



March 20, 2020

Dear Parents, Students, and Staff:

I am pleased to send the attached letter and frequently asked questions that we received from Alberta Education today. These communications emphasize the following key messages:

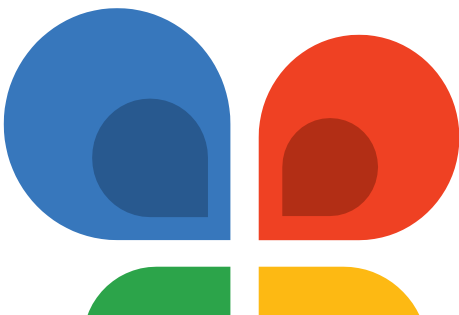
- The safety of our staff and students comes first.
- Student learning will continue.
- Provincial funding is still flowing to schools.
- Your school division has flexibility to do what is best for your community.

In my previous communication, I shared that our schools will be in contact with families following Spring Break (March 23 - March 27). To review the updates that have been sent over this past week by email, please go to our [Coronavirus Update](#).

Thank you for your ongoing patience and support during this very challenging time. I pray for everyone to stay healthy and to enjoy this time with your families.

Sincerely,

David Keohane, Superintendent of Schools





Office of the Minister

March 20, 2020

Dear Alberta parents,

We are in unprecedented times. Your child's routine has changed due to the provincial health emergency we are all facing. I appreciate that you are wondering where we go from here with your child's education. I am writing today to answer some of these questions.

First, I want to thank every Albertan involved in our province's education system. Everyone has come together to work on a path forward – teachers, support staff, superintendents, administrators elected trustees, education associations, the provincial government and many others. It is important you know that we are all working towards the same goal – to make this part of your child's life as normal as possible.

With that in mind, four principles are guiding our efforts.

- The safety of students and staff comes first.
- Student learning will continue.
- Provincial funding is still flowing to schools.
- Your school division has flexibility to do what is best for your community.

Student learning

Students will continue to learn. I have set the expectation that:

Kindergarten to grade 3: content will focus on language/literacy and math/numeracy, with teachers assigning an average of 5 hours of work per week.

Grades 4-6: content will focus mainly on language/literacy and math/numeracy, with some time spent on social studies and science. Teachers will assign an average of 5 hours of work per week.

Grades 7-9: content will focus on language arts, math, science and social studies, with teachers assigning an average of 10 hours of work per week.

Grades 10-12: content will focus on core courses required for high school graduation – which are English, math, social studies, biology, chemistry and physics. Teachers will assign an average of 3 hours of work per course per week.

School divisions will decide how to deliver at-home student learning. This could include online learning, or other forms of delivering content, such as the development of course packages and telephone check-ins. This will vary based on your child's grade, school and school division. Many parents have already heard what their school is planning for your child. If you have not, you can expect to hear from them soon.

Where possible, schools will work with high school students to complete their courses to the best of their ability, providing a final mark and awarding credits. If a student is unable to complete a course that would have allowed them to progress to the next grade, principals have the ability to award credits to ensure student progression.

For parents who want to help supplement their child's learning, more than 4,000 resources aligned with Alberta's curriculum are available on www.learnalberta.ca.

Moving to the next grade

Every student will receive final grades and will receive a report card, appropriate to their grade level. Teachers will be responsible for assessing a student's progress and assigning a final grade. All students who were on track to progress to the next grade will do so.

For our students in grades 6 and 9, I am confirming that provincial achievement tests are cancelled.

Grade 12 students

Students on track to receive 100 or more credits will still be eligible to graduate. Principals will have the ability to award up to 15 credits to students in grade 12 whose program has been negatively impacted by class cancellations. For courses that have already begun, schools will complete them with the student to the best of their ability, provide a final mark and award credits.

If the student is unable to complete a course that would have led them to achieving a high school diploma, for example a work experience or a career and technology studies course, principals have the ability to award credits to ensure the student graduates.

General diploma exams are cancelled. There will be some exceptions for students who need to take them.

Working hard to help your child

I know this is not a perfect situation. For the time being, this is our new reality. I want to leave you with this – many, many education professionals are working very hard to make your child's learning as normal as possible. I am confident that our education system will continue to excel, largely because of the hard work of everyone across the province.

I want to express my deep appreciation for the work that you are doing and the effort you continue to put into your children's success. These are extraordinary circumstances, but the perseverance of you and your children is truly remarkable.

We will get through this, together!

Please reach out to your local school and school division to find out what the specific plans are for your child. You can also send your questions to studentsupport@gov.ab.ca.

For general information on the COVID-19 situation in Alberta, please visit www.alberta.ca/covid19. This website is updated daily.

Yours truly,

(original signed)

Adriana LaGrange
Minister

Education Continuity Plan: COVID-19

Is school cancelled for the rest of the year?

