

SOSD *By The Numbers*

COVID-19 EDITION



SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here



The impacts of COVID-19 on SOSD

It's taken some time and it's been a challenge, but we're back! We're back to seeing the smiles of our students, the sounds of musical productions, cheering of our school sports teams, and celebrating our students through in-person gatherings. Getting back to this place has been difficult and we know that this has created challenges and areas that need extra consideration. While the COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on everyone and is expected to be a factor in some of these challenges, it has also surfaced creative and powerful ways that students, schools, and communities have responded. In this report we address the challenges, share stories of hope and resilience, and discuss how we will move forward together with lessons learned from the pandemic.

In the classroom

Provincial assessments were paused and then reported differently during the pandemic so some academic measures normally reported on were unavailable; SOSD will be able to start comparing those academic indicators again in the following year.

The academic measures available indicate performance as fairly consistent with provincial levels over the years up to 2022. In fact, SOSD has consistently had higher academic scores compared with provincial averages. However, gaps emerge when we examine engagement data, suggesting that COVID-19 had a much larger impact on social engagement and mental health.

Enrolment

There was a drop in enrolment percentages across the province, but SOSD maintained strong enrolment numbers throughout the pandemic with 99% of pre-pandemic levels. This could be the result of intentional, strategic and personal outreach to SOSD families, and may indicate the strength of the relationships built with families in SOSD.

September 30 enrolment	2019	2020	2021
SOSD	11,800	11,454	11,683
Province	190,114	181,078	184,258

Engagement for Secondary Students

Engagement is much more than merely being interested in school or being self-motivated to perform certain tasks. When we speak of engagement, we refer to three types: A learner's sense of belonging (emotional), a learner's commitment to the outcomes of school (behavioural), and a learner's intellectual interest (cognitive). The nurturing of all three are critical to the learner seeing themselves within the school, actively participating in the culture of their school, and rising to the challenge of high expectations - fostering deep skill development, knowledge acquisition, self-efficacy, and agency.

Provincial Timeline

March 11, 2020

World Health Organization declares global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

March 12, 2020

First reported case of COVID-19 in Manitoba; Majority of non-essential businesses closing in the weeks after.

March 23, 2020

In-classroom learning suspended across Manitoba.

SOSD Timeline

March 23, 2020

SOSD moves to remote learning for most students by order of the province.

April 2020

Nutrition hamper initiative for families in need.

Overall, SOSD learners are engaged. However, the pandemic and several waves of remote learning did surface challenges and highlight the work we need to do as a school division to create the conditions and the learning experiences necessary for all our learners to feel part of a community of learners.

The OurSchool survey explored 45 different indicators related to student engagement. Of those 45 areas, we were able to compare levels of engagement of secondary students with pre-COVID numbers and found that although most areas related to engagement had very little change, there are a few areas we have identified as requiring attention. These areas are related to attendance, student connection, motivation and aspirations, and mental health. Comparisons between 2018 and 2022 data in these areas are as follows:

Attendance

- The average absence rate for the pre-COVID years hovers around six absences for the year. In COVID years the average absence rate increases by at least two absences per year.

	2018	2019	2020	2022**
Average absence	6.3	5.6	7.9	9.0

**rate is September to April, whereas all other rates are September to June

- In terms of truancy, this increased slightly from 19% to 22% and it was also noted that girls reported more truancy than boys with 23% compared to 19%.

	Girls	Boys	Total
SOSD	23%	19%	22%

School connection

Students' sense of connection to their schools, engagement in extra-curricular activities, and their personal sense of motivation and aspirations were challenged during the pandemic. Waves of remote learning, schedules that saw secondary students return to in-school learning every second day, and the cancellation of most extra-curricular programs certainly had a major effect.

	2018	2022
Students who had a high sense of belonging	67%	57%

June 1, 2020

Limited use of school facilities with strict guidelines for students and staff connected to specific programs.

March – June 2020

615 educators participate in a range of professional development training on teaching and learning through distance learning.

June 1, 2020

SOSD welcomes back 5,459 students from grades K-8 and 1044 students from grades 9-12 for in-school learning. They include students from families of essential workers, students with additional needs, and students who had more limited connection during remote learning.

Participation in arts and sports clubs

In a typical year, SOSD has multiple options for students to participate in extracurricular activities such as competitive sports, arts programs, and school clubs. The most recent numbers which show a significant decline must be considered within the context of public health orders which cancelled several sports programs and clubs as a safety measure.

	2018	2022
Students involved in sports	51%	43%
Participation in school clubs	41%	34%

Motivation and aspirations

This area considers students' commitment to learning and success as well as their desire to pursue educational opportunities after graduation. The lack of interest in post-secondary opportunities may correlate with the fact that many educational and apprenticeship programs were being delivered differently or not at all because of the pandemic.

	2018	2022
Students who value school outcomes	76%	67%
Positive homework behaviours	73%	66%
Students who reported they tried hard to succeed in their learning	71%	64%
Students who are interested and motivated in their learning	45%	36%
Aspirations to finish high school	81%	75%
Planning to post-secondary education	66%	55%
Planning to pursue apprenticeship program	22%	12%

June 22, 2020

Province announces return to in-person learning September 8.

July 30, 2020

Province announces plan for full time in-class learning for students in kindergarten through to Grade 8, as well as students with additional needs in all grades. Grades 9 to 12 may require some remote learning based on the school's ability to implement public health measures. Schools need to ensure access to technology for remote learners.

