



Delegation: Trustees received an overview of a meeting held September 7 by a representative from a group of parents and students, to discuss their concerns related to the Board's recent decision to require masking in common areas based on the Alberta Government's new temporary measures in response to the Delta variant and varying regional vaccination rates as of September 3, 2021.

Meeting Protocols: Prior to the September 13 meeting, trustees carefully reviewed the requirements for Board meetings as they relate to the recently announced health order from the provincial government to work from home if possible. For the September 08 meeting, the number of people present in the boardroom was reduced and all participants remained distanced. All other attendees participated via Zoom. After greater discussion, trustees passed a motion to continue to hold regular Board meetings via Zoom until further notice and direction from the province.

2021-22 Return to School Plan: Over the past number of weeks, the Division has heard concerns from both parents who want health measures such as masks in schools and those who do not want to see masks in schools. Many parents on both sides have also expressed concerns related to the mental health of students. After careful consideration, including a review of differing concerns expressed by parents and community members, accountability of the Board to provide a level of safety in Division schools, low regional vaccination rates, the lack of a vaccine for students aged 11 and younger, and the importance of students being in schools and schools staying open, trustees passed a motion to have students in Grades 4-12 and all staff wear masks in common areas in schools. Board chair Starosielski noted that the provincial government deemed that "school authorities continue to have the ability and corresponding accountability for any local measures that are put in place...which may exceed provincial guidance. If school divisions make the decision to go beyond the provincial guidance, part of the accountability you have to your communities is to explain why this is necessary in your local contexts". Trustees Young, Anderson, Starosielski and Wiebe shared that ultimately they would like schools to remain open and not experience a forced Alberta Health Services school shut down which could be detrimental to mental health. This requirement will amount to approximately one hour per day when students must wear a mask. Students will be allowed to take off their masks once they are in the classroom. This decision is intended to strike a compromise approach that recognizes both the physical and mental health needs of students while putting in a measure to slow the possible spread of the virus in schools. As they did last year, individual students or staff can apply for a mask exemption in accordance with the province's mask exemption guidelines. At-home learning is also an option. Note that students in Two Hills Mennonite School (THMS) are exempt from the masking requirement. Staff at THMS are still required to wear masks in common areas. This exemption is based on the unique religious and academic programming in Two Hills Mennonite School. Trustees also passed a motion to communicate their concerns regarding the lack of direction and health guidance for schools to the provincial government.

2021-22 Enrolment Update: Early enrolment figures show that the Division is down about 200 students from projections. This number could improve depending on buses running from nearby communities and parents' making a final decision regarding in-person or at-home learning. A very low number of families (12 students in all) have opted for the Division's at-home learning program. These students are currently being supported by the Myrnam Home Education and Outreach Centre. A part-time teacher has been hired to boost at home learning in Myrnam until the end of the semester in January. A number of at-home learners who attend Ashmont, Myrnam and the Regional are also being supported by their home school.

Council of Elders: The Innovation in First Nation Education grant has come to an end as of June 2021. This was a very successful grant that supported a lot of good work between the Division and neighbouring First Nations. The Division has developed a three-step plan to continue the work that was started with this grant. The first phase involved hiring Mr. Clifford Cardinal as Cultural Advisor. Mr. Cardinal opened the school year with a pipe ceremony. The second phase is now underway with the hiring of two Community-School Liaison Workers. Nikita Bull will be working with students and families from Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Shelly Quinney will be working with students and families from Frog Lake First Nation. In addition to his role as cultural advisor, Mr. Cardinal will also work with students and families from Saddle Lake First Nation. Trustees passed a motion approving a third phase which will involve the establishment of an elders advisory council with representation from Frog Lake, Kehewin, Saddle Lake, and Whitefish Lake First Nations. This plan is in the early planning stages and more details will be released shortly.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) Outbreak Management: Under the Health Act, schools in the province are required to monitor absenteeism rates in their schools. If there is an absentee rate of more than 10%, a school must notify Alberta Health Services (AHS), and they will conduct an investigation. If the symptoms among all the absent students in a school are similar, AHS will declare an outbreak and may require specific health restrictions in that school.



Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA): The local ATA executive accepted an invitation from Board Chair Starosielski to attend regular Board meetings during the upcoming school year. Trustees passed a motion to cover one half-day sub per meeting for ATA attendance at regular Board meetings.

Municipal Election 2021: Nominations for Board of Trustee elections close at noon on September 20. Election day is October 18. More information can be found on the [St. Paul Education website](#).

Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Brodziak noted that the Division will recognize September 30 as National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. Students will not attend school on September 30, and Orange Shirt Day activities for students will be held on an alternate day. The PD day that was scheduled for September 27 has been changed to September 30, and staff will take part in professional development related to Truth and Reconciliation on that day.
- School immunization information was sent home with students for parents of students in Grades 7-12. The choice to immunize is a parent choice.
- Through a grant with Alberta Education, Enriched Academy is offering Financial Literacy programming to all grade 10-12 students in Alberta. The program is made up of eight modules covering a variety of financial literacy topics. The information will be reviewed with administrators.

Financial Report

- The Division's projected enrollment for 2020-21 was slightly more than our actual enrollment for 2020-21. Under the new Weighted Moving Average (WMA) formula this means that our funding for this year has been adjusted by -\$101,629.
- Because of COVID, Alberta Education is providing an offset that corrects the -\$101,629 adjustment. For us this is a relatively small amount, but for other districts it is significant.
- Originally it was expected that the adjustment would be part of the 2021-22 year. Alberta Education has now determined that the revenue reduction is to be recorded in 2020-21 and the corresponding offset covid mitigation support is to be recorded in 2021-22.
- The province has recently announced additional funding for home education students wishing to take distance/online education courses. Trustees passed a motion setting a \$650 fee for home education students taking online courses which is to be offset by the provincial support as the division is otherwise unfunded in this regard.

Reports

Alberta School Boards Association Fall Annual General Meeting: Participants will have the option to attend in-person or virtually on November 14-16.

Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association (ACSTA): Work is underway to review and reimagine the structure of the ACSTA. ACSTA will be working with the Council of Catholic School Superintendents to provide guidance to the Department of Education as it relates to Catholic education. A hybrid model of both in person and online options is being proposed for the Annual General Meeting.