

Chinook's Edge connecting with students

A Message from the Superintendent:

Hi Everyone,

I wanted to take a moment to let you know that your teachers, your administrators and your support staff are missing you more than you can imagine. They all chose to work in the field of education because they take great joy in spending time with each of you and when that is taken away it is very difficult for them to adjust to your absence. That said, they are all so proud of each of you for doing what you can to remain engaged in an online learning model that is relatively new for so many of us.

Your Students Matter Committee has been very involved providing us with insight and direction so we can respond better to your needs. I joined in on some of these virtual meetings in April and I was thoroughly impressed by the feedback we received from our student leaders from across the division. Your voice matters to me personally, and I know it makes a difference for our entire staff.

Jason Drent, our Associate Superintendent of Learning Services, is the central office person most directly involved with Students Matter. I appreciate how he has worked to bring forward comments and ideas from our representatives. He is very dedicated to ensuring that you and your teachers have all that you need as learning continues online.

As well, at the suggestion of our Students Matter reps, we shared a survey with every Chinook's Edge student in grades 7-12 (as well as all parents in Chinook's Edge). A summary of that feedback is available by [clicking on this link](#). I hope you will find some of the linked information to be useful. We are all thinking of you and wishing you the very best.
Kurt Sacher,
Superintendent of Schools

[Click to hear
Kurt's
Podcast](#)

[Be Active](#)

"I'm doing lots of art and online workouts to look after myself emotionally and physically." Sundre High School, Gr. 10

[Connect](#)

"I'm trying to be more intentional about taking the time to connect with my friends." Olds Koinonia Christian School, Gr. 12

[Learn](#)

"I was nervous going into all of this, but I can honestly say that it has been way better and far easier than I thought it would be. Everything seems to be running smoothly." Spruce View School, Gr. 9

[Be Proud!](#)

"I'm keeping a good schedule; I'm logging my daily activities; I'm making sure that I spend some of my day doing things that I enjoy." Hugh Sutherland School, Gr. 10

The unexpected turn of events brought on by the pandemic has required a great deal of independence from our students. We appreciate their resilience and their commitment to their own learning. As a school division we have also tried to support any students in need of mental health support as they

work in relative isolation. Our family school wellness workers are still accessible and making contact. For additional support, there are links embedded in this edition of Connecting With Students that students can access if they need extra help. Chinook's Edge will always be a school division "where students come first".



Be Active

You aren't alone in feeling overwhelmed by all the coverage of COVID-19. Your teachers and parents – everyone – can find the constant volume of the topic tedious and worrisome. It's important to find ways to step away from all of it and do something physical!

- **Take a movement break** – there's a ton of activities to choose from on this May [digital calendar](#) created by the Chinook's Edge YES team and Family Wellness Workers.
- **Try something new!** From yoga to kickboxing, a huge range of activities are available online and this is the perfect time to give them a try. Dance like no one is watching - with physical distancing, no one actually is watching! Have some fun with it.
- **Go outside**
- **Play with your dog**
- **Exercise your eyes:**
 - Keep in mind that online learning from home has necessitated increased use of digital devices – computers, Chromebooks, iPads, tablets, cell phones – which can lead to digital eye strain (fatigue, dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches, neck pain). Alleviate eye strain by trying some of these exercises (courtesy of Hour Zero Crisis Consulting Ltd):
- **The 20/20/20 Rule** – Every 20

minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

- **Focusing** – Move your eyes to gaze to the left, then the right, then up, then down. Hold each position for 3-4 seconds and repeat 3 times in total.
- **Remember to blink!** Studies show the longer you work at a computer the longer the interval between blinks, which can lead to dry eyes. Consider even putting a sticky note on your computer to remind yourself to blink!
- **Adjust your device** with 'blue light reducing' features. Blue light penetrates deeper into the eyes and can cause eye strain. Increase your font size for easy-to-read type. Adjust the screen contrast so it is comfortable for your eyes. Have adequate light in the room around you – you don't want your device to be brighter than your surroundings. Position your screen 20-26 inches away from your eyes and slightly below eye level.
- **Drink lots of water!**
- **Step away from your screen and be active**



Socially conscious and physically distant -
Students at Westglen School in Didsbury helped clean the school yard.