August 28, 2020

Public health orders take effect to enforce 14-day self-isolation orders for COVID-19 cases and close contacts of cases.

June 2020

SOSD plans summer programming.

July-August 2020

- Summer programs are attended by approximately 695 students from the division.
- SOSD works on strategy to have students and staff return safely in September.

Mental health

The data collected on social-emotional outcomes focuses on depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. Students self-assessed anxiety as intense feelings of fear or worry about particular events or social situations. Depression was self-assessed based on prolonged periods of sadness, discouragement, and feelings of inadequacy. High self-esteem is based on students who feel they like and accept themselves, and are proud of their accomplishments.

	2018	2022
Students reporting moderate to high levels of anxiety	29%	40%
Students reporting moderate to high levels of depression	29%	40%
Students reporting high self-esteem	68%	58%

SOSD understands that attendance, motivation, aspiration, connection, and mental health do not exist in silos and each area has an impact on the other. As a division, we recognize that we need to support our students in getting more connected, supported, and active. Now that students have more opportunities to be together in-person with their school communities, we are confident in our ability to better respond to their needs.

Despite some areas raising concern, there were a greater number of areas which would indicate most students were coping well in the face of significant challenges. For example, there were no significant changes in substance using behaviours and engagement with technology such as television, video games, and phones. The majority of students still identify having positive relationships, positive behaviour at school, feelings of confidence in their skills in core subject areas, and expectations for success to name a few additional indicators.

Commitment to engagement starts with our youngest learners. Here, Darashdeep Kambo engages grades 1-2 students in small group literacy learning at Elwick Community School, Fall 2021.



September 1, 2020

Return to school with mandatory masks for school staff and students from grades 4-12; masks mandatory for all students riding buses.

September 2, 2020

New provincial guidelines released for students and parents about what they can expect during the school year.

September 28, 2020

Provincial restrictions in Winnipeg and surrounding areas require masks in all indoor public places; gatherings restricted to 10 people both indoors and outdoors.

September 2020

- Hiring and reallocation of staff to support increased needs.
- Establishment of remote learning hub to accommodate students who are immunocompromised or have immunocompromised family members.
- Purchase of additional string and percussion instruments, keyboards, and bell covers for brass and woodwind instruments to reduce aerosol transmission of COVID-19 in music classes.

Secondary academics

Due to COVID-19, schools did not complete provincial testing in the same way, which is important to consider when comparing data from 2018 and 2022. Based on the averages recorded in language arts, math, and science from before COVID, there is not a significant difference in how students performed, though they did go up slightly as demonstrated in the chart below:

Subject	2018	2022
Language Arts	81%	82%
Math	79%	80%
Science	80%	81%

Grade 9 Credit Attainment and Four Year Grad Rate Data

Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) are core courses for credit toward a high school diploma. SOSD has been consistently above the provincial average in terms of students getting credits in math and ELA. Overall, the averages have been similar each year. There was a small decline for both subjects from the 2019-2020 school year compared with the 2020-2021 school year which is consistent with the trend of the provincial average going down as well.

Subjects	2016/2017		2017/2018		2018/2019		2019/2020		2020/2021	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
SOSD	92.4%	91.6%	92.0%	91.2%	91.5%	91.2%	93.1%	93.8%	91.2%	90.2%
Province	89.7%	88.0%	89.5%	87.7%	88.8%	86.9%	90.0%	89.4%	88.4%	86.6%

**Note that data for 2021/2022 was unavailable at the time of this report.*

SOSD staff attend “Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics” with Dr. Peter Liljedahl from Simon Fraser University in a virtual professional development session, November 2020.



SOSD is committed to intentional work to enhance outcomes in mathematics. Renowned Canadian mathematician, John Mighton, worked with teachers and students in multiple schools. He is captured here in November 2021 at Edmund Partridge Community School.



October 2, 2020

Province suspends Grade 12 provincial tests for the winter term.

October 19, 2020

Gathering limits in Manitoba reduced from 10 people to five inside and outside for both public and private gatherings. Multiple businesses are closed or are ordered to operate at 50% capacity. After-school activities must reduce the number of spectators by 25% capacity.

November 2, 2020

Winnipeg Metropolitan Region moves to Code Red restrictions. Businesses in the restaurant, entertainment, fitness, and hospitality industry are either closed or have reduced capacity. Additional restrictions for faith-based gatherings and hospital visitation. Elective and non-urgent surgeries cancelled or postponed.

September 2020 – January 2022

Principals work in partnership with public health to do contact tracing on COVID-19 cases. SOSD proactively communicates confirmed exposures as soon as information is available to reduce additional risks.

September 2020 – March 2022

Physical education classes occur outdoors to reduce transmission of virus.

