

March 27, 2020

Dear parents and students,

I am sending this message today so that you can anticipate what to expect next week when our staff return from spring break and when our schools begin to design learning opportunities for your children in absence of face to face contact with teachers or access to our classrooms. Your children will be at home, and our teachers will be working remotely as we all take seriously the direction of our Provincial Health Officer and as we all work to stop the spread of COVID-19.

This coming Monday is the return from spring break for the vast majority of our staff. The government announcement occurred just days after spring break had already begun. Teachers have had no time to consider what this new reality looks like, no access to their classrooms to gather resources and supplies and no opportunity to gather as a staff to plan and adjust. So our first day back is our first day to connect with each other online and to come to understand the new reality of teaching and supporting students remotely. This means we need your patience in week one.

Monday, March 30th will be the first chance for school staffs to connect with each other and turn their minds to how to design learning opportunities. This means new ways to work together online, new resources they need, new tools to use, and new ways to support students and their learning in absence of face to face contact or the ability for groups to come together.

Likely by the end of the day Tuesday, you will have received a message from your school with initial information on plans for learning. That initial contact may only be to make sure we have your correct contact information and that you can expect more detailed information in the coming days. It will be unrealistic for teachers and schools to phone every family in the district so having access to your email address will be critical for us. If you have no email, then we need to know the best way to contact you.

Our hope is that by the end of the first week, every child in the district will have received a communication from most of their current teachers. There are some teachers who have high numbers of students, and who will take longer to contact them all. This is also why email contacts for you are important for us.

Very likely for many subjects, this early communication may be to confirm that these subjects will be on hold for the time being, and that more information will follow over the coming weeks. As a district, we are placing a top priority on literacy and numeracy so please expect to hear about those topics first. For some subjects it will take more time to determine how instruction will take place under these conditions. The first communication from teachers may not include as much detail as you would like. Please keep in mind that in this situation teachers are having to radically re-design how they teach students. This process takes time and care, and your patience is appreciated.

For all students, you can anticipate contact from your teachers and basic details about what learning to expect in the coming weeks. Please know again, this will be basics and will give you initial information about what week 2 will look like. Instruction will not be continuing in all areas in these early weeks.

Again, I only wanted to create this message to let you know what our first week of a suspension of in-class instruction looks like. It is a new world for all of us and you will be hearing directly from your school and teachers in the week ahead.

Thank you for your patience and we are all in this together as we work to support our health care system.

A suspension of in-class instruction by the provincial government means that students are not to be in school. This is one major way to try to stop the spread of COVID-19. With that direction, I also want to acknowledge that having your children at home, managing the current reality and also trying to work with us in supporting learning is going to be difficult. We all need to support each other and we will be, as a district, providing resources and supports to parents and families. Please also watch for those supports in the coming weeks.

Please stay well and take care.