

DATE: December 31, 2021
RE: COVID-19 update
TO: Horizon Parents

On December 30, 2021, the Minister of Education announced that the Kindergarten to Grade 12 student winter break has been extended to January 10 province wide.

School authorities will use the extended student break to prepare for potential in-person and at-home learning scenarios in response to the current COVID-19 situation. While the intent is to return to in-person on January 10, teachers need to be prepared for a shift to at-home learning, based on local context.

The pause will also provide additional time to deliver 8.6 million rapid tests and 16.5 million medical-grade masks to Alberta schools through a phased approach starting the week of January 10. Once fully distributed, every student and staff member will receive 2 five-test kits and an 8 week supply of medical-grade masks. While medical grade masks are being provided to all K-12 students, current mandates around who wears masks and what kind of mask they must wear are not being changed at this time. Rapid test kits will also be voluntary for students and vaccinated staff. The expanding reliance on voluntary rapid tests, no reporting or follow up PCR test requirements means that AHS will not have the same data about the number of positive cases, as such AB ED is re-examining the matrix that determines when to shift to at-home learning. There is an expectation that there will be updated documents coming out shortly such as an updated daily screening tool (for parents and staff) to address recent changes.

To further support high school students whose learning is disrupted by this extension, January diploma exams have been cancelled.

A decision regarding the April and June diploma exams will be made later in 2022.

On December 31, 2021, the province also announced that they are reducing the duration of isolation for vaccinated individuals, reducing it to 5 days instead of 10 days if symptoms when symptoms are fully resolved.

More information on next steps for students' return to learning will be announced late next week by the province.

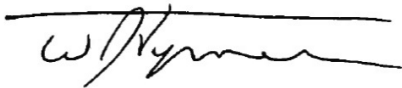
With the delay in the start of school, all school activities including school athletics will be suspended until January 10, 2022.

Information and guidance to support school authorities and parents is available on alberta.ca/returntoschool.

I know that this announcement causes stress in households as parents try to secure childcare for next week. As a school system we are committed to the safety of students and staff and preparing for whatever the return to school looks like for January 10th.

In closing, I hope that you are able to enjoy this final day of 2021 as we navigate this challenge.

Sincerely,



Superintendent