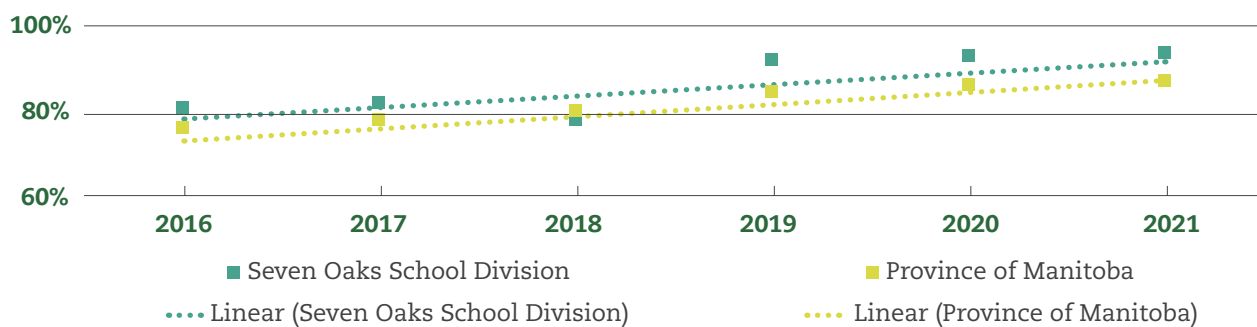
Graduation rates

Despite the pandemic, SOSD has continued to increase the percentage of four, five and six-year graduates. In 2019 and 2020 SOSD's four-year graduation rates were higher than the provincial average by a larger margin than previous years. And the overall average is increasing at a higher rate than the provincial average.

Four-year grad rates

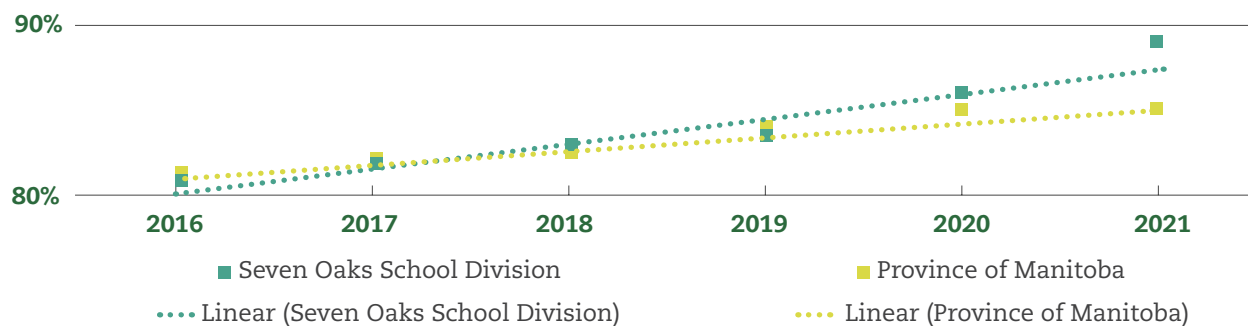
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
SOSD	80.2%	80.7%	79.0%	85.2%	85.6%	85.9%
Province	78.1%	79.0%	79.9%	81.9%	82.6%	83.0%

SOSD had some slightly lower five-year graduation rates than the provincial average in 2016 and 2017, but they have been steadily increasing at a higher rate. As a result, SOSD surpassed the provincial five-year graduation rates in 2020 and 2021.



Five-year grad rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
SOSD	81.0%	82.3%	83.5%	84.4%	87.7%	91.6%
Province	81.4%	82.4%	83.1%	85.1%	86.4%	86.5%



November 10, 2020

Entire province moves to Code Red which reduces social contacts to households only. Social gatherings aren't allowed. Grocery stores and pharmacies are limited to 25% capacity; other retail services can only provide e-service, curbside pickup, and delivery. Hair and aesthetic service centres and fitness centres close. Religious and cultural gatherings are limited to virtual settings.

November 20, 2020

Restrictions on gatherings in private homes as well as gatherings in groups of more than five people at any indoor or outdoor public space. Stores are not allowed to sell non-essential items in-person.

Throughout 2020 and 2021

SOSD works in partnership with the province to increase quality of ventilation in schools.

Six-year grad rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
SOSD	82.9%	82.0%	83.3%	85.7%	85.5%	90.4%
Province	83.0%	83.3%	84.0%	85.4%	86.8%	88.3%

West Kildonan Collegiate was one of SOSD's schools celebrating in-person graduation ceremonies in June 2022.



Seven Oaks School Division Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic introduced significant challenges in meeting the needs of students and staff in Seven Oaks School Division. Schools provide more to communities than classroom time; they also provide spaces where young people engage in social activities, get access to basic needs through initiatives such as nutrition programs, and receive wellness supports through recreation opportunities, and student services. When classroom learning was suspended throughout the province in March 2020, SOSD worked hard to support the physical, social, and psychological needs of their students in addition to their educational needs.



SOSD supported the quick pivot to remote learning by offering staff a range of virtual learning opportunities with a focus on digital learning platforms, April 2020.

December 16, 2020

First dose of the Pfizer vaccine administered in Manitoba.

December 23, 2020

Moderna vaccine approved in Canada. Vaccine requirements expanded to include more frontline health-care workers.

January 23, 2021

Modest reduction of restrictions to some regions across the province, including Winnipeg.

January 27, 2021

Manitoba releases its vaccination priority list to include more healthcare workers and then to the general population beginning with those who are 80 and older. Eligibility will open to those in lower age groups over time.

Throughout 2020 and 2021

Purchase of COVID related supplies (masks, sanitizer, other cleaning products, partitions, etc.).

Schools had to adapt quickly as public health orders changed at various times during the pandemic. SOSD worked through these challenges through close collaboration with governing authorities such as public health and Manitoba Education as well as community partners to help support the needs of families in the division.



