

## **COVID-19: School Closures Q & A**

*(last updated: June 15, 2020)*

The following is a working resource document. We will be updating the information below as new information becomes available. Thank you for your patience as we work through this evolving situation.

### **How long will schools be closed?**

On Tuesday May 19, the Minister of Education announced that all publicly funded schools in Ontario, including the Durham District School Board will continue to be closed until the end of the school year in June and will be re-opening in September.

### **\*\*UPDATED\*\***

#### **What will the start of the 2020/21 school year look like?**

The province is expected to release their framework by the end of June for the re-opening of schools. In the meantime, the DDSB has already started planning for the safe re-opening of schools and will be providing more information later this summer.

### **Distance Learning**

Distance learning for students started on April 6, 2020. The DDSB recognizes that our students and their families are experiencing a range of emotions and challenges during this unprecedented time. Our role as a system is to provide teacher-led distance learning materials and tasks that are respectful of these current challenges.

#### **What is distance learning?**

Educators will connect with their students through a variety of methods to bring the Ontario curriculum to life through digital and experiential learning. Students will receive regular feedback to support their continued growth and learning. Distance learning is not intended to replicate a full school day.

Distance learning will be flexible, can be done at any point in the day, does not always require online access and can be done with minimal adult support. While initial instruction may be conducted online, students are not expected to be tied to a device for their learning. Our goal is to encourage students to read, communicate and engage in authentic learning experiences while continuing to be physically active and mentally well.

#### **What is happening to PA Days and Examinations?**

The exam period for all students and Professional Activity (PA) days have been replaced with instructional time for students.

### **Can students improve their grades during Distance Learning?**

Students will have opportunities to improve the grades they had as of March 13 during Distance Learning, but no mark will decline as a result of the school closure period.

### **What is the deadline for Grade 11 and 12 students to drop a course without penalty?**

Grade 11 and 12 students can drop a course without penalty no later than May 6, 2020.

If a student withdraws from a course after their midterm mark has been provided to colleges and universities, then their final mark will be revised at the end of the school year with the new course status at the time that final marks are usually submitted.

### **What is the level of instruction that students will receive?**

The Ministry of Education has provided direction to school boards on **core expectations** and have suggested a **minimum level of work** that students should be focusing on:

<b>Grade Range</b>	
K-Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5 hours of work per student per week</li><li>Focus: Literacy and math</li></ul>
Grades 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5 hours of work per student per week</li><li>Focus: Literacy and math + science and social studies</li></ul>
Grades 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>10 hours of work per student per week</li><li>Focus: Core math, literacy, science and social studies</li></ul>
Grades 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3 hours of work per course per week for semestered students; 1.5 hours of work per course per week for non-semestered students</li><li>Focus: Achieving credits/completion/graduation</li></ul>
Hours refer to the approximate amount of time <u>students</u> would spend on the work assigned by teachers.	

### **Will my child receive a report card?**

The Ministry of Education has directed school boards to provide final report cards for all students at the end of the school year, including the Kindergarten Communication of Learning.

### **How will students be assessed and evaluated under distance learning?**

The following information is a summary of the assessment and evaluation practices that will be taking place during Distance Learning and has provided direction to educators that includes the following:

## Overall

- Teachers will consider students' individual strengths, needs, and circumstances to support equitable learning outcomes;
- Assessment will focus on giving feedback to improve learning;
- The intention of distance learning is to keep students engaged in learning while understanding that not all the overall expectations can be demonstrated; and
- No student's assessment will be negatively impacted because of school closures or challenges with accessing distance learning during the pandemic.

## Elementary Students

- During the period of school closures, teachers are providing feedback on assignments to assist in their learning, but grades as of March 13th will remain the same.
- The overall course expectations are to be prioritized and reduced, to reflect the loss of instructional time; and
- Additional learning activities may be assigned and will be presented as supplemental learning so that families can make an informed choice.

## Secondary Students

- Students final grades will be based on term marks only and there will be no final exams or summative tasks assigned in June 2020;
- Where appropriate, students can improve their grades through assessed work completed after March 13th;
- The overall course expectations are to be prioritized and reduced, to reflect the loss of instructional time. Only prioritized overall expectations will be part of any summative assessment task; and
- Additional learning activities may be assigned, but they will not be required as part of a final assessment and will be presented as supplemental learning so that students can make an informed choice.

For more information on the DDSB's approach to assessment and evaluation, please review [Assessment & Evaluation at a Distance \(PDF\)](#), [Principles to Inform Distance Learning Practice for Secondary](#), and [Principles to Inform Distance Learning Practice for Elementary](#).

## What accommodations are being made for students with special needs?

Our Inclusive Student Services department is working to ensure that continuity of learning plans include strategies to support students with specialized learning needs. Special Education teachers and support staff will be available virtually as needed to work with families.