- At this time, students are no longer attending in-school classes until further notice.
- It is too early to know how long this situation will continue.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other government officials are monitoring the situation closely and will make further decisions as necessary.

Can my child go to school to pick up materials and personal items?

- We ask for your patience right now as school authorities sort out these details.
- Schools will be in touch, if they have not already, to provide further details on plans to pick-up materials and personal items.

Are classes continuing online or through other mechanisms?

- Student learning is continuing. School authorities are determining how best to support at-home student learning.
- This could include online learning tools or other forms of delivering content and resources.
- Many parents have already heard what their school is planning for their child.
- If you have not heard from your child's school, expect to hear from them soon.

What happens if schools are allowed to resume in-person classes before the end of the school year?

- The education system will come up with a plan on how best to manage that transition, if it happens. However, we are not at a point right now to provide any details.
- Currently, students are no longer attending in-school classes until further notice.
- It is too early to know how long this situation will continue.

Are you considering extending school into the summer?

- At this time, students will no longer be attending in-school classes until further notice.
- It is too early to know how long this situation will continue.

Can home schooling still continue?

- Yes, as long as health recommendations are followed, home schooling can continue.
- Associated boards or private schools are expected to continue to supervise the program and provide assistance and advice to the parent without going into homes.

What does cancelling school mean for First Nation students who attend provincial schools and live on-reserve?

- The impacts are similar as it is for students attending provincial schools but who live off-reserve.
- School authorities are encouraged to communicate with First Nations education authorities where there are existing education service agreements. This communication will help First Nations families and all partners to understand the impacts to these students.
- School authorities are putting together their approach to at-home learning and will communicate the plan with all students soon, including those student they serve residing on-reserve.

What about First Nation schools?

- First Nation schools and school authorities are impacted in similar ways as provincial schools.
- First Nations and First Nation education authorities are also working hard to develop response plans for their schools and students.
- The federal government has announced \$305 million for an Indigenous community support fund as part of a broader aid package to help Canadians and businesses deal with the fallout from COVID-19.

Does this situation change spring break?

- Spring break will continue as scheduled in your school authority.
- Schools will be closed during this time, with teachers and school staff not required to work.

Are schools going to refund fees paid?

- This is an issue that school authorities will be looking at, but no decisions have been made. We are asking for patience from parents as school authorities work on a number of issues.
- Our first priority is establishing continuity of student learning plans for every student.

Student Learning

How will schools be providing at-home on online learning?

- For all children in ECS programs and kindergarten to Grade 12 students, school authorities will offer at-home learning opportunities, either through online means or through other accommodations, such as course packages and telephone check-ins.
- Government expects that every student, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status, will continue to learn while in-school classes across the province are cancelled. This includes students in public, separate, Francophone, charter and independent schools, and Indigenous students attending provincial schools.
- Every school authority will have to determine what will work best for their students.
- Staff will provide specialized supports and services to children and students with disabilities in consultation with families.
- This will likely vary among the school authorities, and may even vary from school to school.
- Government expects school authorities and school leaders to be flexible, and trusts their professional skills and experience.

What about students who do not have computers or internet at home?

- Each school authority will have to determine what will work best for their children and students.
- This will likely vary among the school authorities, and may even vary from school to school.
- Student learning is continuing and each school authority is taking steps to determine how best to deliver at-home student learning.
- This might include some online learning tools, paper packages, or other ways to continue student learning.

How is this going to work? How well are students going to be able to learn at-home? What subjects will be covered/taught?

- Teachers are currently evaluating what has not yet been covered in their classes and will prioritize remaining learning outcomes based on what is manageable for students learning at home.

- Teachers will plan specific tasks and projects to help students learn while in-school classes are cancelled. Content delivery for each grade is broken down as follows:

Early Childhood Services programs

- Essential outcomes, including literacy and numeracy.
- Goals, supports and services outlined in Individual Program Plans (IPPs).

Kindergarten – Grade 3

- Education content will focus on language/literacy and mathematics/numeracy outcomes of the provincial curriculum.
- Teachers will assign an average of five hours of work per student per week, and will be expected to work with their students and parents on the delivery of these materials.

Grades 4-6

- Education content will continue to focus on language/literacy and mathematics/numeracy outcomes, and there will be opportunities to incorporate science and social studies outcomes through cross-curricular learning.
- Teachers will assign an average of five hours of work per student per week, and will be expected to work with their students and parents on the delivery of these materials.

Grades 7-9

- Education content will focus on core mathematics, language/literacy, science and social studies curriculum outcomes.
- Teachers will assign an average of 10 hours of work per student per week, and will be expected to work with their students and parents on the delivery of these materials.

