

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 12, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Pandemic Influenza Planning

ORIGINATOR: R. MacNeil, Executive Director

RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

The following report provides information about pandemic influenza and the district's planning and preparedness initiatives currently underway in collaboration with local government authorities.

Background:

The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that globally, society is at serious risk of a pandemic influenza outbreak occurring at any time. Avian influenza outbreaks in Asia, Africa and Europe have alerted the WHO to the potential of this being the start of a pandemic influenza. In this pre-pandemic phase, WHO is advising to plan for the worst-case scenario.

Historically, outbreaks of pandemic influenza are known to occur three to four times a century and can take place in any season. It is anticipated that between 25 and 35 percent of Canadians will become ill with the influenza. Within Alberta, this percentage equates to 500,000 to 1.3 million Albertans falling ill, and within this group 5,600 to 13,000 requiring hospitalization. A pandemic influenza differs from annual influenza outbreaks in the following ways:

- i. It is associated with a higher incidence and severity of illness and risk of death. Between 25-35 percent of the population will be affected.
- ii. All age groups may be at risk for infection and a vaccine may not be available or will be in short supply.
- iii. Public and private employers including schools will likely experience significant disruption in staffing and operations. Basic services including transportation, power, sanitation and health care may also be interrupted.

Public Health Canada, Alberta Health & Wellness, Emergency Management Alberta, and Capital Health are in the process of developing plans and strategies for dealing with pandemic influenza. The primary goal of these organizations is to reduce the number of

influenza cases and minimize disruptions to daily life by providing access to appropriate prevention, care and treatment.

At this point, it is uncertain what level of support the federal, provincial and municipal governments will be able to provide to school boards. Consequently, all public and private entities are being advised during this pre-pandemic phase to plan for the pandemic outbreak. This includes educating their stakeholders on preventative strategies and planning for business continuity given that up to 25 to 35 percent of staff are expected to be absent from the workforce.

Edmonton Public Schools is actively working with local government and other school districts to meet this challenge. Over the next six-eight months, the Capital Region will be developing a pandemic response plan with the assistance of its school communities. School boards have been advised that Capital Health working with the City of Edmonton will be the lead agency responsible during an infectious disease emergency. Capital Health will not recommend school closure unless school attendance is identified with the spread of influenza in its population.

District Pandemic Influenza Planning

Since February 2006, the district has been participating with other Capital Region school districts in pandemic planning meetings hosted by Capital Health. In March 2006, a district Pandemic Coordinating Team (PCT) was created to facilitate the development and implementation of a district pandemic influenza plan. A budget of \$20,000 has been allocated by the district to support pandemic planning and preparation activities.

The two priorities of the PCT team are:

1. To develop a pandemic preparedness plan that aligns with the district's current emergency preparedness structure and implementation framework. The *District Emergency Preparedness Support Team*¹ which includes representation from principals and key central services administrators will be consulted and utilized as necessary for planning and executing various components of the preparedness plan.
2. To maintain stakeholder confidence through pandemic education and collaboration with Capital Health, Alberta Education and all levels of government.

¹ Presently coordinated by Facilities Services and consists of representation from Leadership, Planning, Communications, Consulting Services, General Counsel, Transportation Maintenance, IT, EAP, OHS and Finance.

A draft district pandemic influenza plan (Appendix I) was completed in August 2006. The plan outlines steps to address interagency coordination, and administrative, operational and communication needs before during and following a pandemic outbreak. The plan objectives are:

1. To educate and prepare Edmonton Public Schools staff, students and school communities on the pandemic influenza and promote awareness and practice of prevention and infection control measures.
2. To develop a pandemic preparedness response and recovery plan that would allow for core district operational and educational activities to be sustained over several weeks.
3. To support the implementation of Capital Health's pandemic influenza emergency plan. This role includes initiating internal steps to promote infection control measures in district schools (e.g. hand washing etc.); minimizing societal disruption by keeping schools operational; health surveillance (e.g. providing data on absenteeism rates) and educating staff and students on personal preparedness strategies at home and work to minimize panic and the risk of flu transmission.

Next Steps

It is anticipated that the phase one of the plan will take approximately six to eight months to implement utilizing the advice and assistance of stakeholders across the district and Capital Region. Schools and central services departments will receive a district Pandemic Information Kit by October 1st 2006. The kit will include, frequently asked questions, posters for hand washing and controlling the spread of illness, links to sources of pandemic information and a school planning checklist. The PCT will also be preparing camera ready materials for school newsletters and templates for key messages, parent letters, and press releases applicable to before, during and after a pandemic outbreak.