“Covid happened and we were in the thick of it March 2020. September rolled around and we started up again: hand sanitizer, hand washing, seating charts, plexiglass dividers, and so many other new things. It was time to reinvent the wheel, yet again. The greatest part of teaching is communicating and working with the children in the classroom, live, and in person. You create a bond; a connection and you learn from each other. We were all going through something new together.”

- Anthony Fiorentino, Teacher at Arthur E. Wright Community School

Different Approaches

“September 2020 started with all of the children returning to in-person learning. The staff began talking about how to best teach children, how to identify learning gaps from remote school, as well as the back-to-school teaching to target the summer learning loss. However, our conversations were ruled more by the more daunting journey that lay ahead of us: how to be in a class together, and successfully, during a pandemic. With the sense of urgency and excitement I think we all had to teach these children in-person, I also was worried what the new restrictions in place for schools would do to us as a class. I was worried about the social distancing, the mandatory monthly sit-spots (that later changed to weekly- thankfully), and the lack of collaboration we were allowed to have with other classes. What might this do to the relationships and learning in our classroom? How would I engage the students in the same way when they’re all sitting in desks and I’m at the front? How will they feel connected to each other as learners and as friends when they aren’t allowed to be physically close to each other? I knew that this year would be very influential to us all and had the potential of being a great school year. As the teacher, I needed to find a way to teach the outcomes and skills in a safe way, while still allowing the children to feel connected to each other and come to school each day with a sense of normalcy.”

- Jill Dempsey, Learning Support Teacher at Amber Trails Community School



January 29, 2021

New public health orders require anyone entering Manitoba from other parts of Canada to self-isolate for 14 days.

February 9, 2021

Province announces new COVID-19 variant in the province.

February 12, 2021

Restaurants, other licensed businesses, fitness facilities and places of worship are allowed to reopen with restrictions.

February 26, 2021

AstraZeneca approved for COVID-19 vaccinations in Canada.

March 1, 2021

First members of the general public receive their first dosage of the vaccine.

March 2021

Chromebooks sent to homes of students.

SOSD staff engaged in professional development opportunities to learn more about how to deliver learning more effectively in an online learning environment and came up with creative ways to stay engaged with students from a distance. When students returned to school, educational staff adapted everything from what they taught, how they taught, and where they taught. For example, band teachers switched to using more string, percussion, and keyboard instruments, and used special covers over woodwind and brass instruments to keep air particulates from being released; in some cases, band classes were taught outdoors.



“My 18 years of physical education teaching and repertoire couldn’t have prepared me to handle how I had to adapt my physical education program being solely outdoors. I had to deal with everything Mother Nature could throw at me on a weekly, daily, and sometimes even hourly basis. I look back and reflect that it was a year that I probably grew the most as a physical education specialist. I went in with the mindset of trying to provide students with outdoor experiences that they may not be getting at home and show them that the outdoors doesn’t have to be a scary place and limiting from a physical literacy standpoint.

Last year I taught physical education every day outside (except for seven days) and looking back I feel we haven’t lost a beat. No matter the season, as a physical educator, I know the ultimate goal is to help inspire students to become motivated to choose healthy, active lifestyles. As a physical education specialist, I can facilitate that anywhere if I have the willingness and creativity to make it happen.”

- Rob Ens, Physical Education Teacher at Forest Park School

A divisional remote learning hub was also established in response to increased need for remote learning supports for students and their families who may be immunocompromised. This hub supported students from across the division and started out with four teachers and 101 students. By June 2021, there were 10 teachers and 179 students.

Since March 2020, SOSD staff found creative and innovative ways to engage with students and their families without compromising their safety. On top of teaching classes and small groups in virtual spaces, they connected with them individually in virtual spaces, connected on doorsteps, and when safe, invited some families and kids into the school or in the school grounds. In 2020-2021, nine Community Coordinators continued with virtual story time programming for families with children ages 0-6 and connected with families for all of SOSD’s schools with early years programs. Community Coordinators also created monthly thematic preschool learning and play packages that they delivered to homes.

March 5, 2021

Capacity limits increase to 50% or 250 people for retail and personal service businesses. Indoor recreation and sporting facilities can open at 25% capacity.

April 9, 2021

Third wave of the pandemic announced by province.

April 15, 2021

P1 variant found in Manitoba.

April 19, 2021

Province adds new restrictions to indoor and outdoor gatherings as well as business capacity to slow down third wave.

April 26, 2021

More restrictions as cases continue to rise. Vaccine eligibility expands including to all adults living or working in the Seven Oaks West area.

March – June 2021

Wifi accounts purchased for families in need.



“While our familiar in-person internship program certainly faced many challenges during the COVID shut-downs, there turned out to be quite a few silver linings in the end. Having remote/virtual internships truly opened up our program geographically as students could have mentors from anywhere in the world. In addition, our internship coordinator started scheduling group informational interview series for students which opened up many doors and provided many new opportunities. So while things were challenging in the traditional sense, it made us rethink the possibilities and many of these new initiatives will now remain with the program.”

- Nancy Janelle, Administrator at Seven Oaks MET School

Another example of SOSD’s creative approaches can be attributed to several school arts programs which were able to proceed by adapting to smaller scale versions, outdoor events, and distributing performances through video links which could be viewed safely off site.

Pivoting the Musical: Recording “Freaky Friday” and the premier screening at West Kildonan Collegiate, 2021.



