

March 17, 2020

Dear St. Martin's Parents & Guardians,

We would like to thank everyone for your patience and understanding as we deal with this unprecedented situation. The landscape continues to rapidly evolve, and information will be shared when it becomes available and as decisions are made. We know you have many questions, and we ask that you give us time to provide you with an accurate and considered response.

As of March 17, Alberta Government [declared a state of emergency](#). The decision came two days after the provincial government cancelled all classes indefinitely across Alberta. All schools were closed to students starting March 16. All childcare centres and all other programming that takes place inside Elk Island Catholic Schools is also closed. Yellow school buses are also cancelled.

We know this decision has a significant impact on families, students and the larger community, but there's nothing more important than the health and safety and well-being of our students, families and staff. We're asking for your cooperation and understanding as we navigate this uncharted situation, together.

### [STUDENTS' BELONGINGS](#)

Families are able to pick up students' belongings starting Wednesday and Thursday (please check the school website for Schedule). This is a school-based decision. Pick-up times will be staggered to ensure we're supporting safe social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### [COMMUNICATION & PLANNING](#)

We recognize that you may want to connect with your child's teacher. Please note that school administration and teachers are working together on a plan to support your child's learning during this period of class postponement and are unable to meet for one on one conversations at this time.

Our school division is spending this week (March 16-20) planning and preparing to best address student academics, as well as wellness through an online platform. Your Classroom teacher will connect with you early next week once a plan has been implemented.

### **Our child is very anxious about COVID-19. How can we support them?**

COVID-19 can make students (and families) anxious. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss with children their fears and explain how students may reduce anxiety by having some control in dealing with COVID-19, such as understanding COVID-19, hand washing, etc. You may find the resource [Talking to Children about Coronavirus](#) from the National Association of School Psychologists a helpful tool.

Please note the Mental Health Help Line is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you. Please call 1-877-303-2642.

We would like to thank you for your continued support.

May God continue to bless you and your families. Please stay healthy.

St. Martin's School Team