Schools present many special challenges in containing communicable disease outbreaks. It is critical that Edmonton Public Schools move quickly in developing a comprehensive pandemic response plan to support the goal of minimizing serious illness and district and societal disruption. By acting now, the plan can be tested, updated, and refined to ensure Edmonton Public Schools preparedness prior to an outbreak. The plan will increase the district's self-reliance during the pandemic phase and ensure continuity of critical operations leaving government and health care organizations to address the distribution of vaccinations and care for the sick and elderly.

RMacN:lj

Appendix I: Draft District Pandemic Influenza Plan

Draft District Pandemic Influenza Plan Phase One – Planning and Preparedness

A. Interagency Coordination

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Create communication linkages with the authority/individual(s) responsible for declaring a public health emergency at the provincial and municipal level.	PCT Chairs Supt's Office	Completed Feb 2006
2	Create linkage with primary pandemic contacts at Alberta Education, Capital Health and municipalities to ensure coordination with their pandemic plans as they are developed.	PCT Chairs	Completed May 2006
3	Maintain linkage with other school districts; associations (e.g. ASBA), tenants, child related agencies (e.g. Daycares, JACKs, Head Start; School Lunch pgm etc.) to share resources, best practices and ensure consistency with pandemic planning.	PCT Chairs Curriculum and Programs	In Progress
4	Organize and/or participate in all surrounding municipal and health authority pre-pandemic planning exercises. Include building tenants e.g. daycares in these exercises.	Facilities Services	May 2007
5	Identify and coordinate, in cooperation with Capital Health, surveillance processes and protocols to monitor signs and outbreaks of a pandemic among staff and students. Includes system for receiving reporting on numbers of students and staff absent due to flu.	Student Information Curriculum and Programs Personnel Support Services	2006-07 School year
6	Work with Capital Health to identify/implement effective infection prevention procedures that will limit the spread of influenza at district worksites.	Employee Health Services	Nov 2006
7	Collaborate with insurers (WCB; ASEBP etc) to share district plan and understand their capabilities and plans related to sick leave and other benefits.	Employee Health Services Financial Services General Counsel	Nov 2006

B. Operational

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Identify the senior administrator responsible for oversight of the pandemic influenza preparedness plan and implementation.	Executive Director, Central Services	Complete March 2006
2	Identify pandemic coordinator(s) and a coordination team responsible for plan development and coordinating implementation of the plan.	Executive Director, Central Services	Complete March 2006
3	Prepare and begin implementation of the district Pandemic Influenza plan	PCT	Sept/October 2006
4	Prepare a school pandemic planning template for implementation at the school level	PCT	October 2006

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
5	Prepare a budget for the district pandemic planning initiative.	PCT	October 2006
6	Update Board Policy on Emergency Preparedness and obtain board approval.	Facilities Services	Oct/Nov 2006
7	Circulate Supt's memo reminding principals/DU administrators to update site emergency preparedness plans.	Facilities Services	Sept/Oct 2006
8	Cross reference emergency preparedness information in the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Tool Kit.	Employee Health Services	April 2006
9	Review legal implications of the pandemic plan.	General Counsel	Sept/Oct 2006
10	Schedule meetings of the District Emergency Preparedness Team (DEPT) to identify critical inputs and strategic priorities for the development/implementation of the district's operational pandemic plan.	Facilities Services	Sept/Oct 06
11	Coordinate the planning process with the annual influenza vaccination program for employees.	Employee Health Services	Sept 06
12	Identify essential functions, operations, inputs (e.g. contracts, outside services (e.g. bussing), products etc) and employees required to maintain school/district operations during a pandemic and a staff absentee rate of 25-30 percent.	PCT DEPT ²	Sept 06
13	Identify scenarios likely to result in an increase or decrease in demand for district services or activities (e.g. travel restrictions, hygiene supplies etc.)	PCT DEPT	Sept 06—Mar 2007
14	Develop a continuity of operations plan for essential central office functions, including payroll and communications with students and parents.	DEPT	Sept 06 —Mar 2007
15	Identify alternatives for possible short interruptions of essential services like sanitation, water, power etc.	DEPT	Sept 06—Mar 2007

