

October 27, 2020

Families of Canadian Rockies Public Schools:

As per our last communication on October 9th, senior and school-based administrators (approximately 20 individuals from all schools and departments within the division boundaries) met yesterday to review our re-entry planning document and to discuss possible areas for easing up on current restrictions.

As we considered the potential for adjustments to our current measures, we continued to prioritize student and staff safety, as well as the importance of keeping our schools open, which is important not only for student academics, but also for their physical and mental health.

We discussed many areas of our re-entry plan and want to make you aware of some of the most notable adjustments, as well as some areas where we are maintaining our current measures.

1. **Field trips**

Current re-entry plan:

All field trips and activities that require group transportation will be postponed or cancelled. All field trips should be restricted to locations that students can walk to within their designated cohort. Schools will ensure that all applicable COVID-19 safety measures are followed.

Decision:

- a) In addition to walking field trips, an individual cohort of staff and students will now be able to travel via school bus to field trip locations within the boundaries of CRPS, and
- b) A host location must share their protocols in advance of a field trip, and protocols must align with the CRPS COVID-19 protocols for a field trip to be approved by school administrators.

2. **Singing and playing wind instruments**

Current re-entry plan:

In music class (which will be taught by the classroom teacher), there will be no use of wind instruments. There will be no singing or projecting of voices within an enclosed environment.

Alberta Health Services considers singing and playing wind instruments in close proximity to others as higher-risk activities. The only space large enough to accommodate the physical distancing directives is a school gymnasium and these will be

used to support physical education classes and activities through the winter months (See #3).

Decision:

- a) No use of wind instruments inside or outside will continue to be a protocol.
- b) Singing will be allowed outside only while wearing masks and physically distancing for grades 4-12. Students in grades K-3 will not be required to wear masks while singing outside, but must maintain physical distancing.

3. Use of gymnasiums and school sports

Current re-entry plan: If a gymnasium must be used for Physical Education, physical distancing must be maintained. Gyms will be used as little as possible at this time.

Decision:

As per our communication on October 2nd regarding our phases for physical activity and school sports, we will be moving to phase 2.

As per phase 2, gymnasiums will now be opened for instructional use during school hours. Schools will create gymnasium schedules that maintain individual student cohorts. Rotation schedules for gym use will balance safety as well as adequate use by students to support positive mental and physical well being. Sanitization of hands before and after students enter the gym and the use of cohorted equipment will be additional measures to ensure student safety.

We appreciate and understand fully that many families in the valley would also like to see our gymnasiums open up for practices and/or athletics. We know that this is an important part of culture within the Bow Valley. Presently, our team of leaders from across the division has decided *not* to proceed with allowing this to take place. This decision will be reviewed by November 20th to allow us to see the impact of opening gyms for instructional use. As stated in our previous communication, Phase 3 will include a review of school athletics beginning with sport specific training within cohorts.

We have received a few communications regarding this topic and we understand and appreciate the parental concerns brought forward. The leadership team felt that it was not the right time to open the schools to outside individuals entering CRPS facilities given the high rate of infection evident across the province and the recent media reports last week regarding COVID-19 cases being transferred in schools due to sporting activities. I must mention that our team will not waver on this decision just because we have incoming comments regarding what other school divisions are doing. Additionally, if parents choose to take their children to Calgary for competitions/practices this is each family's choice. The decisions parents make are not under the control of the school division. I should also point out that even when sports were available through our schools, some parents still took their children to Calgary.

The sanitization of gymnasiums remains a challenge. CRPS does not have the staffing capability or funding to have gymnasiums sanitized multiple times during the day and

later in the evening due to the extensive time required by our custodians to clean classrooms and other high use areas to an acceptable standard.

Our focus remains on safety and we are hopeful that we do not become one of the statistics; 418 schools have reported COVID cases, 92 declared outbreaks, 27 are on watch to be closed and 16 schools are currently closed. It may not be readily apparent to those not involved in these decisions, but the safety and cleanliness of our schools has been, and continues to be, our priority. The ramifications of an outbreak could very easily result in the closing of multiple classrooms or even a school. We know first hand the ripple effect that one positive case can create, having experienced a case only one month ago. The closure of a school would result in many issues and surely impact the mental health of not only our students, but their parents as well. Therefore, we have taken a very rigid approach to what is, and is not allowed in our schools. Our continued communications have indicated that these protocols will be reviewed by the leadership team on a regular basis.

Any changes noted above will come into effect by Monday, November 2nd, 2020 to give our school administrators time to ensure these new measures are implemented safely and effectively. School and district re-entry plans will also be updated by this date.

Thank you for responding to the recent Learning Options Form. Students in grades K-8 who will be returning to face-to-face learning, or remaining with at home learning, will receive information regarding their classroom assignments prior to their return to school on November 9th.

As we have stated before, the success of our schools in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is not only dependent on the measures we have put in place across our district, but it is also dependent on the extent to which our community is following AHS guidelines.

Sincerely,



Christopher MacPhee
Superintendent of Schools

