

March 13, 2020 (6:00 p.m.) – With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been directed by the Alberta government to stay the course. **Schools will remain open.** While schools will stay open, we will take practical and necessary steps to protect the health and safety of our school communities.

Right now, we are not aware of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Medicine Hat Region.

During a press conference today, the medical officer of health stated that the World Health Organization has advised against school closures at this time. Schools, daycares and post secondary institutions will remain open. We will continue to take our guidance and direction from the Medical Officer of Health (MOH); as it is paramount that we keep students and staff as safe as possible in our schools. We will continue to enforce the public gathering restrictions and limiting whole school activities laid out yesterday by the MOH. In addition, we will receive best practice advice from the MOH in a teleconference tomorrow and will share that directive with staff and families.

We recognize that there are questions among families and staff surrounding school closure. While the MOH is not recommending school closure at this time, we are actively planning for the eventuality that school closure is ordered. It is prudent for families to consider how they might respond if the MOH changes direction. We will attempt to provide advance notice to families, however with the rapid pace of the pandemic response this may not be possible. Families should consider making a plan for childcare in the event that schools close.

This is a rapidly changing situation and we appreciate the patience and trust of our school communities as we navigate this pandemic. We will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to take our direction from the MOH.

Schools will be open Monday March 16, 2020.

At any point, please visit the mhpsd.ca website, as this web page will be updated as significant changes occur 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

Be Well, Mark Davidson, Superintendent of Schools

Medicine Hat Public School Division