Grades 10-12

- Education content will focus on specified and core courses required for high school graduation requirements, including language (English, French and French language arts), social studies, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics.
- Content from other courses will be delivered where possible, and accommodations for students unable to complete courses are in place.
- Teachers will assign an average of three hours of work per course per student per week, and will be expected to work with their students and parents on the delivery of these materials.

How will you enforce these guidelines for at-home learning?

- Together, government, superintendents, administrators, school authorities and the Alberta Teacher' Association, determined how to continue teacher-directed learning for students across Alberta.
- All agree that these are reasonable guidelines for learning at-home for students to continue their course work and complete the school year.
- Every school authority will have to determine what will work best for their students.
- This will likely vary among the school authorities, and may even vary from school to school.

- Teachers bring with them a breadth of professional knowledge, skills and experience. Our teachers are in the best position to determine what is best for their students during this unique situation, and do the best they can with the tools and resources they have.

If the focus in the early years is literacy and numeracy, what happens to subjects like science and social studies?

- Foundational to any student learning is literacy and numeracy. It remains vital for all learners but it is very important for early year learners to maintain and develop literacy and numeracy competencies.
- There are guidelines for science and social studies instruction for students starting in grade 4 and up.

What is the plan for high school courses that aren't math, English, French, biology, chemistry or physics?

- Teachers will use their professional knowledge, skills and experience to determine what is best for their students during this unique situation.
- It remains important for teachers to have the flexibility to decide how best meet the needs of their students.
- For any courses that have started, schools will complete them with the student to the best of their ability and provide a final mark and award credits.
- If the student is unable to complete a course that would have led them to achieving a high school diploma, such as a work experience or a career and technology studies course, principals have the ability to award unassigned credits to ensure the student graduates.

Student Assessment

How will teachers grade or assess at-home learning content?

- Teachers will be responsible for assessing a student's progress and reporting on their progress including assigning a final grade.
- School authorities have committed to ensuring parents are consulted and kept informed of how assessment will be determined in this unique circumstance.
- All students who were on track to progress to the next grade will do so for the next school year.

Will students still get final grades?

- Every student will receive a final grade and students who were on track to progress to the next grade will do so for the next school year.
- Provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests (PATs) and Grade 12 diploma exams are cancelled through to the end of June 2020.
- We trust the professionalism of teachers and education leaders to assess their students' progress, no matter the learning environment, to determine suitable final grades.

Will every student receive a final report card?

- Yes, students will receive final grades and a report card, appropriate to their grade level.
- Report cards might not be exactly how they were in the past, but there is an expectation for schools to still provide final report cards for this school year.

Are Grade 6 and Grade 9 PATs cancelled?

- Yes, all Grade 6 and Grade 9 provincial achievement tests (PATs) are cancelled for the 2019-20 school year.
- For grade 9 students who wrote PATs in January, schools may share the results with parents but they will not be provincially marked.

High School Students

Will Grade 12 students still graduate this year?

- Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate.
- Students who are moving on to post-secondary studies will not be penalized.
- Government will be working with post-secondary institutions to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not prevent students from being eligible for admission to post-secondary studies for the upcoming school year.

What is happening for Grade 12 diploma exams?

- All Grade 12 diploma exams are cancelled through to the end of June 2020.
- Students currently registered to write diploma exams during April and June sessions will receive exemptions, without the need to apply for one.
- We will also ensure home schooled students and adult learners who wish to write diplomas exams still have an opportunity to do so.

Under what circumstances will some students still be able to write diploma exams? And how do they make that arrangement?

- Special circumstances where diploma exams may be administered include:
 - Home schooled students due to some post-secondary institutions specifically requiring a standardized test result for home schooled students.
 - Adult students (students with mature student status) can challenge diploma exams without taking the course. These students cannot be exempt from diploma exams as they do not have a school awarded grade.
- Students who do not study under a school authority, such as home school students, can contact exam.admin@gov.ab.ca for assistance.

How will students receive enough credits to graduate high school? Please explain how students will still achieve the 100 credits they need to graduate?

- Students on track to receive 100 or more credits will still be eligible to graduate and receive a high school diploma.
- Principals will have the ability to award up to 15 unassigned credits to students in Grade 12 whose program has been negatively impacted by class cancellations.
- For any courses that had started, schools will complete them with the student to the best of their ability, provide a final mark and award credits.
- If the student is unable to complete a course that would have led them to achieving a high school diploma, such as work experience or a career and technology studies course, principals have the ability to award unassigned credits to ensure the student graduates.

Why not just lower the credit requirement to graduate this year?

- It is important for student transcripts to be complete with 100 credits or more as to not create issues for students in the long-term.
- Most students graduate with more than 100 credits, so the 15 unassigned credits that principals will be able to use are only for students whose program has been negatively impacted by class cancellations, affecting their ability to graduate this year.

