

January 22, 2021

Dear Prairie Spirit families:

This school year has already been extraordinary as we continue to focus on learning while adapting to COVID guidelines and safety protocols. The freezing rain, snowstorm and power outages last week added further complexity to school operations. Thank you for your flexibility in accommodating our move to learning from home (Level 4 in the provincial [Safe Schools Plan](#)) on Thursday, January 14.

The decision to move to Level 4 was made as a result of the extreme weather and because we could not ensure COVID safety protocols and guidelines (for example, keeping cohorts separate and not relying on in-town billets) under the unpredictable circumstances.

COVID processes in Prairie Spirit

I would like to provide some information regarding COVID cases in Prairie Spirit schools to January 15. Since the beginning of September, we have had 39 incidents in schools where a positive COVID case was identified as a public health concern. There has been a case of COVID-19 in 21 of Prairie Spirit's 47 schools.

From September to mid-November, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) conducted specific contact tracing for students in schools. With the increasing COVID cases, the SHA no longer has the capacity to complete contact tracing in a timely manner. As a result, the SHA now directs an entire class to self-isolate if there is a case in the classroom in order to mitigate the risk of the virus spreading.

In many situations, a school will first learn of a positive case in a class directly from a parent, student or staff member. When the school receives that information **before** receiving direction from the SHA, the Division will direct the class to move temporarily to learning from home as a strategy to keep students and staff safe while awaiting SHA direction.

If it is determined that the case poses a public health concern (i.e. the individual attended school while communicable), the SHA will provide a classroom letter with specific directions for self-isolation. The school sends this letter out to the class once it is provided by the SHA.

Once we receive this confirmation from the SHA, the entire school community will be informed of the case. In every situation, our commitment is to ensure the safety of students and staff and to inform our families while still protecting the privacy of individuals. An overview of this process is presented in an [infographic](#) posted on the Division's homepage and included at the end of this letter.

Public Health's contact tracing staff work 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Prairie Spirit's COVID Response Team is actively responding to information about COVID cases following the same schedule. Therefore, a class may be informed of a move to online learning/self-isolation during the day, in the evening or over the weekend.

Prairie Spirit schools

Warman High School (WHS) and Martensville High School (MHS) are both at Level 3 in the provincial [Safe Schools Plan](#), which means the school capacity is reduced with a hybrid approach to learning (at home and at school). All other Prairie Spirit schools remain at Level 2 in the provincial Safe Schools Plan, which requires a variety of layers of protection, including student cohorts, hand hygiene and mask wearing for all students in school and on buses.

Prairie Spirit's online school – Spirit eLearning – was expanded this fall to accommodate students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. This new school, with over 280 students, provides innovative and responsive online instruction to students.

Safe schools planning

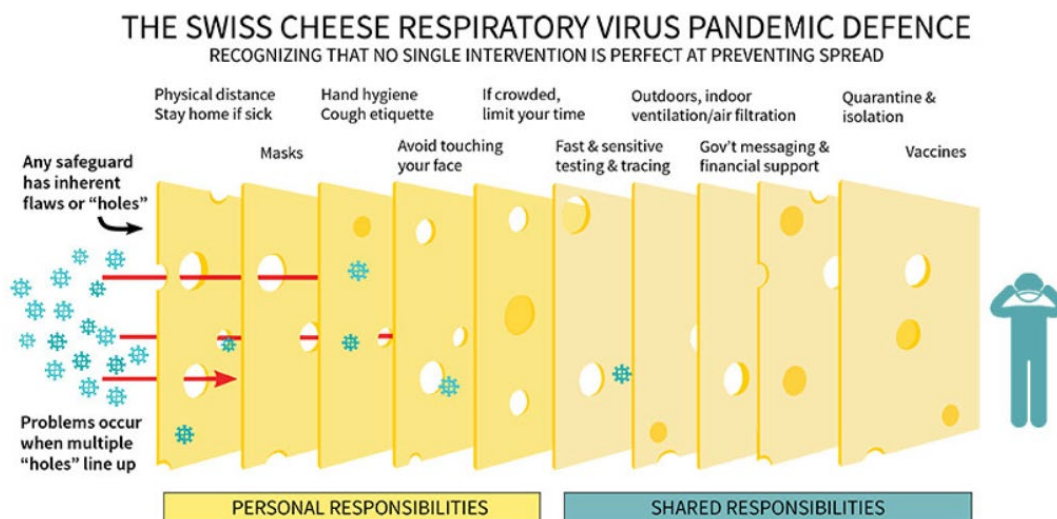
Dr. Shahab, the province's Chief Medical Health Officer, has indicated that the education sector should expect significant restrictions through to the end of the school year in June. Although this is disappointing news, it is helpful to have this information well in advance of high school graduations. Dr. Shahab has asked school divisions to plan alternate graduations again this year, either outdoor or virtual. We will provide an update if there is a change to this direction; in the meantime, we are asking our schools to plan for graduation with current COVID restrictions in mind, including large public gatherings.