Connect

Your social-emotional wellness is as important as your physical health, so we want to be sure you are taking care of your mental health.

- **Are you safe?** If you are fearful of physical harm, please reach out to the [Kids Help Phone](#) 1-800-668-6868 or Text CONNECT 686868.
- **Reach out to others** – your friends would love to hear from you, your teachers are right at your fingertips, your grandma or grandpa may be waiting right this moment to share a story. Why not reach out to a cousin you've lost touch with or an old friend – or someone you would like to become a new friend with. Text, phone or facetime someone every day or two – it will lift your spirits and theirs!
- **Do something nice for someone.** Research shows that doing something nice for others does wonders for your own mental wellness. You could volunteer to help plant your neighbour's garden - which has the added bonus of getting you outside! Or help more around the house – the folks you live with are also under new pressures and will appreciate a hand.
- **Establish a consistent routine.** Many Students Matter reps thought they

might be more organized if they had a schedule. If you think it would be helpful to plot out a timetable for your class time and related projects, ask your teachers for guidance in scheduling assignments and tasks for their specific subject.

- For a general approach to establishing a consistent routine to your day, consider these suggestions:
- Get up around the same time each day – try to make it close to the time you would be waking up for a regular school day.
- Eat breakfast.
- Start up your devices to check in with your teacher and class. Review any assignments, ask any questions and plan how much time you will need to complete any assigned tasks.
- Stop for a healthy lunch.
- Schedule time to Be Active.
- Finish your classwork as best you can.
- Drink lots of water.
- Schedule time to do an activity away from your computer (try something

new!)

- Share dinner with your family and help in its preparation.
- Settle in for a good night's sleep by planning restful evening activities, such as reading or board games with your family or watching a favourite show. Turn off electronics two hours before sleeping and go to bed at a reasonable and consistent time each night.
- Pat yourself on the back for all you're doing!
- **Need help?** Please check out the [Government of Alberta's increased mental health supports](#)
- **Be Active** – physical activity is a proven way to support mental health. Click back on the Be Active button again and again! And again.

Learn

Three dozen Students Matter reps joined us online to tell us what we need to know to support learning online together. From there, we emailed a short survey to all Chinook's Edge students in grades 7-12 to get a glimpse into how you're all doing and what you're doing to take care of yourselves during this time.

Your anonymous responses are helping us generate a lot of valuable information, which we're sharing with schools so teachers and staff are aware of the specific requests you have. For instance, some of you thought a weekly schedule of classroom expectations might be helpful – your teachers will appreciate knowing this. While we share general, anonymous data with them, we encourage you to connect with them to ask for this type of specific support for your learning. They know you and your learning needs best!

For general information purposes, here is a link to the [Education Minister's letter to parents](#). It outlines in a general sense the expectations for your learning schedule.

The most important thing you can be doing is taking care of yourselves and following your teachers' instructions each school day.



Zander from Hugh Sutherland School is ready for anything as he does his school work at home!

Be Proud!

You're doing great. No one in the history of our country has had their learning disrupted the way you have. One day you gathered your things after school and thought you were coming back the next day. Your classroom learning was put on pause without warning. One day you will be back in class with your friends and your teachers. Until then, we're here for you. We're rooting for you and we're at your side all along the way.

"The voice of our students is always incredibly important to our work in Chinook's Edge, but during this time of COVID-19 it's vital," said Associate Superintendent Jason Drent. "Hearing from you informs our work and the kinds of things we can be doing right now to best support your efforts. Thanks for participating in our student survey and for caring so much about your fellow students. Your concern for one another came through loud and clear in your survey responses and that makes us especially proud."

Some of you asked for reliable sources about COVID-19. We have worked to compile and share information on our division website. Please [click this link](#) for information and resources, and keep visiting the division website regularly for updates.

Do you have questions or need more information to keep moving your learning and your wellness forward? Please talk to your teacher - everyone at Chinook's Edge wants you to succeed!



Cooking in quarantine - École Innisfail High students Evelyn and Carson from Mrs. Dingman's Foods class are busy learning at home, as they prepare meals with items already on hand in their kitchens!