



April 14, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we enter week two of remote learning at the Toronto District School Board, I want to thank you for your partnership and patience as we help students and educators transition from face-to-face to remote learning.

Many of you likely heard that Premier Doug Ford announced today that students will not return to school on May 4 as previously indicated. He stressed that this does not mean that the school year is cancelled and that the Minister of Education will provide more details in the upcoming days. As soon as we know more and have details to share, we will do so.

We know families have many questions and face a number of challenges right now and our staff want to be as supportive as possible. As a result, educators connect with families in different ways, such as a software platform like Google Classroom or Brightspace, or through email, phone or even direct mail.

As we worked through this process together over the last two weeks, we have received valuable feedback from students, families and staff. The suggestions given and concerns raised vary widely. To help in our response, we have five principles to guide our work as we move forward:

1. Prioritize the health and well-being of everyone.
2. Focus on the continuation of learning in a variety of ways.
3. Maintain relationships and connection to one another.
4. Engage all students, especially those who have historically been underserved and those who may not be able to participate effectively in remote learning for a variety of reasons.
5. Build staff capacity to be effective in this remote space.

Please know that we are committed to providing every student with an opportunity to continue to learn remotely and safely at home. We also support our caring staff to serve your children in the most effective ways possible in this remote learning environment. As always, we will continue to keep you updated along the way. Below you will find information about:

- Online Safety for Students
- Distribution of Devices
- Field Trips, Graduation and Other Events
- Contacting Staff re: Questions or Concerns
- Online Learning Platforms
- Student Assessment
- Mental Health Resources

### Online Safety for Students

During this time when many students spend an increased amount of time online, it is incredibly important to reinforce online safety practices. The internet offers many opportunities for our communities to learn and connect, but it can also put youth at risk for cyberbullying, inappropriate use of social media, privacy issues and more. Below you will find information to help support





discussions about online safety with your family. If we work together – parents/guardians, students and educators – we can help keep our students safe from online risks.

Here are some key online safety tips for parents/guardians and students:

- Students should never share personal information, such as their phone number, address, social insurance number, date of birth, personal images or financial information, over the Internet without adult permission;
- If students see a message, comment, image, or anything else online that makes them concerned for their personal safety or feel uncomfortable, they should bring it to the attention of an adult immediately; and
- Parents/guardians should be aware and monitor the websites, video games and apps that your child is using to ensure they are appropriate and used in a safe manner.

For more information, please visit the [TDSB Online Safety web page](#).

### **Online Learning Platforms and Web Conferencing**

The TDSB provides educators with options for online learning platforms and video conferencing to connect with students remotely. It is the decision of individual educators which platform(s) to use and how best to engage students and families, based on their own knowledge and comfort level as well as consideration of student and family circumstances. It is important for students and families to remember that remote learning for each class will be different and is based on the teacher's professional judgement.

Educators are welcome to use video conferencing but are not required to do so. Our common goal is to engage all students. This will be accomplished in many different ways and using different strategies and online tools. It is our expectation that teachers and designated early childhood educators in Kindergarten will have a method of regular engagement with all of their students to ensure students are able to access learning tasks and resources, check in on students' well-being and provide students with feedback.

We recognize that families who have students with special education needs or English Language Learners may require specific attention to support unique learning needs. Supporting all of our diverse learners in TDSB is a priority and teachers and ESL/ELL staff continue to collaborate with other school staff to personalize student programming based on the specific strengths and needs outlined in the IEP for students with special education needs who are accessing the Ontario Curriculum or the Alternate Curriculum or are English Language Learners. Families are encouraged to visit the [Special Education Resources](#) or the [ESL Resources](#) page to access resources and supplementary tools to support learning.

### **Device Distribution to Students**

To support students who need a device to access remote learning, we have made arrangements to loan devices out to students. As you can imagine, we have received a large number of requests — approximately 29,000 families require devices — but staff are working day and night to prepare and distribute these devices as soon as possible. We made the decision to have the





devices delivered directly to the homes of our students to ensure that families can remain safely at home. This option will take more time, but the safety of our communities is our top priority. If your child receives a device, we will support families with technical issues. We include this information with delivery of the device. Students may also connect with their teachers to report problems with the device.

We also want to ensure students with special education needs have access to Special Education Amount (SEA) equipment to support remote learning. Families and schools will collaborate with the Special Education SEA team, the OT/PT team and the IT team to ensure either Chromebooks or specific and specialized equipment are delivered to students.

### Student Assessment

I know that this information has been shared with you before, but it's important that you and your child understand the assessment process for remote learning:

For **elementary students**, teachers will use approaches to gather evidence of student learning and will provide meaningful feedback to students on their progress. Evidence of significant improvement in learning, during the closure period, may be taken into consideration by the teacher when assigning a final grade in a subject area. Otherwise, students in Grades 1 to 8 will be assigned the grades earned based on their learning up until schools closed on March 13, 2020. All students, Kindergarten to Grade 8, will receive a June report card.

Mid-term marks will only be entered for **Grade 12 students** by April 27 to meet the deadline to report grades to the Ontario Universities' Application Centre ([OUAC](#)) and the Ontario College Application Service ([OCAS](#)). Marks will reflect work done up until March 13, 2020 (from the beginning of the semester for semestered schools, or from the last provincial report card for non-semestered schools). However, teachers may accept assignments that were due prior to March 13 and they may assign an additional assignment after April 6 to provide opportunities for students to show their learning. These assignments will be considered toward the mid-term mark only if it improves their March 13 mark.

For **students in secondary school**, teachers will assign tasks, projects and culminating activities during remote learning and provide feedback; however, this work will only be taken into consideration for final marks only if it improves the student's mark. If not, final marks submitted in June will reflect work completed by March 13, 2020.

We understand that families may be concerned about the learning gaps that may form during remote learning. When the school closure period ends and into next fall, we will be very intentional to understand the learning needs of each student and provide appropriate intervention where needed.

All students should be able to access learning online or through print resources. Some students may not be motivated to continue learning in light of how we are proceeding with marks over the next few months, but we ask students to remain involved in their learning wherever possible. This





will help students when we are able to return to a regular classroom setting and school environment. Even if a student feels unable to participate in the continuation of learning at home, we ask that they still remain connected to their school and in contact with their teacher.

### **Field Trips, Graduation Ceremonies and Other Events**

We have had many questions about upcoming field trips, graduation ceremonies, proms and a number of other activities. Given the uncertainty about the weeks ahead, we have made the difficult decision to cancel all field trips and overnight trips for the remainder of the school year. With regard to all other activities, such as graduation ceremonies and proms, we are working to confirm these details very soon.

### **Mental Health and Resources**

We understand that this is a challenging time for many families and that isolation can impact mental health and well-being. If needed, please access the valuable information on self-help and service providers available on our [Mental Health and Well-being](#) web page. It's important that we work together to help our communities stay safe, both physically and mentally.

### **We Will Support our Families**

I would like to reinforce how much I appreciate your partnership and patience. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to your child's education and to the education of all students at the Toronto District School Board. We know that there will be bumps and adjustments along the way, but we will overcome these challenges together. What's most important right now is that you and your family stay safe during this difficult time.

Should you have any questions, please email your child's teacher directly. If further assistance is required, please contact the school principal. Should you have a school-based question, but do not have access to email, please phone your school, leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible. Should you have a system-based question, please email your superintendent. If you do not have access to email, please phone your [Superintendent's Office](#), leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible. For contact information for your school, please visit the [Find Your School](#) web page. As always, for the latest updates, please visit the TDSB [website](#).

Again, please take care of yourself and your family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Malloy'.

John Malloy  
Director of Education