² District Emergency Preparedness Team (DEPT) -Presently coordinated by Facilities Services and consists of representation from Leadership, Planning, Communications, Consulting Services, General Counsel, Transportation Maintenance, IT, EAP, OHS and Finance

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
16	Identify alternatives for possible shortage of bus drivers.	Student Transportation	Sept 06—Mar 2007
17	Identify volunteers (i.e. DARTS retirees) that can assist the district in the event of a shortage of trained staff.	Leadership Services	Sept 06—Mar 2007
18	Identify staff and students with special needs and incorporate their requirements in to the preparedness plan.	Curriculum and Programs Student Transportation	Sept 06—Mar 2007
19	Identify/stockpile as necessary sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies (e.g. masks, soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal). Determine distribution schedule.	Employee Health Services Distribution Centre	Sept 06—Mar 2007
20	Identify alternatives for possible shortage of bus drivers.	Student Transportation	Sept 06—Mar 2007
21	Identify volunteers (i.e. DARTS retirees) that can assist the district in the event of a shortage of trained staff.	Leadership Services	Sept 06—Mar 2007
22	Identify staff and students with special needs and incorporate their requirements in to the preparedness plan.	Curriculum and Programs Student Transportation	Sept 06—Mar 2007
23	Identify/stockpile as necessary sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies (e.g. masks, soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products, tissues and receptacles for their disposal). Determine distribution schedule.	Employee Health Services Distribution Centre	Sept 06—Mar 2007
24	Identify/stockpile recommended cleaning supplies and procedures. Determine use and distribution schedule.	Principals Facilities Services Distribution Centre	Sept 06—Mar 2007
25	Identify in-house and community health agencies/professionals with ability to provide psychosocial support services for staff and students and medical consultation and advice for emergency response.	Employee Health Services	Sept 06—Mar 2007

C. Communication

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Prepare heads up Supt's memo on district pandemic initiative – coordinate with annual flu immunization program memo.	Employee Health Services	Sept 2006
2	Prepare a report and PowerPoint presentation for delivery to the Board to update them on the district pandemic influenza planning initiative.	Executive Director PCT Chair	September 12 2006
3	Deliver key messages to Superintendent's Council and SELT.	Executive Director	October 2006
4	Deliver key messages to principals and DU administrators thorough principal and central service support groups	Supt's Council Reps Supt's Memo	October 2006

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
5	Provide information to and staff group representatives through liaison committees and obtain consensus and support for the pandemic plan.	Personnel Staff Relations Liaison Committee Chairs	October 2006
6	Identify communication vehicles to be used to keep staff, school communities, other school authorities and the public abreast of Edmonton Public's pandemic influenza planning initiative (e.g. website, Infozone, school and union newsletters, Parents of Partners, hotline etc.	Communications PCT	October 2006
7	Develop and circulate school information package, including posters, FAQ's, school planning checklist, camera ready materials etc. for staff, students, parents, volunteers, visitors and tenants on the pandemic influenza, their role and the potential impact it will have on schools and other district worksites. Post on district website and intranet. Have translators review information templates and finalize the information that will be provided to non-English speaking families.	Communications PCT	Oct 2006 after # 2, 3, 4 are completed
8	Provide information links for the at home care of ill employees and family members.	Communications	Sept 2006
9	Maintain a list of websites and sources of up to date pandemic information from reliable sources.	Communications PCT	Complete August 2006
10	Develop templates for key messages; parent letters, school checklists, & press releases related to district pandemic planning, school outbreaks, school closures etc.	Communications PCT	Dec 2006
11	Develop an emergency communications plan and test/revise periodically. Identify key contacts (with back ups), chain of communications (including service providers, students and parents) and processes for tracking and communicating district operations and employee status	Communications Facilities Services PCT	Sept 06—Mar 2007

D. Establish Policy, and Administrative Guidelines

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Develop a pandemic response policy, outlining the legal and administrative authority's responsibility for executing the response plan, especially those authorities responsible for case identification, isolation, quarantine, movement restriction, healthcare services, emergency care and mutual aid.	Executive Director PCT	December 2006
2	Develop administrative guidelines outlining pandemic influenza preparedness protocols and strategies, including process for dealing with situations when students and staff become ill at school/work and possible work refusals under the OHS Act due to unsafe working conditions.	Employee Health Services PCT	March 2007

