

May 3, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The third wave of this pandemic is here and our division, along with our community, is experiencing an increase in cases of COVID-19. You may have noticed an increase of notification letters either from Public Health or your school. Transparency and open communication are important to us, which is why all RETSD schools will inform their communities about each case, even if no action is needed, so that we can keep our communities informed, and safe.

Public Health will send a letter to any positive COVID-19 case associated with a school (students or staff) when there are close contacts that must self-isolate (along with their families). Based on their investigation, Public Health determines who are close contacts. These letters are sent as quickly as possible to ensure close contacts immediately self-isolate and the school community is informed of these cases. These notifications will be on Public Health letterhead.

School divisions in Manitoba may *choose* to send home a letter when they are advised of a positive case where Public Health determines there are no close contacts. RETSD has chosen to alert our communities for every case Public Health advises us on—even if no action is required. Not all divisions will send home a letter of this nature as it is optional. These types of notifications are sent on school letterhead.

We understand the anxieties some may feel when they receive notice of a case connected to their child(ren)'s school. Public Health has continued to advise that the risk of transmission in our buildings is low due to the diligence placed on physical distancing, mask use, and frequent hand washing.

We are committed to the safety of everyone in our schools and division. To mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, Public Health will determine and direct us to shift a school into remote learning. Manitoba Education may also choose to move a school to remote learning if there are staffing concerns due to isolation requirements. At the beginning of the school year, RETSD hired additional full-time itinerant staff to support our schools in the anticipation of the possibility of increased absences or isolation requirements. At this time, we have been able to fill nearly all staff vacancies as they arise. We continue to encourage our staff to stay home if they are ill.

COVID-19 is in our community and our schools are part of the community. Our schools have done a tremendous job keeping the risk of transmission low by following the fundamentals. But we can't do it alone. We again ask our parents to help us keep our schools safe and open for in person learning by keeping students home when ill, or if anyone in your household is ill, following the fundamentals and current Public Health orders and consider getting the first COVID-19 vaccine available to you as eligibility expands.

Sincerely,



Kelly Barkman
Superintendent/CEO