

COVID-19 Update and Our Path Forward

We want to provide an update of our current effort to support you and all our school communities during the COVID-19 closure. Obviously there is a lot of uncertainty at this point. Things are changing very rapidly and we will do our best to keep you in the loop when there are changes affecting our operations.

We are working to develop a plan for learning that supports students and staff during this closure period. To date, we have received some direction from the Ministry of Education and we anticipate more to come in the days ahead. In the interim, we will be reaching out to our many dedicated educators, school administrators and federation leadership to help us establish and prepare a learning strategy that is reasonable, accessible and responsive to these unique times in our province. While things are changing rapidly, here is what we can share right now:

School Closure Period - Schools were originally scheduled to be closed until April 5th. This week the Premier announced that the closure would extend beyond that date. At this time, we do not have any more information about the length of the closure. We understand the Ministry will be providing more information and we will share that when it becomes available.

Learning Resources - We are committed to continuing to provide resources aimed at helping engage students, parents/guardians and families. Last week we shared the Ministry of Education [Learn At Home](#) resources and it is posted on our website. This week, we have additional learning resources posted to our website as support to families and students. You may find these under the "Students" tab on the District homepage. Click on "[RCDSB Online Resources](#)".

Continuity of Learning - While we await further Ministry direction, we know staff and school communities may be looking for additional and more specific resources. While our school buildings may be temporarily closed, a plan to support continuity of learning for students is currently being established. This support plan will be shared more broadly before April 6th. In the meantime, please continue to check your email, our Twitter (@RCDSB) and Facebook (facebook.com/RCDSB) for announcements and information.

Staying Connected - This week, our focus is reconnecting - school teams are working with each other, establishing work from home spaces, identifying technology capacity and most importantly, reaching out to their students and families. This week, students and families can expect to hear from principals and school staff. Watch for emails, phone calls, and/or

social media feeds. This will likely look different across the District depending on the grade and the practices already established for teacher to student and/or teacher to parent/guardian communication.

Access to Technology and Wifi - We know that not all our students have access to a computer or WiFi. We are working on a process to provide - through our principals at each site - Chromebooks to students where needed. We are very sensitive to the varied and complex needs of our students and are committed to finding ways to support access to learning for all students. In the meantime, we recognize the importance of communication during this pandemic. That's why all RCDSB schools are now designated as public WiFi hotspots. Members of the public may access the internet at no charge outside any of our schools. Please respect and follow social distancing protocols established by public health.

School Year - For many parents/guardians and students, particularly in grade 12, there is concern about the possible loss of the school year. The Minister of Education was very clear in his letter that “no graduating student will have their ability to graduate impacted by the two-week closure and the COVID-19 developments”. We share this commitment and will prioritize this in our planning for continuity of learning.

Access to School Playgrounds - We recognize that our school yards occupy an important space in neighbourhoods across the County. While our school yards remain open, our play structures are not being cleaned. As such, we do not recommend that children play on these structures.

Mental Health and Well-being - Most importantly, this is a stressful time for everyone. For parents trying to balance work with taking care of children and students trying to maintain their studies to staff seeking to help their students. To help navigate this stressful time, our Mental Health Lead has compiled a list of [resources](#) that provide information and tips to support mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.