April 29, 2021

Premier Brian Pallister announces teachers and education workers will be able to receive a vaccine in partnership with North Dakota.

May 5, 2021

Province announces vaccine eligibility for all Manitobans 45 and up; the Pfizer vaccine is approved for youth 12 and up as of May 21.

May 10, 2021

Vaccine eligibility drops to age 30 and up.

May 12, 2021

Schools in Winnipeg and Brandon switch to remote learning. Vaccine eligibility drops to age 18 and up.

May 14, 2021

COVID-19 modelling data for Manitoba shows a dire situation with extreme daily COVID-19 case numbers. Manitobans 12 and older are now eligible to book COVID-19 vaccine appointments.



“Our team’s main goal was to ensure that students walked away with a rich experience and did not feel short changed by the pandemic. When things shifted very quickly and a live performance was not feasible, we came up with the idea of filming the show not just as a live production but more like a movie filmed on the Seven Oaks Performing Arts Centre (SOPAC) stage and a few areas of West Kildonan Collegiate. With the help of the SOPAC team, we created a recording studio on stage to “lay down the soundtrack” before playing it as we filmed each scene. Because of the mandated two metre distance while singing, students had a unique experience of recording their songs that would be used as a soundtrack that they could sing along when filming the scenes. Students did not get a live performance experience, but they had an opportunity to do something so unique that it provided them a special opportunity. Showcasing their performance as a movie may not have been what the students’ imagined, but we aimed to give the students a chance to grow and develop as actors and performers. Over 40 students were able to participate on the stage and behind the scenes. This new pivot allowed us to celebrate the diverse student body, giving them a live theatre experience in a time when live theatre was more or less suspended completely.”

- Tanya Henry, Teacher at West Kildonan Collegiate

“We played our band instruments outside! LUCKILY, I have a whole bunch of marching band experience and we did marching band outside every day! If the weather was bad, we would spread out in the gym and do various activities from bucket drumming, body percussion, percussion, music theory and watching videos. We purchased a bunch of ukuleles and brooms and other various instruments that were allowed. We also started creating some virtual band projects. To complete these projects, we set up numerous private online one-on-band lessons with the three of us band teachers. We also included our student teachers and even some music students who joined us online from Brandon University! This was the best part of the year when we weren’t allowed to play in school.”

- Jaclyn Loganberg, Teacher at Maples Collegiate



May 17, 2021

Manitoba leads Canada and the U.S. in COVID-19 infections reporting an average of 331.9 infections per million.

May 22, 2021

New restrictions in place to limit gathering sizes in indoor and outdoor spaces as well as private businesses.

May 27, 2021

Students in Winnipeg are among those who will continue with remote learning until at least June 7.

May 29, 2021

New public health orders related to gatherings, working from home, and capacity in retail businesses.

June 8, 2021

Premier Brian Pallister announces immunization cards for Manitobans two weeks after they have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. Fully immunized Manitobans no longer have to self-isolate when returning from interprovincial travel or if they are a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

May – June 2021

Second initiative to deliver \$100 worth of physical books directly to families of students in grades 1-3.

Supporting Needs of Students and their Families

Students had different experiences in the pandemic due to personal circumstances. SOSD recognized that the capacity for students to cope during the pandemic would be highly sensitive to the resources realistically available to them. For some families, there was an increased need for necessities such as food and toiletries. SOSD organized nutrition hampers to benefit families with students in preschool up to adult education programs. Schools supplemented divisional hampers to tailor to individual families' cultural contexts and dietary needs and included learning supports. This initiative involved all staff from across the division and resulted in the distribution of 5,559 hampers during a total of five months combined in 2020 and 2021. SOSD also recognized that students may not have access to physical copies of quality books in their homes; therefore, an initiative was launched to get books in the hands of the division's youngest learners. Each family with students in grades 1-3 were eligible to receive \$100 worth of physical books to keep in their homes supplied with funds from SOSD.



Collège Garden City Collegiate was headquarters for SOSD staff to put together and distribute food hampers for students and their families during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 and again in 2021.

Some of the students in SOSD needed more connections with staff in order to support a range of needs. Staff found creative ways to keep connections with students while maintaining safety. For example, dedicated EAs engaged in outreach with students who needed more support and would participate in outdoor activities with them. Programs such as the Active Transportation and Bike Skills program where students are supported in cycling to and from their schools were able to continue. This program proved to be a great way for students to continue learning outdoors and distanced. Students who were able to return to classes due to their circumstances continued with the cycling program even when classes were interrupted. This program is popular for students and continues to have multiple benefits.

Students from the Active Transportation and Skills Program at Elwick Community School

"We have seen a marked increase in students commuting to school as our program has developed - particularly in schools where there is less reliance on bussing. We have also been able to get more kids riding by repairing their bikes free of charge and by giving free bikes to kids."

- Peter Obendoerfer, Learn to Bike Coordinator Active Transportation and Bike Skills



June 12, 2021

Restrictions related to outdoor gatherings slightly relax.

July 1, 2021

Children are now permitted to attend childcare programs and day camps.

August 5, 2021

Education plan for all K-12 students to return to in-person learning. Masks will be recommended, but not required. K-6 students will be in cohorts and 7-12 will have full classes with physical distancing. Remote learning will be available for students who are immunocompromised or have family members who are.

August 7, 2021

Eased restrictions announced including mask mandates and more businesses reopening.

