



Office of the Minister

February 8, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Under the very challenging circumstances during the pandemic, I am so grateful to parents, students, teachers, and education partners for their flexibility. We have used additional layers of protections in schools including masking, cohorting, enhanced cleaning and sanitization, and for those that choose to, vaccination, to ensure our schools remained safe. As announced by Premier today, we are taking steps to begin relaxing COVID-19 protocols, including in our schools.

When it comes to our children, there are many important factors to consider when they attend school, including seeing the facial expressions of teachers and classmates, having the ability to be animated and joyful, and considering the mental health impacts that come along with public health measures such as masking. I have been encouraged to see a downward trend in the number of Alberta schools shifted to at home learning over the last few weeks. At the peak of the fifth wave there were 29 schools that were shifted to at home learning, and today only 7 of the over 2,500+ schools in our province remain learning at home. Effective Monday, February 14, 2022 the masking requirements in CMOH 22-2021 will be removed and as such there will be no masking requirements for any students in schools or on school buses. At this time, masking will still be required for adults including teachers, administrators and other school staff including school bus drivers.

As I shared in November, I must reiterate that every child in Alberta is entitled to have access to an education program as per Section 3(1) of the *Education Act*; this provision also existed in Section 8 of the previous *School Act*. To be clear, as of February 14, 2022 school boards will not be empowered by provincial health order or recommendations from the CMOH to require ECS - grade 12 students to be masked to attend school in person or to ride a school bus. At this time, prevention measures including cohorting, as well as enhanced cleaning and sanitization, will remain in school environments.

As Minister of Education, I take very seriously the responsibility of providing access to education for all students in our province. School authorities cannot deny their students access to in person education due to their personal decision to wear or not to wear a mask in schools. Individual family choices need to be respected and students should not be stigmatized for their choice related to masking going forward, similarly to their personal vaccination status.

Thank you to everyone for your continued support in keeping students safe and learning throughout the pandemic.

Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education