Upcoming parent open houses or parent meetings will be planned as virtual events for the rest of the year. This includes events like Kindergarten orientation or parent/teacher conferences.

Dr. Shahab has shared the vaccine delivery [plan](#) with the education sector. We are hopeful that the vaccination plan will help us prepare for a more normal return to school this fall.

Our Prairie Spirit team is committed to creating a learning and working environment that is as safe as possible for students and staff. Thank you for assisting your child in following the layers of protection that are required in our schools. Thank you for keeping your child at home if they have symptoms. This is a critical piece in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.

Layers of protection




Our local Medical Health Officer has shared this graphic with the message that when we combine all protective measures at the same time, we have greater success in protecting ourselves and others.

Thank you for supporting your child's teachers and school staff as they continue to focus on learning, with many other pressures this year. We are thankful that we get to partner with our families and communities as we focus on learning in safe and caring places.

We will continue to provide regular updates to our families.

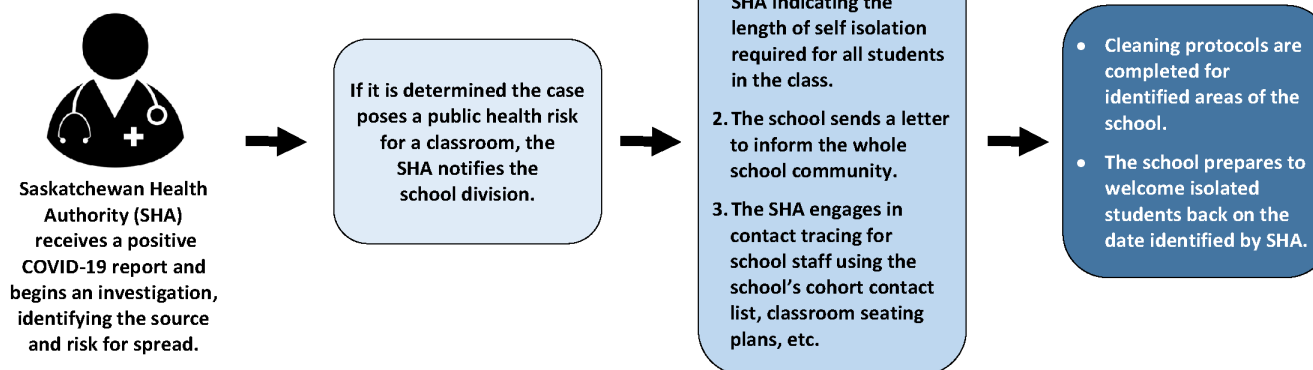
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lori Jeschke', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lori Jeschke
Director of Education

PRAIRIE SPIRIT SCHOOL DIVISION

What happens if an individual in my child's school tests positive for COVID-19?



Please note: A parent, student or staff member may choose to inform their school administration of a positive COVID result. When the school receives that information **before** receiving direction from the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), the class will temporarily move to online learning as a strategy to keep students and staff safe and await SHA direction.

Layers of protection in Prairie Spirit schools

