

# NNDSB

## Parent Guide to Learning at Home: Supporting your Child Through their Educational Journey

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The Near North District School Board (NNDSB), along with other school boards across the province has implemented a new way of learning quickly. Last week we began our journey towards re-engaging all students in teacher-led home-based learning.

It is our goal to ensure the successful completion of the school year for all students and to support advancement to the next school year. In our steps towards the achievement of this goal, we remain focused not only on the curriculum but on continuing to deliver equitable and inclusive educational programming while supporting our most vulnerable students.

The collective effort that has been put forward by all staff to develop and deliver home-based learning is incredible, and we are confident in the ability of educators and support staff to continue to rise to the challenge. As we begin this journey together, we know that students and families will need time to become accustomed to this learning environment.

Understanding that teaching and delivery of services will not look the same and will likely continue to evolve over the coming days and weeks, we want to assure you that you and your child will be supported. We know that not all circumstances are the same and that families are facing many challenges at this time. This guide has been developed to assist parents and guardians in navigating this new environment with their child and understanding what is involved in home-based learning.

Sincerely,

Jay Aspin,  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Craig Myles  
Director of Education

## Learning From Home Expectations

While all NNDSB schools remain closed to reduce the spread of COVID-19, students will continue their educational journey by learning at home. It is important to note that while traditional online learning resources may play a part, distance education does not necessarily rely solely on the use of technology. Our goal is to encourage students to read, communicate, and engage in authentic learning experiences while continuing to be physically active and mentally well.

Learning at home allows flexibility and:

- Can be done at any point in the day.
- Encourages student voice and choice.
- Does not always require online access.
- Can be done with minimal adult support.

The Ministry of Education has provided direction with respect to the time and curriculum expectations during school closures.

Teachers will provide instruction to students based on the following Ministry Guidelines:

Grade Level	Hours of Instruction	Key Focus
Kindergarten to Grade 3	Five hours of work per student per week	Literacy and math
Grade 4 to Grade 6	Five hours of work per student per week	Literacy, math, science, and social studies
Grade 7 to Grade 8	Ten hours of work per student per week	Math, literacy, science and social studies
Grade 9 to Grade 12	Three hours of work per course per week for semester students.  1.5 hours of work per week per course for non-semester students	Focus on achieving credits and graduation

Our teachers have been developing home-based learning plans specifically for their class(es). They have been connecting with students and families by phone and email to check in and determine technology needs. Based on this knowledge they will be determining the best method through which to deliver inclusive, accessible, and positive learning. Instruction will consist of flexible learning opportunities, adhere to curriculum requirements, and is not hindered by the at-home learning environment. As much as possible, teachers will engage students using tools that students are already familiar with through previous schoolwork. All resources are available on the NNDSB Passport to Learning page.

<https://www.nearnorthschools.ca/learning-at-home/>

# Responsibilities

## Teacher Responsibilities

Despite the ever-changing landscape in education due to COVID-19, the board remains committed to enabling all students to reach their potential and to succeed. Teachers are central to ensuring this occurs and will continue to fulfill the expectations of their role as your child's primary instructor during school closures.

It is expected that teachers will make themselves available to their students and will be available for students who need assistance or want to ask questions. This could take the form of an email exchange, a phone conversation with the teacher, or small group meetings online. Since teachers may be reaching out by phone, please be aware that they may not be calling from a number you recognize so that you might see "Unknown Caller ID," "Private Name," or "Private Number."

## Student Responsibilities



During home learning, students will need to shift and create habits of success in their new learning environment. Your child's teacher(s) will help with this and will communicate clear expectations for students. Students, in consultation with their parent(s)/guardian(s), and to the greatest extent possible given their circumstances, should:

- Establish daily routines for engaging in learning experiences (e.g., start at 8:30 a.m. each day).
- If possible, identify a comfortable, quiet space in their home where they can work productively and successfully.

- Monitor the established lines of communication with their teacher(s), to check for announcements and feedback.
- Do their best work by completing assignments with integrity and academic honesty.
- Do their best to meet timelines, commitments, and due dates.
- Communicate proactively with their teacher(s) if they cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.

## Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

The transition to learning at home is not simple or easy for everyone. In the coming weeks, we know you will continue to provide support to your child(ren), while managing several stressors. We want you to know that we do not intend to place an additional burden on our families. We know that many parents are caring for elderly parents and young children, and many are still working during the day. There is no expectation that students will need to be online during a specific hour(s) of the day--they can engage in learning at any point in the day and take a brain break when needed.



