



BC Confederation of
Parent Advisory Councils

Letter to Parents
March 27, 2020

Ref: 218947

Dear Parents/Guardians

We understand this is a difficult time for you and your children as we work together to ensure everyone's health and safety are protected during the COVID-19 pandemic. While there are important public health matters for all of us to keep in mind, we're encouraged by the goodwill of British Columbians, who are stepping up in extraordinary ways to help each other.

We are writing to you today to let you know about the steps we are taking to ensure continued learning opportunities for your children.

On March 17, 2020, under the direction of the Provincial Health Officer, we made the difficult decision to immediately suspend in-classroom learning in B.C. until further notice. These actions are critical to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is important to know that while in-classroom instruction is being suspended, our school system will not be closed – we will remain open to continue to support students and families in a variety of ways. We want to assure you that the health and safety of your families and our communities is the highest priority, and this is at the forefront of all of government's decision making.

We want you to know that every student will receive a final mark, and all students who are on track to move to the next grade will do so in the fall. For grades 10 and 11 students, graduation assessments that were scheduled for April will be postponed.

Every student eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate. The only graduation assessment required for current Grade 12 students is the Grade 10 numeracy assessment, and we will ensure students who are on track to graduate but haven't yet completed this assessment will have the opportunity to meet this requirement. We are also ensuring all students graduating high school will have a smooth transition to post-secondary.

This is a challenging time for everyone, but we all have the same goal. As a society, we need to find ways to create a sense of routine and learning for children and youth, and continued opportunities to learn are a big part of that.

That's why we are working with all 60 school districts, independent school authorities, First Nations schools, teachers, school leaders, support staff, public health officials and all our education partners on a coordinated approach. Guidelines have now been sent to schools and districts to follow as they develop education plans for students.

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All the planning will be guided by these principles:

1. Ensure a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and employees.
2. Provide the services needed to support children of our essential workers.
3. Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance.
4. Provide continuity of educational opportunities for all students.

These principles will also guide how schools will plan for students who need extra learning support for those with disabilities and diverse abilities, services like meal programs, child care operating on school grounds, and essential services for healthcare workers and first responders.

B.C. is an incredibly diverse province and there won't be a one-size-fits-all approach to continued learning. Flexibility will be key as we all move forward together.

Since there are many students who will have challenges working online, we've also asked schools to look at a variety of approaches for continued learning that will fit with your individual needs and situation. Your school leaders are actively working on these plans and we anticipate they will be ready with more specific continued learning opportunities for your community in the coming weeks. You can expect to hear from your school principals shortly.

While primary responsibility for continued learning will come from teachers, we know many parents and guardians are asking for additional resources to help keep kids learning at home while plans are being put in place. That's why we've launched, Keep Learning BC at www.openschool.bc.ca/KeepLearning to ensure there is a central place where you will find a list of free, everyday educational activities for every age, designed to support the B.C. curriculum. You will also find a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions that will be continuously updated as things progress at www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools/.

We understand that many children are experiencing anxiety, while also missing their teachers and friends. We encourage you to talk to your kids. Let them know that the actions we are taking are designed to best protect them, and to protect the people most vulnerable to COVID-19 – their grandparents and other seniors and elders and people with compromised immune systems.

We are navigating this new terrain together and we must do our best to support each other's health and well-being. There's no question, speculation and misinformation being shared on social media can cause unnecessary stress during what is already an incredibly anxious time. That's why we are committed to making sure you have timely information communicated to you on a regular basis, so you have facts you can count on.

Know that these actions are temporary, and we will return to regular school life down the road. In the meantime, look out for each other. We are in this together. By working together and supporting each other, we will get through this.



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Sincerely,

Rob Fleming,
Minister of Education

Andrea Sinclair, President
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

More Information

- Students, parents, guardians and teachers can find learning resources and accurate, timely information about schools at www.openschool.bc.ca/KeepLearning. You can also find a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions that will be continuously updated as things progress at www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools/.
- For mental health and online safety support, all families have access to ERASE – Expect Respect and a Safe Education – available here: www.erase.gov.bc.ca
- If your child is struggling with a problem big or small, they can also call the Kids Help Line, a free resource available to them at: 1-800-668-6868.
- A new website at www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19 is constantly being updated with the latest information.
- The best source of COVID-19 health information can be found at the BC Centre for Disease Control website <http://www.bccdc.ca/>
- For questions of a non-medical nature, a new telephone line has been set up at 1-888-COVID19. Phone lines are open 7 days a week from 7:30 AM to 8 PM, and information is available in more than 110 languages.
- For those who think they have symptoms of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health has developed an online self-assessment tool at <https://covid19.thrive.health> and people with symptoms can also call 8-1-1 to pre-arrange health testing.