

Dec. 11, 2020

Superintendent's Update: Students, Parents/Legal Guardians, and Staff

I hope that you are finding some joy during this difficult time as we look forward to Gaudete Sunday, the third Sunday of [Advent](#). The word 'Gaudete,' which means 'rejoice,' is taken from Paul's letter to the Philippians (4:4), "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" Amid this season of introspection and penance, Gaudete Sunday shifts our focus to our Lord's nearness. In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when our attention is often on the negative and fearful, this is a time to remember that we are loved by God and that, despite the chaos in our world, God is always present. We await His coming, not with fear or anxiety but with joyous expectation!

On Dec. 8, Premier Jason Kenney [announced](#) new and [stronger province-wide public health restrictions](#), which will be in place until at least Jan. 12, to protect the health-care system and [slow the spread of COVID-19](#). A ban on all indoor and outdoor social gatherings, as well as mandatory mask-use, became effective immediately, while all other measures come into effect on Sunday (Dec. 13). The announcement did not include any changes for schools; thus, programming and protocols will continue as [previously directed](#). All of the new health restrictions are posted on the [government's website](#).

The ban on social gatherings will remain in place over the Christmas break. As this is the most important time of the year for many of our families, this announcement, coupled with other challenges around the pandemic, may cause seemingly unmanageable stress or hardship for some within our faith and learning community. This [simple resource](#) provides additional information on where to turn for help. More options are noted in the "Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing" section of our updated [Parent Guidebook for School Re-Entry: 2020-2021](#). Furthermore, our Division retains professional school counselors for our students. Contact your child's school principal if your child needs support. As well, the province has said that social, charitable, and protective services will remain open for in-person attendance.

The government has issued a province-wide **work-from-home mandate**, except in cases required for "a physical presence for operational effectiveness." For our schools, 'operational effectiveness' includes, but is not limited to, teaching and learning, serving students with diverse needs, supervision of students, technical support, and resource management. In light of this, all Division staff who can meet their professional obligations remotely will have the opportunity to work from home, whenever feasible. School principals will work with staff to determine who needs to continue working at school and who can work from home, based on the needs of the students that they serve.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) has changed some of the rules regarding [close-contacts](#) and [isolation](#). These are outlined on pages 14 and 15 of our updated *Parent Guidebook* and our [website](#). Reading the *Guidebook* and website, as well as following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#), is a good way to stay up-to-date regarding COVID-19 and our schools, but also to stay informed about other important Division news. Your child(ren)'s school principal can best address concerns related to student learning and wellbeing.



I am always uplifted by the generosity of our community. To date, our schools have collectively raised nearly \$3,900 (and rising) for Catholic Social Services' (CSS) [2020 Stuff-a-Stocking Campaign](#). All funds raised will help CSS provide Christmas stockings and turkey dinners for approximately 300 vulnerable or at-risk youth. Thank you for [supporting this campaign](#), which runs until Dec. 31.

As well, more than 525 people raised \$14,250 through the Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools Education Foundation's 50/50 Raffle Fundraiser! These funds will help the Foundation work to enhance the educational and spiritual opportunities for our students. Finally, our schools are sharing the love of Christ with others through a variety of fun initiatives and fundraisers to support the needy in our community.

I know that these are challenging times, particularly during this Advent season, but there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we can find comfort and hope in God's eternal presence. By collectively abiding by all public health mandates and showing care and empathy to one another, we will get through this sooner. As we reflect on the theme of this third week of Advent, joy, we recall the words of our Saviour when He encouraged His disciples to look forward to His resurrection:

"So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." (John 16:22)

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented many difficulties and challenges, it can never steal the anticipation of Advent and the joy of Christmas from us.

I wish you a blessed weekend!

Sincerely,

Dr. Clint Moroziuk
Superintendent of Schools