## Technology

### **My child's teacher has setup an online class, how do I access it?**

Students using Google Classroom, D2L or Moodle may access their online classes from the [Student Mobile Campus](#). Students log in using their DDSB credentials (student number followed by @ddsbstudent.ca and their password). If your child does not know their login information, please contact their teacher for help.

### **How will the DDSB be supporting families with limited access to technology and the internet?**

We understand that not all DDSB students have access to a computer or the internet and we are committed to finding ways to support equitable access to learning for all students. Our school teams have reached out to families through a variety of means to help identify who requires additional supports. Approximately 5,000 Chromebooks have been distributed to students, bringing the total number provided to approximately 35,000. The DDSB has also distributed 660 mobile internet hotspots to families in need. Paper packages were distributed to families previously waiting to receive internet hotspots. Please notify your child's school principal if your child does not have access to a device or internet access for distance learning as we are responding to follow-up requests for technology supports.

### **\*\*UPDATED\*\***

### **Will students who have left materials at school be able to retrieve them?**

Schools have reached out to families to arrange for the retrieval of personal belongings. This is taking place until June 26. Please contact your school Principal if you need to pick up personal belongings. There may be security guards at some secondary school sites to assist with line management and physical distancing requirements.

## **Impact on Students**

### **Will graduation ceremonies take place?**

#### **Grade 8 Graduations**

We are exploring alternate options to celebrate Grade 8 graduations in accordance with the requirements of our public health officials and the province. We are committed to working with the School Community Councils (SCC) to determine how best we can celebrate and to mark this milestone and transition to secondary school.

#### **Grade 12 Graduations**

Due to the extension of the school closure to the end of June and the uncertainty as to when large gatherings can take place, we have made the difficult decision to postpone Grade 12 graduation ceremonies. However, we are committed to working with the school community to consider ways that we can celebrate the important achievements

when it is safe for larger gatherings to take place. This could include events in the late summer/fall and would be dependent on the advice of our public health officials and the province.

### **What programming will be offered for summer school?**

Due to the uncertainty surrounding the re-opening of schools this summer, Durham Continuing Education is currently experiencing limitations in the types and number of courses we can offer.

This summer, eLearning courses will be available and online registration at [www.dce.ca](http://www.dce.ca) is now open for students to enroll in eLearning courses.

On May 19, the province announced an expanded summer learning program that will focus on credit recovery, supports for vulnerable students, and course upgrading. Once we receive additional information from the province to inform our planning, we will be communicating this information with families.

We are hopeful that expanded programming choices and other registration options can take place for the current 2020 summer session, pending direction from the province and public health authorities. However, Durham Continuing Education reserves the right to revise, limit or cancel programming as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and other circumstances.

### **What is the difference between summer school eLearning and Distance Learning?**

Durham Continuing Education offers eLearning over the summer which is not the same as Distance Learning. The eLearning Summer 2020 program is a full credit (half credit for Civics and Careers) course consisting of 110 hours (55 hours for half credit) of content and a final summative evaluation. The final mark will be determined based on 70% term work and a 30% summative evaluation. Participation of approximately 6 hours per day, Monday to Friday is highly recommended for completion of this program.

Distance Learning is the mode of instruction that DDSB students are currently engaged in during school closures. Distance Learning does not always require online access and educators connect with their students through a variety of methods. Distance learning is **NOT** being offered over the summer.

### **Are there other online learning resources for my children?**

The Ministry of Education has created the [Learn at Home online portal](#). The portal includes supplementary resources students can use to practice and learn literacy and numeracy skills at home. The Ministry is also working with TVO and TFO to roll-out education programming on their broadcast channels, with a phased-in approach.

In addition, the Durham District School Board is providing [Optional Continuous Student Learning at Home](#) resources, available on the DDSB website, to further support the development of student literacy and numeracy skills. These resources have been curated by board staff and are age and subject-specific.

### **Will this impact college and university applications?**

There is no impact anticipated for college and university applications. Mid-term grades submitted at the end of April will be considered as part of the application process.

### **Do I still need to complete the 40 hours of community involvement required in order to graduate?**

The requirement to complete 40 hours of community service for graduating students is suspended for this school year. Community involvement hours that have been completed will be reported on the final report cards of graduating students. However, graduating students are encouraged to complete their hours wherever possible, where the health and safety of the student can be assured.

### **What is happening to dual credit programs with colleges and universities?**

Both Durham College and Fleming College have closed their campuses but are proceeding with online learning depending on the type of course offered. Students in dual credit programs have been informed if their program is running and where possible, alternative options have been offered to support student's pathway destinations and graduation plans.

### **What has happened to the OSSLT?**

The OSSLT has been cancelled for the 2019/2020 school year. For students who are graduating this 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 OSSLT in the upcoming 2020/2021 school year.

### **Will EQAO assessments scheduled for this school year take place?**

All EQAO assessments for the 2019/2020 school year will be cancelled. This includes the Grade 3, Grade 6, Grade 9 Math, and OSSLT assessments. We appreciate the work done to prepare for these assessments by EQAO and school board staff.

