



March 27, 2020

Dear Near North Families:

I wanted to provide an update of our current progress on supporting student learning during the COVID-19 closure and some information about possible next steps. I know that there are many different perspectives on this issue, and at the NNDSB, we are working to find a path forward that meets the many needs and perspectives in partnership with the Ministry of Education, our provincial and local education partners, and our many dedicated educators. While the situation is continually changing, we can share the following:

School Closure Period - Schools were originally scheduled to be closed until April 5th. The Premier has 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 sharing resources to help engage students, parents, and families. Last week we shared the Ministry of Education [Learn At Home](#) resources. Today the NNDSB launched the [NEW Near North Passport to Learning webpage](#) which offers a variety of resources and tools that cover a range of grades and subjects that may be helpful for students and parents during this time. We know that finding time to access these resources can be challenging for some families and other families may be looking for additional and more specific resources. These resources are not a substitute for in-class instruction, but rather a first step in promoting learning-based activities and will be updated as we move forward.

Continuity of Learning - While we await further Ministry direction, we are proactively working with the Ministry to develop a continuity of learning plan. We know that it's not possible to replicate the school day online, but it is possible to identify key curricular concepts, best practices for online/remote learning, ensure online learning platforms and resources are in place and establish new ways for teacher collaboration, instruction, and assessment. We recognize that families have many questions about how learning will continue, and we will expect to bring clarity to this over the next two weeks.

Staying Connected - Now that March Break has come to an end, we are entering into a two-week school closure period. Our school-based staff is currently awaiting the direction of what work will look like from remote locations with schools closed. This week has been focused on beginning to develop plans for these school-based staff.

Access to Technology and Wifi - We know that not all students have access to a computer or wifi. We are working with the Ministry to consider strategies that could make technology available 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.

Students with Special Education Needs - Our Special Education and Student Support Services staff are working to ensure that continuity of learning plans include strategies to support students with specialized learning needs.

Risk of Loss of School Year - For many students and parents, 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 Schools and Playgrounds - Access to all school buildings is completely restricted at this time. We would like to remind everyone that as we transition out of winter into spring, play structures and playground equipment currently remained closed.

Mental Health and Well-being - This is a stressful time for families and many parents are balancing work with taking care of children. We look forward to providing further links to online resources and additional supports for parents and students in the coming days.

I know there are more questions and we remain committed to sharing information as soon as it becomes available. We encourage you to visit our website www.nearnorthschools.ca for current news and information.

Please continue to practice safe social distancing.
Be well.

Craig Myles
Director of Education