



September 28, 2021

Honourable Adriana LaGrange

Minister of Education

228 Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Honourable Jason Copping

Minister of Health

Office of the Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Via email: education.minister@gov.ab.ca
health.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister LaGrange and Minister Copping;

As President of the Alberta School Council's Association (ASCA), the provincial Association representing parents on over 1100 legislated school councils in public, separate, and charter schools across Alberta, I am writing to you to formally request that the school plan for the 2021/22 year, and the provincial COVID-19 mitigation strategies, be adjusted to reflect that we are not actually living endemically with this virus and that we are currently in a wave that is highly contagious and collapsing our healthcare system.

I believe justification for formally requesting adjustments to the 2021/22 school year plan, and provincial health protocols, includes but is not limited to:

- ❖ Multiple schools across Alberta have moved to online learning because of the number of COVID-19 positive cases in their school communities;
- ❖ classroom sizes have not reduced, resulting in thousands of students still not able to physically distance from their peers;
- ❖ many classrooms cannot easily support enhanced ventilation practices;
- ❖ the significantly delayed, and not universal, masking mandate undeniably contributed to the increase of positive cases of COVID-19 in school-aged children (https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7039e3.htm?s_cid=mm7039e3_w);
- ❖ the permissive language on page 3 of 4 in the [Health Daily Checklist](#) implying that unvaccinated close contacts of COVID-19 positive individuals **are not required to isolate** has created space for parents to send siblings of students/close contacts testing positive for COVID-19 to school, thereby furthering in-school transmission jeopardizing the health and safety of all those with whom they come in contact (students, staff, and by extension the families of students and staff), and creating compliance complications for school administrators.

Screening Questions for Children under 18:

1.	<p>Has your child been a household contact of a case² of COVID-19 in the last 14 days?</p> <p><i>A household contact: a person who lives in the same residence as the case OR who has been in frequent, long-duration, close-range interaction with a case of COVID-19. For example, siblings, someone who slept over, or someone who provided direct physical care to the child.</i></p>	YES	NO
<p>If the answer is “YES” AND they are NOT fully immunized⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child should stay home and NOT attend school, childcare and/or other activities for 14 days from the last day of exposure and monitor for symptoms. If your child has symptoms, proceed to question 2. 			

ASCA calls upon the Ministers of Education and Health, and their respective Ministries, to keep schools safe and functioning during this fourth and potentially deadliest wave of this pandemic, to adjust the 2021/22 school year plan and provincial COVID-19 mitigation strategies to reflect the following:

- ❖ Parents are entitled to know if their child(ren) has been exposed to (is a close contact of) a positive of COVID-19 while in school;
- ❖ Parents are entitled to know the number of positive COVID-19 cases in the school(s) their child(ren) attend(s);
- ❖ Albertans are entitled to know, reported by the Ministers of Education and/or Health, the numbers of positive COVID-19 cases in schools, the numbers of school experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks, and the numbers of children hospitalized for COVID-19 related causes;
- ❖ The provision of additional resources, such as rapid testing kits, and options to improve classroom ventilation and air filtration, at no cost to all schools and school divisions;
- ❖ Mandatory testing for symptomatic individuals, regardless of vaccination status;
- ❖ The reinstatement of robust, rapid, contact tracing, implemented, and supported entirely by the provincial government;
- ❖ Mandatory isolation for unvaccinated close contacts of individuals testing positive for COVID-19;
- ❖ Mandatory masking for all students, staff, and visitors in all school settings where appropriate physical distancing cannot be maintained.

As a province, Alberta’s experience has been that community spread and school cases are intertwined and feed each other. More must be done to reduce community cases, so that our healthcare system does not collapse and so that our schools can remain open and safe for students. The mitigation and prevention strategies should not be the responsibilities of teachers, principals, superintendents, or board of trustees to dictate; these fall squarely within the responsibilities of Alberta’s Education and Health Ministries.

Furthermore, ASCA calls upon the Minister of Education to recognize Alberta's students and teachers are entering a third grade and year of interrupted learning, with the potential for significantly impacting student learning success. Given this, ASCA questions the merits of mandatory standardized testing, especially diploma exams, in relation to what is best for Alberta's students.

Finally, with multiple years of impacted learning and teaching, and with a draft curriculum minimally piloted along with the considerable public outcry for fundamental adjustment, ASCA calls upon the Minister of Education to halt the implementation of the new draft K-6 curriculum in the 2022-2023 school year.

This fourth and most devastating wave of COVID-19 in Alberta is not a wave caused only by citizens of Alberta who remain unvaccinated. This is a wave caused by mismanagement and misinformation. It is not only straining our public services such as healthcare and education; it is costing Albertans their lives.

This crisis requires courageous leadership. We are looking to you, Minister LaGrange, and Minister Copping, to *"do the right things, for the right reasons"* because our children deserve equitable access to quality education in healthy and safe learning environments.

Sincerely,



Brandi Rai
President,
Alberta School Councils' Association

Cc via email: Premier Jason Kenney; DM Education Andre Tremblay; CoS Education - Nicole Williams; Ministerial Assistant Education – Erin Allen; CoS Health - Christopher Thresher; ASCA Vice President Shelley Odishaw, ASCA ED Wendy Keiver