



Small Schools Make a Difference

COVID 19 School Closures: Frequently Asked Questions for Families

Update to Families: March 20, 2020

Dear SGDSB Families,

We hope you are well and managing these challenging times. We wanted to share the most recent information from the Ministry of Education about school related issues.

As you know, all schools remain closed until April 5th, 2020. There are many questions about what happens after that date. The Ministry of Education has advised that they are developing plans, which include guidance for staff, students and families on how to manage re-entry to school. These plans also include preparing for a possible extended closure if that is necessary based on public health advice. We will continue to keep you updated on this situation.

We want to acknowledge that in the midst of pandemic planning and precautionary measures that we are taking as a community, that these measures are in fact to prevent the exposure and spread of the COVID-19. We want our staff, families and communities to understand that these are steps taken in preparedness to ensure safety. We want to continue to support healthy communities and support people in engaging in appropriate hygiene, appropriate use of medical services and practice wellness overall. This time is for us to slow down and engage in intentional steps so that we can all remain healthy and well. It is a time to remember to frame our decisions around prevention, remain calm, act in kindness, check in on each other and follow recommended guidelines from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Provincial health authorities.

The situation continues to evolve and a number of decisions will follow. We will continue to update our communication in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Thunder Bay District Health Unit and community partners. **Below is information that we currently have and wished to share with families in order to reduce stress and worry and to provide clarification.**

Please continue to monitor the SGDSB website (www.sgdsb.on.ca) as well as our Facebook page. Information will also be shared directly with you via School Messenger.

Thank you to everyone in our local school communities for your compassion, cooperation, and responsible citizenship as we all do our part to practice social distancing, proper sanitization, and other measures as recommended by our local, provincial, and federal public health officials. Please remember that we are here for you.

We extend our best wishes for the health, safety, and well-being of you and your family.

Yours in education,

Nicole Morden Cormier
Director of Education

Background Information:

All publicly funded schools in Ontario will close for two weeks following March Break, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and a Ministerial Order by the Minister of Education. Subsequent to the Ministerial Order, Ontario has now declared a State of Emergency and thus, significantly enhanced precautionary measures have been introduced to help to contain the spread of COVID-19.

This means that all Ontario schools have been ordered to remain closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020, inclusive.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
Are the school buildings/Board Office/Learning Centre open during this time?	No. All buildings have been closed. Our custodial staff have engaged in a “deep clean” of all buildings to in preparation for a 14-day resting period as we all work towards reducing the pandemic crisis our country is facing. Once a space has been cleaned, signage will be posted on that room preventing entry. This will be finished prior to the end of the March Break. With the exception of a small number of authorized individuals (no risk factors) who must enter the buildings to keep our system operational, all buildings are closed.
How do I contact the school or my child’s teacher?	All phone messages at the schools and offices are being monitored. Staff will be using EDSBY to connect with families. For families not yet using EDSBY, information will be posted to our website on how to sign up. In addition, specific contact information can be located on the sgdsb.on.ca website.
Will the school year be extended?	The Ministry of Education has advised that it is too early to determine. Any decision on the school year will be made by the Ministry of Education.
Will there be any grade specific or subject specific on-line learning for students?	The Ministry of Education is working on plans to support the continuity of learning between teachers and students, where possible, during the closure period. More details will be forthcoming regarding access to on-line resources. We will share the links to these resources once available.
I am worried that my child will be missing out on learning as we don’t have a computer at home.	Please contact your child’s school. We are endeavoring to provide portable electronic devices to families who do not have a tool for their child/children. These will be signed out from the school. More information will be provided asap.

Will students be at risk of not graduating?	This closure is not expected to impact secondary school graduation.
Will the closure impact college and university applications and mark submissions?	Applications were generally due in January. The Ministry of Education is currently working with Colleges and Universities to ensure that this closure does not impact the admissions process. Please watch for information from the Colleges and Universities for further information.
What happens with the OSSLT and EQAO GRADE 3, 6, and 9 assessments?	Given the school closure period and the uncertainty beyond that point, the Ministry of Education has cancelled all EQAO assessments for the remainder of this school year. For students who are graduating in the 2019-20 school year, the literacy graduation requirement as set out in Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016 will be waived. Students who are not graduating this school year will have the opportunity to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in the upcoming 2020-21 school year.
Can schools still attend field trips and excursions?	All field trips and excursions are cancelled during the period of school closure and up to April 18, 2020. Information regarding trips and other excursions is being reviewed and we will provide further guidance regarding field trips and excursions.
Will students be able to participate in athletic competitions or extracurricular activities?	Athletic competitions for students will be suspended. Coaches are not permitted to hold practices during the closure. Other extracurricular activities will not occur during the period of closure.
Will Individual Education Plans (IEPs) be sent home soon?	IEPs will be sent home following the period of closure.
Will Parent Teacher Interviews proceed?	No. All school-based activities are cancelled during the period of school closure. It is too early to determine whether parent-teacher interviews can be rescheduled in the same manner. A determination about this will be made in the upcoming weeks and communicated to parents via our school board website. If there are concerns regarding a student's progress (e.g. student is failing a course, in danger of losing a credit, other concerns), we would expect that staff would be contacting the student's parents to alert them to this. Parents are also welcome to contact their child's teacher if they have questions or concerns.
My children are extremely worried about the virus. What should I tell them?	Please see our sgdsb.on.ca website for resources to support your children. Please reach out to our Manager of Mental Health, Deana Renaud, at drenaud@sgdsb.on.ca for additional supports.

<p>How are the travel advisories impacting the school board?</p>	<p>We are requiring our employees to remain in the region and be available during the closure period. We all recognize that travelling during this period puts everyone at risk of needing to enter a 14-day period of self-isolation, based upon the Public Health Agency of Canada's guidance to all Canadians.</p> <p>We advise all families to please adhere to the directives being provided for everyone at this time.</p> <p>As a Board, we want to ensure we use the closure period to reduce the risk of contagion when schools re-open. We therefore ask that during this time, you follow the advice of public health authorities and avoid public gatherings and travel outside of Canada. Self-isolate as required, so that when schools re-open we can be confident that we have all done our part to keep students and staff safe.</p>
<p>Will schools open on April 6, 2020?</p>	<p>It is too soon to determine this response. The Ministry will make this decision.</p>
<p>Will the Community Use of Schools Program be running?</p>	<p>No. Community Use of Schools will not run during the school closure period.</p>