Why did you wait to cancel Grade 12 diploma exams, when other provinces had already canceled them?

- Our first and foremost priority for Grade 12 students was to ensure those that are eligible to graduate would still be able to do so, and continue on to post secondary studies without being penalized.
- However, feedback from our education partners over the last few days has identified a number of challenges in having Grade 12 students write diploma exams.
- Based on this feedback, government decided to cancel Grade 12 diploma exams through to the end of June 2020.
- Students will receive a final mark for classes they are currently taking by the end of the school year, which will appear on their transcript.
- They can then use their transcript for post-secondary entrance, scholarships and other purposes, as they normally would.

How will classes in option courses such as fine arts, music, culinary arts, automotive mechanics work?

- Where possible, schools will work with high school students to complete their courses to the best of their ability, providing a final mark and awarding credits.
- Government recognizes this might not be possible with some courses with hands-on learning or requiring specialized equipment.
- If a student is unable to complete a course that would have allowed them to progress to the next grade, principals have the ability to award credits to ensure student progression.

For grades 10 and 11 courses, can unassigned credits be used to move students to the next level?

- A student's grade is important in high school as it indicates a certain level of knowledge and learning was demonstrated by the student.
- Student learning for grades 10 and 11 course is continuing, and teachers have the flexibility in determining alternative ways for students to still learn the course material and to use their professional judgement to assess the student and assign a final grade.
- There will be some courses where there just is not an effective alternative to in-class learning with specialist equipment, such as automotive or hairstylist classes and students won't be able to complete these courses in this school year.
- However, our education system has the flexibility to find ways for students to still complete the courses they want to at a later date.

High school classes have more students per class than lower grades, so how are teachers going to manage that many students in an online environment?

- At-home is going to be new for many students, and many teachers.
- Teachers and students can work together to determine how best to achieve the learning outcomes.

- Students not having face-to-face time with a teacher does not mean student learning is over.
- Some students have been using distance learning for many years and have told us that learning this way becomes easier as you go.

How are high school graduation ceremonies going to be affected?

- Graduation ceremonies are important milestones for high school students.
- It is still too early to know how long this situation will last, but any plans being considered will have to follow the direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health at that time.

Other Student Considerations

What supports will be provided for students with special needs?

- Staff who provide specialized supports and services to children with disabilities should consult with families to find ways to support learning outcomes at home, while avoiding direct contact to protect students' health.

How will at-home learning work for students in Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs?

- School authorities are in the best position to decide how to provide education services to children while still following the directions from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, including not going into homes.
- Teachers are expected to connect with families to plan for and ensure continuity of each child's educational program in an ECS program.

What is the plan for exchange students here from other countries?

- For foreign born students currently still here in Canada, they should still be supported by the school authorities.

This is a stressful time for students. What considerations are being made for their mental health?

- With this disruption in their education, students will be experiencing a range of emotions and will deal with the stress in a variety of ways.
- School authorities should reach out to health partners to ensure supports are in place for students during this difficult time.

For students that are in crisis situations, how will they be supported?

- School authorities should reach out to health partners to ensure support are readily available for students during this difficult time.

Teachers and Staff

What are the expectations for teachers and school staff?

- Teachers and other school staff are expected to work, either from home or at their workplace.
- School authorities are expected to continue their regular day-to-day operations and ensure the safety of our school facilities. We expect maintenance, capital projects, cleaning of facilities, and administrative work to continue.
- Decisions on how to do this are still to be made, and may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- We encourage school employees to speak to their employer about their specific situation.

What are the expectations for teachers in terms of working from home?

- Teachers and school staff should seek advice and guidance from their principal.

Some of the support staff are running out of work. Should school authorities be looking at layoffs?

- Student learning is expected to continue and it is still too early to know how long this situation will continue.
- Options for support staff to perform other duties, such as providing some teaching support and professional learning, should be explored.
- These are still early days and quick decisions on staffing is not encouraged. Keeping people safe is our priority, but keeping people employed is also very important.
- Ultimately, these types of decisions will need to be made by each school authority. However, school authorities will still receive their full allotment of funding for the 2019-20 school year and should take steps to minimize staffing impacts.

What should boards be instructing staff that have children but no childcare?

- This is a very common issue facing many Alberta parents.
- We are all in this together and school authorities and education system leaders should continue to be flexible in supporting individuals with varying challenges and needs.

Is the government considering emergency daycare services for essential workers like teachers?

- No decisions have been made at this time.

What about school bus drivers? Will their contacts be upheld?

- Government is committed to working with school authorities during this unprecedented situation.
- School authorities will still receive their full allotment of funding for the 2019-20 school year and should take steps to minimize staffing impacts.