frequent, but some communication processes may change** with increasing demands. We reach families in various ways so some parents may get duplicate messages. Thanks for your patience.

There may be a variety of adjustments that schools make, but please be assured that we will continue to care for the wellbeing and learning of your child(ren), no matter what changes we need to make. Please connect with your child(ren)'s teacher or school if you have questions about school procedures.

We also want to encourage you to make the adjustments in your life so you can keep the most important things front and center. We all can be flexible, kind to each other and resilient. Resilient does not mean that circumstances don't affect you or bother you; it means you can adapt and carry on. Dr. Robyn Hanley-Dafoe says resiliency "is doing the next right thing. It is taking that next precarious step in the direction you want to go." We might take that next step confidently or by leaning heavily on others as we take it, but each of us can take that next precarious step and perhaps be a support to others in our family and community. COVID-19 and its variants are present in the community and we will continue to rely on each other.

Yours in Education,



Robert Bratvold, Director of Education