

ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS AND PLANNING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – FOR PARENTS

Q. What is EIPS doing to prepare for pandemic influenza?

The health and safety of students and staff is our top priority. In light of the current H1N1 virus pandemic, we are taking appropriate steps and working with government and health agencies to monitor the outbreak and to implement appropriate protocols. School principals have been provided with a Division Pandemic Plan, a Flu Surveillance Protocol, educational resources, and flu kits. Aligned with Alberta Health Services recommendations, children and staff should stay at home if they are ill. We will keep parents informed about pandemic planning initiatives and any outbreaks via letters home, school newsletters, and the school and division websites.

Q. What can we do to minimize the impact of pandemic influenza in EIPS?

Health Impact: Like any influenza, the best way to reduce the spread of the virus is to practice good infection prevention behaviours. The most effective prevention actions are to wash hands frequently with soap, cough or sneeze into a sleeve rather than into a hand, and stay home when sick. Staff will follow a Flu Surveillance Protocol for screening and reporting illness. Custodial contractors have met with District personnel regarding sanitization and cleaning in schools for the prevention of flu transmission.

Business Impact: Departments and schools must fill out the Pandemic Business Impact Template to ensure continuance of essential services and submit a copy to Central Office Administration.

Personal Impact: Be flexible and adaptive in helping EIPS maintain a high level of service. Employees and school families should review their personal pandemic preparedness and create a plan regarding personal matters. (Example: A daycare closes due to an ill caregiver).

Q. How will EIPS communicate updates and information?

Information is posted on the EIPS website and on individual school websites. Students will also receive newsletters when appropriate. The OHS Specialist issues updates as needed to the Executive Team, who then inform and work with principals to provide information to their staff and school community. Please ask your principal to assist with any questions or concerns you may have.

Q. Where can I get more information about H1N1, flu symptoms, family pandemic plans or Alberta Educations resources for schools?

Please visit our EIPS website at:

<http://www.eips.ca/content.php?page=298>

For additional information contact:

Health Link Alberta toll-free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Visit www.fightflu.ca for Public Health Agency resources on H1N1.

Visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/guide/index-eng.php> for a personal pandemic plan guide.

Visit the Alberta Education website at:

<http://education.alberta.ca/admin/healthandsafety.aspx>

Q. Will schools be closed during a pandemic?

The closure of schools is unlikely in the early stages of a pandemic. However, closures may occur under the following circumstances:

- 1) Regional health authorities, in consultation with Alberta Health and Wellness, may direct a specific school or schools be closed if a health situation were serious enough.
- 2) The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Board, may make a decision to close one or more schools due to lack of staff to operate a school safely.

Q. Will employee travel be restricted and/or student field trips cancelled?

Any decision to cancel or restrict student or staff travel will be based on recommendations from national and provincial health authorities and on our priority of providing safe and healthy learning and working environments for all staff and students. Notification of cancellations or travel restrictions will be communicated with as much advance notice as possible.

Q. What is being done to minimize the impact on student learning during a pandemic?

Meaningful instruction and the advancement of curriculum is the first priority in EIPS.

In addition, Alberta Education has posted provincially authorized student resources for all core courses for grades 1 to 12 on its website at <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/>. The modules are intended to provide learning opportunities for students to supplement their studies during a possible school closure and can be downloaded at no cost. The Ministry also provides distance education and related materials that can be purchased from the Learning Resources Centre for self-supervised study.

Q. Could school calendars or schedules be adjusted to compensate for school closures?

In the event of a pandemic, Elk Island Public School's Board of Trustees will consult with appropriate stakeholders and determine if any schedule changes are needed to compensate for school closures.

Q. Would the diploma examination schedules be altered because of school closures during a pandemic?

Provincial examination schedules may be altered or suspended if one or more schools are closed or if the Superintendent of Schools is unable to provide the required number of presiding examiners to administer the examinations. This decision would be made in accordance with Alberta Learning protocols.

Q. What happens when large numbers of students miss exams or assignment deadlines due to illness?

EIPS' *Policy HKAB – Learning Assessment* allows students to make up missed work with no penalty.

Q. Will classroom sizes be adjusted if large numbers of students are absent due to illness?

School principals, in consultation with teachers and the Superintendent of Schools, may make any necessary adjustments to provide educational services. Meaningful instruction and the advancement of curriculum is the first priority.

Q. What happens if buses are cancelled due to driver illness?

Parents will be expected to drive their children. EIPS' Student Transportation will continue the practice of keeping schools and parents informed about any bus cancellations or altered routes.