Also, learning activities will be assigned with careful consideration of grade-level, and accommodations that may be required for students. We know parents want to be there to guide their children through at home learning, but students should be able to complete their work with minimal adult support. If you have concerns, please contact your child's teacher(s). As we move forward with distance learning, we ask for your continued support as we navigate uncharted waters and explore innovative ways to engage parents/guardians at home.

The following may help in assisting your child with their new learning environment.

- Establish routines and expectations to maintain a familiar rhythm of the day.
- Balance screen time and non-screen time activities.
- Students should take brain breaks and regularly move as they engage in the activities and study.
- Encourage outdoor activity.
- Discuss what your child is learning and ask questions.
- Establish times for quiet and reflection.
- Remain mindful of your child's stress.
- Stay connected with your child's teacher.

# Learning at Home Resources

## Access to Technology and Equity of Resources



We recognize that some families and staff members do not have access to WIFI, the Internet, or to devices that are necessary for online learning during school closures. Access to broadband internet connectivity remains a challenge in many homes and communities throughout the district, as not all families have access to technology.

A process for obtaining data on specific student needs was implemented beginning the week of April 6, 2020. Information collected from our online learning platforms regarding usage since the school closures has assisted in identifying students who may not have access.

Teachers have contacted these families to obtain further information on specific needs and potential barriers. This information will be used to develop student-specific solutions for delivering education to those students who do not have appropriate internet access and WIFI. Parents who have not been contacted by their teacher and require assistance with access to technology are encouraged to contact their child's teacher. You can do so by calling your child's school directly Monday to Friday.

## Alternatives to Home Based Learning

Our primary goal is to do everything we can to keep families safe and healthy. To support this goal, we are working to ensure that every student has access to learning during the closure, and we will work diligently to ensure all learning needs are addressed. We have explored different ways to deliver learning offline to ensure all students are successful, including those who have challenges accessing the Internet or those who are unable to thrive in an online learning environment.

Currently, we are focusing on providing access to online learning for families where possible. The next phase will focus on providing support for students who have alternative learning needs.

We are also currently exploring how paper packages can be printed and safely distributed to students and families who need them while following public health agencies' physical distancing guidelines. Students will not be penalized for circumstances and barriers that may arise due to the need for physical distancing. Learning can occur through a variety of mechanisms and is present in everyday experiences and opportunities.

## Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

To support access to learning for students with special education needs, IEPs will continue to remain in effect as the continuity of learning strategies are implemented. In situations where the existing accommodations, modifications or alternative programming are not feasible, teachers will work collaboratively with students and families to determine workable solutions.

## Assessment and Evaluation

We recognize that these are not regular times and that not all students are equitably well-positioned to learn from home. Some have limited access to technology. Others may have less support from family members because their parents/guardians are essential workers, and others may be struggling in other areas. All of this to say that educators understand the challenging circumstances in which many of our families find themselves and will assess and evaluate student learning, with care and compassion.

Our goal is to support every learner, not to penalize them for the circumstances that they find themselves in. At the same time, it is the expectation of the Ministry of Education's and the NNDSB that learning will continue and that students will do their best to complete all assigned work. We want students to be supported as they work towards their credits and well-prepared for their next level of education. We will do everything we can to support all learners to be successful.

As always, students and families should connect with teachers directly if they have questions about assessment, evaluation, and reporting, or any other class/course-related question. You can also direct questions to your vice-principal or principal, but please start with your teachers.



### ***How will students be assessed/evaluated?***

With care and compassion, teachers will assess and evaluate student learning during the closure period. Student's marks will reflect work completed up until March 12 and can improve if students demonstrate further achievement of curriculum expectations during such times schools are closed.

#### **Elementary – Kindergarten to grade 8**

Teachers will use assessments to gather evidence of how students are progressing in their learning and will provide meaningful feedback to students to support their continuous and ongoing learning.

Teachers will endeavour to conduct distance learning for all remaining strands in Mathematics, Social Studies, History and Geography, and Science and Technology. However, if it is not possible to evaluate a specific curriculum strand, that section of the Final Report Card will be left without a mark, and the comment will indicate that the strand was not assessed.