May – July 2021

SOSD creates informational videos on COVID-19 in 40 different languages.

August 12 & October 26, 2021

SOSD hosts two town hall sessions with Dr. Joss Reimer and Dr. Brent Roussin for the public.



Educators went to great lengths to safely connect with students during the pandemic. Here, Sonia Cordeiro, Community Coordinator, reads to students in front of their home from a distance.

This photo captures Annette Head, the first female Journey person in Manitoba engaging middle years students in carpentry camp at Amber Trails Community School.



SOSD was able to provide summer programs in schools in 2020 and 2021. These programs were particularly important for students and their families for several reasons. Students needed to be able to feel comfortable being in a school environment again after being away for several months. SOSD offered a variety of educational and healthy activities for children and youth to engage in which also provided families with some respite after being home together for an extended period without much reprieve. Sessions were delivered by teachers, community members, and partner organizations to approximately 2,365 students combined over both summers.



“My grade 1-2 class moved to online teaching three times in a row during the pandemic. Building and sustaining relationships with my students became even more important; especially for the children whose safe place is their school and a place they can trust. I felt confident with the technology side of things, but these transitions between remote and in-school learning made it hard to connect with students and their families. Many parents felt overwhelmed for a prolonged period and so I learned how important it was for families to connect and for us to work together as a team. I tried; we all tried to get over this pandemic by strengthening our relationships, building our trust to a greater extent, and supporting each other more than ever.”

- Jatinder Jaura, Teacher at Elwick Community School

More professional development learning goes virtual! April 15, 2021 Spring Lecture with Chris Emden: Restoration, Restitution, and Rigor: Towards a New Pedagogy, in partnership with the University of Winnipeg.



- August 16, 2021

Anyone born on or before the end of 2009 is eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine.
 - August 19, 2021

#RestartMB Pandemic Response System (PRS) launched to classify COVID-19 risks in a colour-coded system.
 - August 24, 2021

Province announces all school staff must be fully vaccinated by October 31, 2021 or undergo regular testing for COVID-19.
 - August 28, 2021

Province reintroduces mask mandate for indoor public spaces, including schools.
 - September 3, 2021

Manitobans must show proof of vaccination to participate in certain activities.
 - September 22, 2021

Start of school-based vaccine clinics.
- September 2021**
- SOSD increases teaching staff in early years to support learning and reduce classroom sizes.



Outdoor learning is another way to make professional development happen in a pandemic! Pictured here are MET schools staff learning together at the Aki Centre in June 2021.

Contact Tracing and Accountability

Contact tracing was an important part of managing the spread of COVID-19 and involved determining details of potential exposures to the virus. Principals worked in partnership with public health with investigation and communications. Contact tracing work would range approximately **8-12 hours** per case depending on complexity. Principals were alerted to positive cases and would work to determine details of potential exposures including the student cohort, whether or not masks were worn, physical distance, etc. Principals were also responsible for communications with affected families and the school community. Due to backlogs in testing and workload with public health, there were delays in notifying parents and caregivers about potential COVID-19 exposures in schools—sometimes more than a week after the potential exposure. Therefore, SOSD took a proactive approach with their communications about exposures to help mitigate wait times from public health. SOSD was also transparent in how exposures were communicated to the public. Whenever there was a confirmed case of COVID-19, letters were sent home and posted on the SOSD website.

“It wasn’t just contact tracing that took time. It was editing and submitting letters, consulting with public health nurses, interpreting changing protocols, getting the dates right, delivering the news that a whole family had to quarantine, updating guidelines, follow-up phone calls, comforting sad and scared families, informing and reassuring staff and daycares, submitting webforms, tracking down information. The hours were long but the biggest piece was the emotional load of trying to make sure that everyone is okay. That no one is trying to make things harder for anyone else. That we’re taking care of you.

It wasn’t the letter. It wasn’t the contact tracing. It was the follow-up.

Trust was a real question. Every time we sent out a letter, people would ask for more info than we could give. All we could do was ask for them to trust us. Talking to families every day. Listening for hours.”

- Ross Meacham, Principal at Riverbend Community School



October 21, 2021

The state of emergency officially ended in Manitoba.

November 20, 2021

Health Canada approves Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5-11.

November 24, 2021

Manitoba administered the first vaccines to children ages 5-11 in the province.

November 25, 2021

Province announces funding to upgrade ventilation systems in Manitoba schools and #ProtectMB Kids Campaign to encourage vaccines for children ages 5-11.

October 2021

98.5% of SOSD staff are vaccinated. The division sets up COVID-19 testing program for remaining unvaccinated staff members.

November 2021

SOSD engages in contact tracing with public health.

Keeping Our Spaces Safe

In anticipation of students returning to in-class learning in fall 2020, Manitoba Education worked with school divisions including SOSD to ensure adequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and enhanced sanitation of schools. SOSD complied with additional public health orders in October of 2020 which required stronger restrictions on gathering and elimination of non-essential activities such as organized sports, school celebrations, concerts, recitals, internships, and all in-person meetings with families and in-person professional development.