### **Will students be at risk of not graduating?**

We do not anticipate that the province's decision and transition to distance learning will have any impact on secondary school graduation.

### **Will co-op placements continue during this time?**

All co-op placements are not occurring during this time. Students in co-op placements should connect with their teachers for further direction.

### **Will the school year be extended into the summer months?**

We have not received this direction from the Ministry of Education. Any decision to extend the school year would be made by the Ministry.

## **Mental Health & Well-Being Supports**

As we acknowledge that many of us - parents/caregivers, students, and school communities - are all experiencing uncertainty and worry about the health and safety of ourselves and our loved ones, and how COVID-19 is disrupting our personal and professional lives, it is important for all of us to acknowledge these impacts and to engage in an open dialogue about them, including ways to maintain and support our collective mental health and well-being. **To assist, the DDSB has created well-being resources for community members, staff, parents and students that can be accessed by [clicking here](#).**

### **As a parent, you may be wondering what supports are available to me and my child/teen?**

As parents and family members, the best thing we can do is maintain communication with our children and teens and to be patient and understanding. We are sharing the following resources to give you some ideas to keep in mind. Of course, you know your child best, so consider these tips based on your own family situation. **The DDSB's Inclusive Student Services team has also developed a set of resources on our website that you can visit by [clicking here](#).**

- [School Mental Health Ontario](#) has several [student support resources](#) available online
- [Children's Mental Health Ontario](#)
- [WHO Parenting Fact Sheet](#)
- [Lakeridge Community Support Services](#)
- [Kidshelpphone.ca](#) has a number of online resources you can access. Children and teens can also reach out to counsellors at Kids Help Phone who are available 24/7 via phone, text or online chat. You can access their services by calling 1-800-668-6868 or by texting CONNECT to 686868.

### **What community supports are available?**

Here are a few supports that are available to families in Durham Region:

- Durham Health Connection Line: 1-800-841-2719

- [Durham Public Health](#)
- Durham Crisis Line remains open for 24/7 support - 1-800-742-1890
- [Durham 2-1-1 up-to-date community resources](#)
- For families in need of [resources related to food banks](#)
- Additional resources can be found on [DDSB's COVID-19: Supports and Resources for Family and Youth](#) webpage

As this is an evolving situation, we continue to remind people of the importance of using credible sources to stay informed of COVID-19 and encourage others to do the same.

Recommended sources include:

- [Health Canada](#)
- [Region of Durham](#)
- [WHO - Coronavirus](#)
- [Public health guidance for schools \(K-12\) and childcare programs \(COVID-19\)](#)

## **Programs and Child Care Centres**

### **Will Child Care centres continue to operate?**

All Child Care Centres at DDSB schools are closed until further notice. This also includes EarlyON programs and Youth Hubs.

## **Other Impacts**

### **\*\*UPDATED\*\***

#### **My child(ren)'s school has a modified calendar. Will school be taking place at the same time as last year?**

We have not yet received approval from the Ministry of Education regarding 2020/2021 school year calendars. At this stage, neither the regular or modified school year calendars have been approved. We have requested that the Ministry consider in their planning that the modified schedule for some schools begin in August.

#### **What is the status of my Community Use of Schools Permit Application?**

All Community Use of Schools permits are considered cancelled. In addition, any timelines for permit applications for the 2020/21 school year are also suspended until further notice.

When circumstances allow, the Board will provide adequate notice to the public regarding school openings, permit application timelines and processes. The Board will consider all applications without preference for any past permitting and in accordance with all applicable Board Regulations, Policies and Procedures.

### **What will happen to trips and events?**

All board-sanctioned trips and events have been cancelled until June 30<sup>th</sup>. This includes field trips, international trips, graduation trips, semi-formals, proms and banquets. The only exception at this time are commencements and graduations. A final decision will be made regarding commencements and graduations once further information is available. School celebrations such as homecomings, school anniversaries and ground-breaking celebrations for new schools have been postponed.

### **Can we use the playground equipment and other outdoor amenities (i.e. basketball courts, baseball diamonds, school tracks, soccer fields, etc.) at DDSB schools?**

All playground equipment and other outdoor amenities (i.e. basketball courts, baseball diamonds, school tracks, soccer fields, etc.) situated on DDSB schoolyards are **closed** due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the current provincial emergency order on the [“closure of all outdoor recreational amenities.”](#) Please note that playground equipment is not sanitized and municipal by-law officers may enforce the provincial order.

For clarity, the emergency order does not preclude individuals from walking through or using portions of park and recreational areas that are not otherwise closed and that do not contain an outdoor recreational amenity. When outside, please continue to follow the 2-meter social distancing guidelines.

### **Can I contact my child’s Principal, Vice Principal or Superintendent?**

Yes. In the event you have any urgent questions or concerns, Principals, Vice Principals and Superintendents are still available by e-mail. Not all our school phones have voicemails that can be accessed remotely. It is therefore best to use the email provided on the school’s website to contact your child’s principal.