



# Pandemic Response

Update 1 – September 1, 2009

Much planning has gone into preparing for a successful 2009/10 school year. We look forward to an excellent year of teaching and learning for the 10,000 students in Red Deer Public Schools.

Some of our planning as a jurisdiction has included responding to the influenza pandemic and how we can best prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus. We have been working closely with health and other government officials in developing a response plan. The potential impact of a pandemic could be far reaching and as such, information will be widely available on prevention and response strategies.

Our Pandemic Response Plan, other references and resources, as well as updates as they come available, will be available at: [www.rdpsd.ab.ca/pandemic](http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/pandemic)

## ***Prevention will be the key***

Our planning has included how we can work together to prevent the spread of the influenza virus. In the event of a pandemic influenza, **prevention will play an important role in minimizing its impact.**

Prevention strategies we all need to follow include:

- **Hand washing** and sanitizing will be essential. Hands should be washed frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water especially after coughing or sneezing, before eating and after using the washroom. The use of hand sanitizers is also effective in minimizing the spread of the virus.
- **Cough etiquette** includes covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
- In the event of an influenza like illness, people who are **sick should stay home** from school and stay away from others until they're better. It will be important to monitor the health of children for influenza like illness and ensure they do not come to school to spread this to others. **Symptoms** include fever, cough, muscle aches, lethargy and lack of appetite.
- Do not touch your **eyes, nose or mouth** after shaking hands or touching surfaces that may harbour influenza and other viruses. **Keep common surfaces clean** and disinfected.
- Stay at least two metres (six feet) away from people who are experiencing influenza-like symptoms. This is called **social distancing** and includes staying away from crowds when influenza is circulating in the community.

While schools will be regularly reviewing and taking action on these strategies, it is **also important that parents support and encourage these prevention strategies with their children.**

## ***A Balanced Approach to Pandemic:***

Red Deer Public Schools has developed a comprehensive plan in response to the current pandemic. Our plan looks to balance preventing the spread of the influenza virus while minimizing disruptions and supporting learning.

## ***Other Suggestions:***

- Plan in advance for **childcare** at home if your child gets sick or school is dismissed.
- Plan to **monitor the health** of your children for symptoms of influenza like illness which include: fever, cough, muscle aches, lethargy and lack of appetite.
- Be sure that our schools have up-to-date **contact information** for your family.

## ***Vaccination Programs:***

Help prevent infection with pandemic influenza by getting the vaccine that is anticipated to be available to the public in **November 2009**. More information will be available from Alberta Health Services.

## ***Pandemic Websites:***

The Alberta Health and Wellness website provides answers to common questions about the Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Virus:

<http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-H1N1-questions.html>

## ***Keep up to date:***

We encourage families to subscribe to our ListServ at: <http://elink.rdpsd.ab.ca/listserv.htm> which will e-mail important information to parents, including pandemic updates, with an option of receiving regular news from your school as well.