Manitoba

Seven Oaks School Division won't wait for public health before acting on COVID-19 cases in schools



Superintendent says concerns about contact tracing delays may spur schools to act faster

Holly Caray | CBC News | Posted: Nov 01, 2020 2:30 PM CT | Last Updated: November 3, 2020



Some notifications to parents about potential COVID-19 exposures in Manitoba schools have gone out more than a week after the potential exposure. (Jeff Stapleton/CBC)



“The custodial experience during the pandemic was quite different from most school staff. We were at work every day and doing enhanced disinfecting and cleaning throughout the school, far and above the normal routines. Saying this, I believe that our work allowed schools to continue to stay open and on many occasions, I was personally thanked by the staff, students and parents of École Belmont for keeping them safe.”

- Rick Moore, Day Custodian at École Belmont

Throughout the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, SOSD adjusted classroom spaces to ensure proper physical distancing, used plexiglass dividers in classrooms, gave masks to students and staff as needed, supplied hand sanitizer, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing measures, and educated students about the importance of proper hand hygiene. Schools also functioned with a cohort model, so that the same group of students stayed together. They adapted school schedules so cohorts would be outside for recess at different times. Cohorts remained in separate sections of outdoor space as well.

December 1, 2021

In-school vaccine clinics announced for children ages five to 11 starting this week.

December 21, 2021

New restrictions in place for public and private settings due to threat of omicron variant.

December 22, 2021

Province announces delay of return to school to January 10, 2022 to assess risk of omicron variant.

December 27, 2021

Announcement that rapid antigen tests will be distributed to families with students in kindergarten to Grade 6 in provincial schools.

December 28, 2021

Additional restrictions in place for public and private settings due to sharp increase in case numbers.

December 2021 – March 2022

Principals responsible for notifications and contact tracing.

COVID 19 Products by the Numbers

- In August 2020, SOSD purchased 50,000 cloth masks to distribute to staff and students prior to the province supplying masks.
- From September 2021 to November 2021, 130 rapid testing kits were ordered for unvaccinated staff requiring testing.
- From March 2021 to June 2021 \$11,600 worth of sanitizer and cleaning sprays were ordered.
- In September 2021 \$18,970 worth of sanitizers were ordered.
- In April 2021 the division ordered 75,000 N95 masks for staff use, of which approximately 58,000 were used from April 2021 to March 2022.
- Since the start of COVID, the division has purchased:
 - 33 – 55 Gal. drums of Oxivir Disinfectant (approx. 7,000L).
 - 144 – 20L pails of Oxivir Disinfectant (2,880L)
 - Over 4,000L of hand sanitizer

Students in a grade 1-2 classroom with safety measures in place at West St. Paul School.



SOSD assessed all ventilation systems in schools and performed additional maintenance and upgrades to improved ventilation operations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmissions. As a result of this initiative, all schools in SOSD have improved systems.

SOSD staff were required to show proof of vaccination or undergo rapid antigen testing (RAT) under public health orders. In September 2021, 130 rapid antigen tests were ordered for unvaccinated staff requiring testing. As of November 1, 2021, most staff in the division were vaccinated against COVID-19.

January 2022

Decision made to delay return to school by one week after winter break.

February 15, 2022

Schools move to “yellow” on the pandemic response system meaning cohorts only required in K-6 grades, masks required indoors for staff and students and not required during physical education classes. Medical masks are recommended, but not for school staff.

March 1, 2022

Proof of vaccination requirement removed by the province.

March 15, 2022

Manitoba removes restrictions such as mask mandates, isolation requirements, and physical distancing measures across the province.



“One of the major outcomes of the pandemic is that it has helped us evolve and define new practices around change in an unknown, and to a certain extent, new world. We as principal teachers have come up with solutions for issues and initiatives that were presented to us time to time this year with the co-operation of our staff and students. Leading ourselves and our schools during these uncertain times has sparked our creativity and spirit of experimentation in unthinkable ways.”

- Navjeet Kambo, Vice Principal at Amber Trails Community School

Vaccine Initiatives and Supporting our Greater Community

SOSD understands that healthy schools are part of a larger community. As such, SOSD took the initiative to facilitate educational opportunities to others in the Seven Oaks community that staff and students are a part of. These initiatives included two town hall sessions with Manitoba’s Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, and Vaccine Task Force Lead, Dr. Joss Reimer to educate the public on COVID-19. SOSD’s Immigrant Services created short informational videos on COVID-19 in 40 different languages.

Examples of public health education posters from SOSD in English, Punjabi, and Tagalog.



When vaccinations became more widely available, SOSD offered spaces within their buildings for vaccine clinics and worked in partnership with public health to organize a range of pop-up vaccine clinics. Anyone who wanted to get vaccinated at one of the clinics was welcome to do so whether they were connected to the school or not and regardless of whether they lived in the Seven Oaks area.

April – June 2022

School operations return to “normal.”

Under 12	12-17	Staff
*50%	*90%	98.5%

*Estimated

The table below lists data from SOSD's vaccine clinics:

Date	Location	Doses Given
June 28 and 29	Elwick	300 doses
July 5	Maples	150 doses
July 23	Amber Trails	25 doses
August 16	Maples	50 doses
August 17	Elwick	70 doses
August 23	Maples	*70 doses
September 18	Margaret Park	30 doses
September 22	Garden City	30 doses
March 18	950 Jefferson	25 doses

*Youth focus: 12-17 year olds



People line up for pop-up clinic at Elwick Community School.



Métis leader, Bucky Anderson uses his Métis music van at a pop-up vaccine clinic.



Pop-up clinic at Maples Collegiate.

