



# News Release

## The Board of Trustees passed a motion to close St. Gabriel Online School

***For immediate release – June 24, 2020***

Yesterday evening (June 23) the Board of Trustees passed a motion to permanently close St. Gabriel Online School effective August 15 after summer school is completed.

This comes after a virtual Town Hall meeting on May 28, where parents, students and teachers were able to share comments and ask questions, followed by a three-week period to receive additional feedback from stakeholders.

The decision to close St. Gabriel Online School was made in response to a change announced in February to the way the Alberta Government will fund education, specifically online (or distance) education. As a result of this change, a fully online school is no longer a viable option for the division.

In the future, online courses will be delivered through École Secondaire Notre Dame High School and St. Joseph High School in Red Deer, and St. Dominic Catholic High School in Rocky Mountain House.

There will be 18 teachers supporting online learning at the high school level: four online learning specialists supporting students in the core subject areas (English, Math, Social and the Sciences) in addition to 14 teachers offering online non-core courses (Religion, CALM, CTS and physical education programs).

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The lease at St. Gabriel Learning Centre, which housed both St. Gabriel Online School and St. John Paul II Outreach School in downtown Red Deer is also ending on June 30, 2020.

St. John Paul II Outreach School will move to St. Benedict the Moor Centre (on 39 Street between Maryview and St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School). St. John Paul II will continue to be the hub for outreach programming and new students looking for flexible learning opportunities. Outreach teachers will be able to create flexible programming for students that can include online delivery, face-to-face teaching, as well as facilitating opportunities for students to take specialized courses, such as welding, cosmetology and mechanics at one of our high schools.

“Closing St. Gabriel Online School was a difficult decision for the Board. Several alternatives were considered, along with stakeholder feedback. In the end, we feel that moving the online learning into our high schools is the best compromise possible and will continue to serve our students well, whether they’re taking one or two blended learning classes or their entire education online. We thank all stakeholders for sharing their stories, concerns, and ideas. We also thank our staff who worked at St. Gabriel Online School over the years, making meaningful connections with students through excellent distance and online education,” said Anne Marie Watson, Board Chair at Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

“Our high schools have had a rich history of supporting students who wish to take online courses to supplement their high school journey. All three high schools are well equipped to continue this rich legacy of online delivery,” said Interim Superintendent of Schools, Kathleen Finnigan at Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools.

*Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 10,480 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 600 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.*

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**For more information, contact:**

Communications Department

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools

P: 403-343-1055 Ext. 310147

E: [communications@rdcrs.ca](mailto:communications@rdcrs.ca)

W: [www.rdcrcs.ca](http://www.rdcrcs.ca)

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