PANDEMIC DISEASE OUTBREAK PROTOCOL

Belief

The Division is committed to the health and safety of students, staff, and volunteers. The Division, its employees and volunteers will work cooperatively with the provincial government, Alberta Health Services and local Public Health Units to be able to access services and resources necessary to effectively respond to a pandemic influenza epidemic.

Procedures

1. The Division’s Pandemic Influenza Continuity Plan establishes guidelines and a standard set of response protocols for dealing with pandemic outbreaks.

2. The Superintendent or designate has the authority to make decisions related to pandemic outbreaks. Questions and inquiries related to communicable disease outbreaks, as determined by Alberta Health Services, will be directed to the Superintendent.

3. The Principal shall be aware of the contents of the Pandemic Influenza Continuity Plan and ensure all staff members are aware of the rationale and procedures for responding to pandemic outbreaks.

3.1 The Principal shall follow the guidelines set out in the Pandemic Influenza Continuity Plan when responding to a pandemic event.

4. Staff members are required to report any possible cases, concerns or questions to their Principal, and the Principal is required to report any possible cases, concerns or questions to the Superintendent or designate. This will ensure that any concerns or questions are dealt with in an efficient and informed fashion.

4.1 Under the Public Health Act, it is the responsibility of a school to notify the Medical Officer of Health of any illness noted in epidemic form. Public Health Act, Part 3, Communicable Disease Section 26 states, “A health practitioner, a teacher or a person in charge of an institution who knows of or has reason to suspect the existence of a communicable disease in epidemic form... shall immediately notify the medical officer of health...by the fastest means possible.”

5. The Superintendent or designate shall work with Alberta Health Services in the event of pandemic outbreaks.

6. The Alberta Health Services contact person and the Superintendent or designate will work together to develop a monitoring and reporting system for pandemic disease outbreaks.
7. The Superintendent or designate will monitor the rapidly changing updates about communicable disease outbreaks. Alberta Health Services will provide useful and current information about communicable disease outbreaks.

8. Parents/guardians and staff will be provided with relevant and appropriate information regarding communicable disease outbreaks within the Division. Parents will be notified by school newsletter and/or electronic communication as to further sites for accessing information.

8.1 Alberta Health Services will be consulted prior to parents and staff receiving Division communication about communicable diseases. Parents and staff will be informed about any joint monitoring and reporting system put in place by the Division and Alberta Health Services when a communicable disease outbreak threat exists.

9. Nonessential travel will be cancelled to affected areas of communicable disease outbreaks. Before any field trips are approved, a review of communicable disease outbreak conditions for the area must be completed. A review of the status of any outbreak at the destination shall also be done just prior to departure.

10. For staff, students or visitors coming to Division schools from elsewhere, the current health and communicable disease outbreak information about the area will be reviewed to determine if it is an affected area. This will include staff or students returning from field trips or personal holidays; exchange or international students or professionals; and student or staff transferring to the Division from another jurisdiction.

10.1 School principals will inform the Superintendent or designate about students or visitors arriving from these areas. All incoming visits should be cleared through the Superintendent.

10.2 For staff or students coming to the Division from an affected area or known to have been exposed to a communicable disease outbreak, it is important for school staff and parents to monitor the student’s health for ten (10) days following their presence in the affected area. However, according to Alberta Health Services, these students may continue to attend school unless they develop symptoms.

10.3 If a student or staff member who has been to an affected area or exposed to a communicable disease outbreak develops any of the symptoms of the disease, staff will ensure that the individual remains where he or she is and report the suspected case immediately to the local Public Health Unit.

Reference: Alberta Public Health Act, Part 3, Communicable Diseases Section 26
Alberta Public Health Act Communicable Diseases Regulation 238/1985