Increased Resources

Meeting the educational needs as well as the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of students and staff during a pandemic would not be possible without increased resources. SOSD increased the number of faculty, support, and custodial staff in order to meet demands.

An additional 20 teachers were added to support primary classes to be in smaller groups and facilitate additional instructional support to the youngest learners. More teachers were also hired to support remote learning. Additional EAs were hired to support learning and nutritional package deliveries to homes, provide extra supports for students with higher needs as well as for students of essential workers who continued with in-school learning. Custodial staff were also increased in order to attend to more rigorous sanitizing/cleaning that needed to occur in schools.



“I was an Educational Assistant in both a high school and elementary school during the pandemic. The work that was done, and how open the lines of communication were, was incredible to see. The division did so much to both keep us working and to stay connected to the community and to families. From delivering chromebooks and homework packages for remote learning, to making lunches and delivering them to families. Supporting online learning and connecting to our special needs and additional needs students. Constantly cleaning, and masking up, and sanitizing, all while social distancing to the very best of our ability. All this was done to create a safe environment for kids to be able to come back to school and learn in person as much as possible. Everyone in the division adapted to make it all work and to normalize a new way of getting things done. It was a hard time, but also so inspiring to see everyone coming together truly as a team for the greater good of the community and our kids.”

- Brad Alder, Educational Assistant at Amber Trails Community School

Now That We’re Back: Ongoing Commitments to Health and Safety Related to COVID-19 and More!

“I learned we need to celebrate these walls as much as we can. The students love this place. Nothing proved that more than this year. Even our most disconnected students couldn’t wait to be here when we were open. They can’t wait until this pandemic is over so they can go back to their normal lives. I think they all learned the word “normal” is relative. They can’t wait to get back to the normal struggle we all have every day. They want to be here. They want us to reach out to them and reel them in. They want all the support we give them. I know that now. Because, when we couldn’t give it to them, they missed it.

I now know that going forward, I will focus on celebrating their place in this building. Celebrate it for what it does for them. They recognize now more than ever, they want to be here, participating in the madness. And they know more than ever now, we’re here to get them involved in it.”

- Ryan Cook, Teacher at Maples Collegiate





Divisional Day October 2021 Hybrid (live and virtual) for Seven Oaks School Division staff featured Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in K-12 Education with Dr. Pamela Palmater (pictured here with grade 11 students, Hailey Peebles and Carly McKay).

In addition to the commitment in excellence in student-centred learning and support, SOSD has committed to ongoing health and safety measures related to COVID-19. Here are some of the projects SOSD has under way:

- New infrastructure at multiple schools to maximize outdoor fresh air rates, improve air distribution and reduce volume of recirculated air.
- Enhanced commitment to professional development and school improvement efforts to help students make gains in literacy and numeracy.

As of May and June 2022, there has been an increase on gatherings which include extracurricular activities, arts in the park, student productions, sporting events, and a graduation pow wow. SOSD recognizes the significance of these activities resuming as they support positive physical and mental health.



Spring 2022 - Productions are back on! Collège Garden City Collegiate's performance of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee".



Sports are back! Spring 2022.



After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, SOSD's "Arts in the Park" returned in June 2022!



Preschool in the Park engages families within the Seven Oaks catchment area, June 2022.



Graduation Pow Wow at Maples Collegiate with graduates from all high schools and adult learning centres and all kindergarten to adult learning centres participating, June 2022.



SOSD Graduation Pow Wow, Photo Courtesy of Dave Force.

Reflecting Back and Moving Forward



SOSD Graduation Pow Wow, Photo Courtesy of Dave Force.

SOSD has worked through many challenges and is aware more work needs to be done; the pandemic is not over, and the effects of the last years are still being experienced in varying degrees. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the positive things already known about the staff, students, and community. We were able to witness capacity for creative and innovative approaches to learning, compassion for each other, and collective resilience. We know that challenges related to equitable access to education and basic needs as well as struggles with physical and mental health were amplified during the pandemic; we did what we could to help lessen some of those difficulties in our community. The wellbeing of staff and students is essential to great teaching and engaged learning as it was before the pandemic. The data and the narratives of the Seven Oaks School Division community tell their story of challenge and resilience. These stories are important and will inform how we continue to move forward together.

“This year so much has been taken away from us, but it has also brought the gift of reimagining how things can change. This year we have had to be more purposeful and creative with how we built our classroom community. These are activities, strategies, and ways of thinking that I will take with me into every year.”

- Jenni Magnus, Teacher at Governor Semple School



APART, YET TOGETHER: Seven Oaks School Division Anthology of Student Writing and Art



Wellness, Resilience and Joy During the Pandemic 2020-2021

In 2021, SOSD released a book titled “Apart, Yet Together: Seven Oaks Anthology of Student Writing and Art – Wellness Resilience and Joy During the Pandemic 2020-2021.” This book contains a collection of creative work from students in kindergarten to grade 8 on their experiences living through challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This collection is one example of the strength and resilience of the staff, students, and the larger Seven Oaks community.

“I’ve watched students share passions from their bedrooms, students show leadership from their living rooms and students encourage others from their basements. Throughout the daily tedium of morning messages, unstable internet connections and afternoon news conferences, these kids have displayed in both subtle and overt ways that they are resilient and remarkable.”

- Dana Crawford, Teacher at École Constable Finney School









SEVEN OAKS
SCHOOL DIVISION
community begins here