



Eastern School District

Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan Eastern School District

October 2009

Introduction

Public health officials from around the world warn that an influenza pandemic is overdue. These warnings have been underscored by the spread of the avian (bird flu) influenza in Southeast Asia, the outbreak of H1N1 (swine flu) and the resulting toll on human life. Increasingly, health officials are talking about the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus and an impending 2nd wave.

Given the potential for an increased influenza pandemic occurrence on PEI and the impact it could have, it is important for every organization to prepare a response plan. The Eastern School District recognizes the need and has created an Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan.

Key Messages

1. The Eastern School District is prepared for a pandemic. Our plan is open to staff, parents, students and the community for their information and feedback.
2. During a pandemic, the Eastern School District will follow the advice and guidance of provincial public health officials who have the expertise to assess the level of health risk posed by a specific situation.
3. Our priority during a pandemic is the health and safety of students and staff and our intent is to keep schools open as long as it is safe to do so. The essential services of classroom instruction, bus transportation and property maintenance and cleaning will be the primary focus. Non-essential services will be halted to focus on providing the most necessary services to our community.

General Information

The health and safety of staff and students is of primary importance and will be closely monitored. If health or safety becomes a concern, the District Leadership Team will consider recommending the closure of specific sites. Special arrangements may be necessary for medically-at-risk students and staff as soon as the pandemic is declared in Prince Edward Island. It is also possible that the provincial Chief Health Officer may make recommendations regarding the closure of individual schools or all schools. In terms of preparing for the impact of the 2nd wave of the pandemic, it has been projected that up to 35% of the workforce may be absent due to the effects of the virus on individuals and families. **It should be noted that while the schools are open during a declared pandemic, normal program expectations and service levels may not be met.**

Operations

Organizational Structure

When an actionable level of the pandemic is declared in PEI, the following actions will be implemented once the District receives official notice from the Chief Health Officer (or designate):

1. The District Leadership Team will be responsible for directing the system on a day-to-day basis.
2. Other district personnel will participate as resource persons and make recommendations to the District Leadership Team.
3. This group called the Pandemic Management Committee shall consist of the following personnel:
 - all members of the District Leadership Team
 - ▶ the Superintendent of Schools
 - ▶ the Director of School Development
 - ▶ the Director of Corporate Services
 - ▶ the Director of Curriculum Development
 - ▶ the Director of Student Services
 - ▶ the Leader of School Development
 - ▶ the Manager of Human Resources
 - ▶ the Manager of Policy and Planning
 - ▶ the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent
 - Information Systems Officer
 - Property Services Manager

Role of the Pandemic Management Committee

1. To monitor and direct the overall operation of the system
2. To receive updates and reports from schools and departments.
3. To make decisions regarding the operation of the District.
4. To review information items and prepare news releases for parents, community, and media groups.
5. To report to the Trustees on the operation of the system
6. To recommend the closing of any school(s) due to excessive absenteeism

Operational Strategies

1. By 11:00 am each day, the Superintendent's Office shall receive updated attendance reports about all schools and departments.
2. By 11:30 the District will report above normal absentee levels related to ILI to the Chief Health Officer.

3. From 11:00 – 12:30 pm each day, the Pandemic Management Committee will review the data that has been received and will develop operational recommendations. Some members of the team should be available at all times to respond to an emergency situation.
4. In the event of an emergency situation arising, the Pandemic Management Committee will assess the situation, and make decisions regarding requests for assistance and recommend a course of action.
5. The Superintendent of Education or designate must always be available to respond to an emergency situation.
6. The Pandemic Management Committee will update the Trustees by email as necessary.
7. All requests by the media will be referred to and received by the Superintendent of Education. Schools will be closed to all media.
8. All communication regarding the pandemic and the District's response will be provided by the Superintendent of Education.
9. Before making any decisions or taking any significant action, the Pandemic Management Committee will undertake appropriate consultation so issues will be handled in a consistent manner in the system.

Operational Modifications

It is the District's intent to conduct affairs in accord with existing policies and operating procedures; however, once an actionable level of the pandemic is declared in PEI by Public Health, an assessment of operational activities will occur. This assessment may result in the following, pending direction from the Pandemic Management Committee:

1. After Hours School Permits – existing/new permits for school facility use will be suspended/not issued
2. Board Meetings – Board meetings will be held as required and may be held electronically
3. Co-op Placements – co-op placements will be monitored on a regular basis. If the school is closed due to H1N1 illness, students will not report to their workplace.
4. Computer Support – computer support is a provincial responsibility and staff will be governed by the provincial pandemic plan. However, district generated e-communications providing pandemic information to be posted on the website, sent to schools and to the media, will be given the highest priority.
5. Continuing Education – night school and summer school programs will be suspended
6. Courier – will attempt to operate as usual.
7. Custodial Services – frequency of services may be altered due to staffing levels and to focus on infection control

