

Hello all,

We are now headed into our fourth week of a suspension of in-class instruction and I wanted to target this week's message to parents and students particularly in our secondary schools. I have received lots of emails and questions about secondary and grade 12's and it was back in spring break when I last sent out a message to our graduating class of 2020. Back then I told you that we are thinking of you and we know that this is such a special year for you. There are some things that are important for you to know as we continue to be in a time of social distancing and "regular" school seems to be a long way away.

First, to the Grads of 2020 and your upcoming commencement and graduation ceremonies. Graduating from secondary school is a once in a lifetime event. We know you've bought clothes, you've planned, you've waited for this June to be your turn. Celebrating with your parents, family, friends, and extended family as you leave secondary school is a big deal. It is something you will remember forever. A couple of days ago, the Provincial Health Officer said that we would not be lifting any restrictions until at least mid-May. Even if the province does lift restrictions, it will be slow

and calculated. This means that we are still looking at people lining up at the grocery stores to get the very basics of food for at least a month. In that context, it seems extremely unlikely that any large gathering such as a commencement ceremony is on the near horizon. I just want you to know, that we share in your disappointment. We want nothing more than to celebrate your success and to see you off into the life beyond school. So what exactly will we do? We will continue to wait, to look at any other plans that are possible including looking toward the fall when maybe then we would have a chance to bring you together. But we also know that in the fall, many of you will be off to other adventures in your life. In essence, we just want you to know that Grad is a big deal for us too and we are very disappointed to know that bringing over 1000 people together to celebrate with you, just does not seem to be possible. We will wait, we will make new plans, and your schools will work with you and your parents.

Next, to all students and to the learning that you are all engaged in right now. Your studies and your lessons are important. We are not having in-class instruction, this does not mean that what you are doing does not matter, or that it will not be assessed in some way as we head toward June. Your teachers and schools are working extremely hard to determine what learning is necessary for you to pursue your studies as you move on. Whether to post-secondary or to the next grade, the foundation studies that you are working on right now matter a great deal. You won't likely be exposed to all the regular content that you normally would see if we were in regular session, but your teachers are identifying what learning matters most and they are working hard to make sure you keep a solid foundation to move forward next year. For report cards in June, the Ministry of Education has stated that teachers must include an assessment of learning before we suspended instruction, and after we have suspended instruction. All your learning matters.

To parents and students, your communication with schools is essential. Teachers are masters of knowing when and how students are engaged in a class. They do this in so many ways from talking to you, to checking in with you and to watching you work through lessons. In today's context, it is likely far more difficult for teachers to know how you are doing with your learning. Please stay in touch, reach out, email, whatever works but make sure that if you are needing help, that you let teachers know.

It seems we are only still at the beginning of our adventure. There still is a long way to go. Again, I wanted to send out this message so that parents and students know that for the graduating class of 2020, we are thinking of you, and for all learners, keep going, your learning matters and we still need you to keep building the foundations upon which we rely so that you can be successful in the years ahead. To the Grads of 2020, keep learning, keep working, and the reason that we are practicing social

distancing and that we are not permitted to gather is so that your parents, your friends and family and your grandparents can be at your side celebrating your successes not just today and in June, but for years ahead.

Take care, stay well,  
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