



March 13, 2020
2:30 p.m.

The Province of Manitoba has announced that it will suspend all classes in public schools effective March 23 for three weeks. More information will be posted here as it comes available. The information below remains in effect until the closure on March 23.

March 13, 2020
10 a.m.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Over the past two days, the Deputy Minister and Chief Medical Officer (CMO) have provided some additional direction to school divisions regarding containment of COVID 19. Here are the key messages we have received:

- There are no plans currently in place to close schools.
- School divisions are taking direction from health professionals at Manitoba Health – any decision to close schools will be at the direction of Manitoba Health.
- The CMO asked us to reinforce the following key points:
 - Social distancing – minimizing prolonged (10-minute threshold) close contact (within two metres) with other individuals; keep group work to less than ten minutes.
 - Reducing large group/crowded activities.
 - Encourage staff and students to stay home if symptomatic for the flu or the common cold.
 - Regular and proper handwashing for ALL students and staff.
 - If and when students or staff return to school after a short absence or trip, and are asymptomatic, they are to be welcomed back into the school setting. Only those people who are symptomatic should be referred to the four virus testing sites. For more information on self-isolation and self-monitoring, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/factsheets/coronavirus_selfisolation.pdf.
 - If any member of the family is showing symptoms, MB Health is recommending that ALL members of the household self-quarantine.

These messages are consistent with what we have been seeing in the media and on the MB Government website.

Winnipeg School Division is taking measures to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in our schools and the larger community. Our schools will remain open until we have direction to close any or all of them from MB Health and MB Education. The WSD Pandemic Planning Committee and Senior Administration has reviewed and updated the WSD Pandemic Plan and we are making some immediate changes to how we do business:

Managing Illness

- Our schools must consider not only the health of the individual student, but also the health of other students and staff. We have shared the “Managing Illness” information sheet with all parents/guardians.
- If your child shows signs of illness while at school, our schools have identified a safe, comfortable isolation space for your child to stay in while waiting for you to pick them up. The space will be cleaned rigorously after each use.
- All employees and students who show flu-like symptoms are asked not to report to work or school and take the advice provided by MB Health including quarantine in residence.

Cleaning

- Custodial Services has implemented a rigorous cleaning protocol in all of our schools and buildings.
- Building managers/principals and head custodians are monitoring and recording compliance of the rigorous cleaning in each building.
- Budget has been made available to schools to purchase additional supplies for the extra cleaning supplies required.

Events

- Schools are cancelling all school assemblies, concerts, field trips and sporting events until further notice.
- For a full list of events please visit winnipeg.sd.ca/parents/pandemic. We will be posting on this site as information is made available.

Permits

- All permits with the exception of daycares, Before/Noon/After school care and lunch programs, have been cancelled until April 13 at which time the situation will be reassessed.

Social Distancing

- Messages regarding physical contact, cough and sneeze etiquette, hand washing, the use of sanitizers and disinfectant wipes are being widely shared and circulated.
- WSD schools are remaining open until we are advised to do otherwise, however, essential services are being reviewed and options assessed.
- Principals are working with students who are on work experience or providing any in-home volunteer services to cancel these activities until further notice.

Meetings

- Keeping in mind the need for social distancing, all planned meetings in the division are being assessed as to whether they can be postponed, cancelled or done by conference call.

Travel

- All division-related travel is suspended for staff and students where possible.
- We encourage everyone to follow MB Health’s recommendation to eliminate non-essential travel. Our concern is that you may find yourself in a lockdown region with limited or no access to medical care and incurring the cost of extended stays.

Communications

- We urge all staff and our school communities to follow all health and safety protocols.
- We will update the winnipegssd.ca/parents/pandemic planning page with new information as it is available.
- Communication to parents/guardians will continue to be sent through the schools using your normal method of distribution.

We recognize this is a lot of information to process and, while we are taking proactive and preventative measures within WSD, we are committed to providing quality education to our students while meeting this current challenge.

Thank you to all staff for your continued efforts to keep our schools and work-spaces as safe and healthy as possible. We will do our best to keep you informed as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in our province.

Sincerely,

Pauline Clarke, Chief Superintendent and CEO

Chris Broughton, Chair, WSD Board of Trustees