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
3	Establish and/or expand policies/administrative guidelines for employee compensation and sick, family and medical leave stressing the importance of staying away from the workplace if they become ill.	Employee Health Services PCT	March 2007
4	Establish and/or expand administrative guidelines for flexible work options and information technology infrastructure/tools that enable employees to work from home with appropriate security and network access to applications, if possible.	Personnel Support Services Staff Relations	March 2007
5	Review district communicable disease policies/procedures and enhance as necessary to address prevention of influenza spread at the worksite (e.g. respiratory etiquette) and how to address staff/students that are suspected to be ill or become ill at school or the worksite.	Employee Health Services	March 2007
6	Establish and/or expand administrative guidelines for transporting ill students.	Student Transportation	March 2007
7	Develop administrative guidelines for school closure, outlining thresholds for student and staff populations.	Leadership Services	March 2007

E. Education Services & Training

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Identify/develop worksite and curriculum materials on good hygiene and prevention to share with staff; students, tenants; daycares etc.	Curriculum and Programs AB Education	March 2007
2	Deliver training materials developed on the pandemic influenza and use of hygiene curriculum materials in classrooms.	Principals/DU Administrators/ School Staff	Apr- June 2007
3	Identify core educational services schools will be required to be maintained during a pandemic and who will be allowed to deliver these services. This plan must coordinate with guidelines set by Alberta Education.	DEPT AB Education	December 2006
4	Provide alternative options for continuity of instruction (e.g. web-based instruction, video conferencing, electronic mailed lessons) in the event of school closure	Resource Development Curriculum and Programs AB Education	March 2007
5	Identify curriculum materials on grief and crisis response for all grade levels.	Consulting Services	March 2007
6	Identify/develop training program on additional sanitation techniques/supplies for delivery to all custodians.	Consulting Services	March 2007
7	Identify and prepare ancillary workforce to cover off sick or absent employees.	Personnel Supply Services Personnel Staffing/Recruitment	March 2007
8	Identify/develop training program for "fit test" of respirators where they are required.	Employee Health Services	December 2006

Phase Two – Plan Activation and Response

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Activate district emergency communications plan.	Communications	TBA
2	Inform municipal and public health linkages of Edmonton Public Schools Response Plan and Incident Command System used during the pandemic.	PCT Chairs	TBA
3	Contribute to municipal and regional authority plan for surge capacity of healthcare and other services to meet the needs of community (e.g. schools as contingency hospitals, vaccinations stations)	PCT Chairs	TBA
4	Identify the number of staff and students absent with pandemic flu report numbers absent to Capital Health if requested to do so.	Student Information Personnel Support Services	TBA
5	Communicate operational and educational expectations for staff in terms of the delivery of education during a pandemic.	Principals/DU Administrators	TBA
6	Activate the district incident command management system as warranted.	Facilities Services	TBA
7	Identify information that needs to be communicated to staff, students, and families, and the frequency and method of communication.	Communications PCT	TBA
8	Provide information to Trustees and administration on extent of infection at school sites and possible changes that may take place at the school.	Executive Director PCT	TBA
9	Document critical actions taken during the response.	PCT	TBA
10	Conduct timely debriefings to identify lessons learned and make necessary changes to the response plan.	PCT	TBA

Phase Three – Recovery

	Task	Lead	Target Completion
1	Provide information to schools regarding grief and possible health problems.	Consulting Services Employee Health Services	TBA
2	Mobilize the Crisis Recovery and Employee Assistance staff to provide or arrange for emotional-psychological support services.	Consulting Services Employee Health Services	TBA
3	Provide educational materials available to schools such as how to support staff/students with their recovery from pandemic flu, common symptoms of loss and grief, and constructive ways to cope with stress.	Communications PCT	TBA
4	Develop and implement a recovery plan to compensate for loss in instructional days caused by a pandemic.	Leadership Services AB Education	TBA
5	Conduct debriefings with Crisis Recovery and Employee Assistance Team.	PCT	TBA
6	Document “lessons learned” and incorporate them into revisions and trainings.	PCT	TBA

Additional Information:

- District Infozone Links (TBA)
- Capital Health- Pandemic Planning
<http://www.capitalhealth.ca/EspeciallyFor/PandemicInfluenza/default.htm>
- Alberta Health and Wellness www.health.gov.ab.ca
- Government of Canada-Public Health Agency www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- World Health Organization www.who.int/csr
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov