



September 8, 2021

Dear families and staff of WRPS:

On August 18, 2021 Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools communicated its 2021/22 “Return to Near Normal” School Year [Plan](#) that outlined health measures in schools, based on the guidance from the Alberta Government and Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.

We assured you that we would continue to update you on any changes to those health measures, directed by the Alberta Government or enacted on a local level. On September 3, 2021, CMOH Dr. Hinshaw and the Alberta Government announced further temporary measures aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19. Enhanced measures, including mandatory masking are subject to change.

Based on that announcement, rising case counts, hospitalizations, and low vaccination rates in our communities, on September 8, 2021, Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools’ Board of Trustees determined that:

- Effective Friday, September 10, 2021 and until further notice, masking is mandated for all staff and students in grades 4-12 in indoor school common areas, i.e., hallways, bootrooms, and washrooms.
- Masking is **not** mandated for students or staff in classrooms or playgrounds; however, we will continue to support students and staff who choose to wear a mask in these areas.

Following are the provincial health measures that took effect across Alberta on September 4, 2021, and WRPS’ response to these measures.

Masking

Provincial Requirements:

- Masks are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and workplaces.
- Schools are not required to implement masking, but school boards will continue to set COVID-19 management policies as they deem appropriate.
- Masks are mandated on all school buses for all students and staff.
- Medical mask exceptions letter, from an authorized health professional will be required for those seeking a medical exemption as per Government of Alberta guidelines.

How Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools is responding:

- Masks continue to be mandatory for all K-12 bus students and staff.
- Masking is not mandated for students and staff in classrooms.
- Masking is mandated for students in grades 4 - 12 and staff in school common areas.
- Masks will be mandatory at Division Office and Maintenance Office, except when staff are in their own workstations.
- Masks will be mandatory for visitors, including parents, who enter WRPS schools, Division Office and Maintenance Office.
- Community use of schools will be approved on a case-by-case basis, with mask use required.

Social Gatherings

Provincial Restrictions:

- Albertans are encouraged to limit in-person contacts.
- Unvaccinated Albertans are strongly recommended to limit indoor social gatherings to close contacts of only two cohort families up to a maximum of 10 people.

How Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools is responding:

- Extracurricular and sports activities can continue, taking precautions as much as possible. All spectators at indoor events must wear masks and sanitize their hands.
- Meetings should occur virtually where possible.

Working from Home

Provincial Recommendations

- Employers are recommended to continue work-from-home measures where possible, and to pause or revert plans to have staff return to work.

How Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools is responding:

- Schools are open and operational; therefore, staff are required to be at school.

Isolation and Quarantining

Provincial Requirements:

- Isolation is still legally required for people who have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive.
- Quarantine is no longer legally required for close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases, unless directed to do so by local public health officials.

How Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools is responding:

- Individuals (parents, students, and staff) shall continue with daily self-screening, and remain home when sick (when they have COVID-19 symptoms) or test positive for COVID-19.

- Students and staff must stay home when sick or have COVID-19 symptoms or other symptoms of respiratory illness based on Government of Alberta isolation and quarantine requirements.
 - Students attending WRPS schools follow AHS requirements. We are aware that students living in Maskwacis are under tighter restrictions. This may have implications for students riding Maskwacis Transportation buses.
- Students and staff who develop symptoms at school will be isolated and sent home.

Please be assured that schools will continue to encourage good hand hygiene (e.g. washing hands and sanitizing), good respiratory etiquette (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes), and enhanced cleaning. Should schools see an increase in absence due to illness, WRPS will work with local public health officials to determine if additional measures are needed.

We understand that COVID restrictions are a sensitive issue for all our communities, and there is a wide range of opinions on courses of action. We will continue to work together with the goal of a safe and successful school year. We truly appreciate the feedback the Board received, and thank you for your continued support for our schools, students, families and fellow staff.

Sincerely,



Peter Barron
Superintendent of Schools