8. Exams, class assignments, tests - these assessments will continue as appropriate. Schools will exercise flexibility and compassion for those students dealing with personal/family illness.
9. Extracurricular Activities – extracurricular activities will be suspended
10. Field Trips/Excursions – there will be a moratorium on field trips/excursions
11. Food Programs – Breakfast programs, pizza days and other school based food programs will be suspended
12. Garbage Collection – the normal process of garbage collection will be maintained
13. Home Tutoring – district -sponsored home tutoring and visitations will be suspended
14. Instruction/Evaluation/Reporting – where possible, the regular instructional program and those activities related to instruction, evaluation and reporting will continue
15. Maintenance – the normal procedure will continue with concentration on emergency calls
16. Meetings – meetings that take administrators or other staff out of school will either be postponed or held by teleconference
17. School Closures due to High Absentee Rates - if a school is closed because of high absentee rates among students due to H1N1 illness, instructional staff and administrative assistants are expected to work but they may choose the most appropriate location to carry on their work. Please advise the school administrator of work location. Custodial staff will be required to work at their regular job site.
18. Substitute Staff – the normal replacement procedure will continue for all staff. (teachers, administrative assistants, EAs, bus drivers, custodians)
19. Principals experiencing high absentee rates among staff members will explore options for reorganizing staff to keep the building open. If this does not appear to be possible principals should call their contact person in School Development.
20. Professional Development Activities – all professional development and attendance at district conferences will be postponed . (Provincial PD will be determined by the appropriate provincial department)
21. School Councils/Home and School – School Council meetings at the school or district level will be postponed. Principals will have a plan for on-going communication with the Chair of the School Council and Home and School.
22. Security of Facilities – while schools are open, security will continue in accordance with current procedures . If a building is closed because of high absentee rates, the holiday/weekend security procedures will be in effect.

23. Student Transportation – subject to daily review, buses will maintain regular schedules while schools are open. Absenteeism of bus drivers may jeopardize the district's ability to provide adequate level of service. If substitute drivers are unavailable, parents may choose to transport their children to school.
24. Supply Orders – the normal process for ordering supplies will be maintained
25. Volunteers – the practice of having volunteers in schools will be suspended

Communication

Planning for timely, proactive and sufficient communication with staff, students, parents, and trustees is a vital component of our pandemic planning initiative. The Eastern School District recognizes that *nothing is more important to parents than the well-being of their children*. Our goal is to serve our families to the best of our ability, in environments that are supportive of their health and well-being.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide our decision-making:

- * Decisions about closing schools for health reasons will be made by the Chief Health Officer as outlined in provincial legislation.
- * Decisions about closing schools due to safety concerns (e.g. an inability to provide adequate supervision due to staff absence) will be made by the Superintendent of Education in consultation with the school principal.
- * We make all our decisions based on available information and with the best interests of students in mind. We recognize that public opinion on our actions will vary; however, our primary communication goal is to ensure our stakeholders are informed about our plan and contingency actions.

Stage	Characteristic	Key Actions and response	Communication Response
1. Inter-Pandemic Phase	No new influenza subtypes detected in humans	Preparedness - Refine Pandemic Response Plan - Train Staff	Ensure stakeholders are aware of potential pandemic and that planning is underway to mitigate impact
2. Pandemic declared in another Country	Sustained human-to-human transmission outside Canada	Preparedness - Ensure staff are aware of roles and responsibilities - Ensure physical resources are available (sanitizers, sufficient cleaning supplies)	-Inform stakeholders that ESD is prepared should pandemic spread to Canada/ PEI/ESD area - Internal stakeholders are aware that a plan exists and understand their respective roles
3. Pandemic declared in Canada	Sustained human-to-human transmission in Canada	Preparedness - Consult with provincial Health Officials - Implement recommendations - Prepare and post updates to website	-Reinforce message to stakeholders that we have a plan and are working with our provincial Health Officials. - Stakeholders are aware of where more information can be found.
4. High incidence level declared in PEI	Sustained human-to-human transmission in PEI	Preparedness - Consult with provincial Health Officials - Adjust service levels as recommended by Health Officials - Post updates to website regarding program and service changes	-Inform stakeholders that the ESD is well prepared to respond to the pandemic. - District Officials are taking direction from provincial Health Officials.
5. High incidence level Declared in ESD catchment area	Sustained human-to-human transmission in District	Response - Consult regularly with provincial Health Officials and implement recommendations - Adjust service levels to maintain safe and supportive environment - Regular updates regarding services and programs are posted to the website	-Ensure stakeholders know ESD is working with provincial Health Officials and will adjust service levels as deemed necessary. - Ensure stakeholders are aware of where to find up-to-date information
6. Post-Pandemic	Return to Inter-Pandemic Phase	Recovery - Restore pre-pandemic service levels - Receive feedback about Pandemic Response Plan - Prepare and implement recommendations to improve service delivery - Update website	-Ensure stakeholders are aware of restoration of service levels. - Update stakeholders on any revisions to Pandemic Response Plan