### Secondary – Grades 9 to 12

Secondary teachers will assign learning tasks, projects, and culminating activities for assessment purposes. Teachers will communicate results and feedback to students about these marked assignments, and results will inform students' final course marks.

#### ***Will mid-term report cards be issued to secondary students?***

Mid-term report cards will not be issued to all secondary students, including graduating students, as per ministry direction. Mid-term marks will only be provided to graduating (grade 12) students. These marks will be reported to the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) and the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) by May 1, 2020. Teachers will email mid-term marks directly to grade 12 students and reach out by phone to those who may not yet have access to technology. Mid-term marks will reflect work completed up until March 13, 2020. However, assessments completed under learning at home conditions can be used to improve marks should students demonstrate further achievement of expectations. Teachers may provide opportunities for students to submit a missed and/or additional assignment to demonstrate their learning. Teachers can adjust the weighting of assigned tasks in their determination of a mark if needed.

#### ***Will Final Report Cards be issued?***

All school boards will issue final report cards, including the Kindergarten Communication of Learning for all students in June 2020. Mid-term marks will be issued, for graduating (grade 12) students only by May 1, 2020.

### Kindergarten Communication of Learning

The Kindergarten Communication of Learning will be based on educators' observations of key learning and growth in learning before March 12, 2020. Teachers may choose to include comments on the growth in learning demonstrated during the school closure period when it is to the child's benefit.



## Grades 1 to 8

Final grades and marks will reflect work completed and evaluation information gathered before March 12, 2020. Evidence of learning between now and June may be used to improve final grades in a subject area. Please note that marks may improve if students demonstrate further achievement of expectations.

Reporting on Learning Skills and Work Habits should reflect information gathered before March 12, 2020. Teachers may choose to include comments on the final report card if they feel that doing so would support the student's progress.

## Grades 9 to 12

Final marks will be reported in June 2020 and will be based on work completed until March 12, 2020 and after April 6, 2020. Only demonstrated improvements in learning would be taken into consideration when assessing a final mark.

Marks should represent the most accurate reflection of student work based on what is reasonable and in the best interest of students during this time. Tasks will be assessed with a focus on improving student grades, given that distance learning is not an environment that is conducive to learning for all. Our goal is to support every learner, not to penalize them for the circumstances that they find themselves in. At the same time, it is our expectation and the Ministry of Education's hope that learning will continue and that students will do their best to complete all assigned work. We want students to be supported as they work towards their credits and well-prepared for their next level of education. We will do everything we can to support all learners to be successful.

Reporting on Learning Skills and Work Habits should reflect information gathered before March 12, 2020. Teachers may choose to include comments on the final report card.

## **Graduating Students**

The Ministry of Education has made it clear that grade 12 students will not have their graduation or progression impacted by the developments surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, one of our key priorities will be to support students who are scheduled to graduate this year. Any student who is on track to graduate will be supported to graduate. Teachers of graduating students will provide marks for them by May 1, 2020 on work completed by that time to meet admission requirements for post-secondary education. Final report cards with marks will also be issued. The ministry is currently in discussions with colleges and universities about the adaptations required to support the admission process for students applying for post-secondary education and to ensure no student's graduation or transition to post-secondary is jeopardized as a result of the school closure period. The graduation requirement to complete 40 hours of community involvement is suspended for this school year. Community involvement hours that have been completed should be reported on the report cards of graduating students. Graduating students should be encouraged to complete their hours wherever possible, where the health and safety of the student can be assured.



## Parent/Guardian Communication

We know that when parents are involved in their children's education, student success improves. It is important to us that we keep lines of communication open. Communication with students and families will look different across the NNDSB and will vary by grade, classroom, and tool used. Educators and support staff may communicate with you through email, online learning platforms (such as Brightspace and Google Classroom), and/or by phone.

Families are welcome to reach out to educators and school administrators by email. If you have trouble reaching someone, please email [info@nearnorthschools.ca](mailto:info@nearnorthschools.ca) or call (705) 472-8170 or toll-free 1 (800) 478-4922 and leave a message in the general mailbox.

Centrally, we will continue to provide board updates to families regarding COVID-19 and its impact on schools. Stay connected by:

- Visiting the Near North District School Board website at [www.nearnorthschools.ca](http://www.nearnorthschools.ca). This should be your primary source for all board updates on COVID-19 impacting NNDSB students, staff, and families.
- Following the NNDSB on social media – follow NearNorthSchool@Twitter and/or like our page on Facebook.

