

COVID-19: School Closures Q & A

(last updated: March 25, 2020)

The following is a working resource document. We will do our best to update the information below as we receive confirmation and clarification. Thank you for your patience as we work through this evolving situation.

Impact on Students

****NEW****

Will students be provided with online learning opportunities during the closure?

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) and our educators are currently working on creating resources to facilitate learning that will be meaningful for your children with the temporary closure of our physical school locations. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education released its first phase of 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. Further information will be provided regarding the Ministry's education programming once it becomes available.

The Ministry has said that these resources do not replace what students have been learning at school, but are intended to help mitigate learning loss during the COVID-19 school closures. They have also indicated that they will launch phase two of their Learn at Home online portal if the school closures extend beyond April 5th.

In addition, the Durham District School Board is providing [Optional Continuous Student Learning at Home](#) resources, that are 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.

The Ministry has asked school boards to use the next two weeks to develop plans to re-establish the delivery of curriculum in the event the school closure period is extended. We intend to include your ideas and suggestions as part of this work. Our goal is to ensure that every student has access to learning during the closure, and we will work diligently to ensure all learning needs are met. Once a plan is in place, we will share it with staff, students, and families.

****NEW****

Are students required to complete work, assessments or evaluations at this time?

While teachers will not be collecting or assessing student work between now and April 5th, we encourage students to continue to practice their skills learned in the classroom and through the online resources noted above.

****NEW****

What about students with limited access to Technology and Wifi?

We know that not all DDSB 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.

****NEW****

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. The school district cannot provide in-person support during this period of social/physical distancing. We are exploring opportunities for connection with students with special education needs.

Will the OSSLT scheduled for March 31 be cancelled?

Given the school closure period and the uncertainty beyond that point, 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?

Given the school closure period and the uncertainty beyond that point, 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 will have any impact on secondary school graduation.

Will this impact mid-term marks?

Students will not be penalized for missed work or assessments.

My current mark is low and I was looking to improve it before the mid-term marks are in. Will this closure impact my marks?

We will be reviewing this issue to mitigate, where possible, any negative impact to students.

Will this impact college and university applications?

At this stage, we have not heard the plan from colleges and universities. We encourage families to check with the colleges or universities to which the application(s) was submitted.

Will co-op placements continue during this time?

All co-op placements are not occurring during this time.

Should students in dual credit programs attend their college/university classes?

Both Durham College and Fleming College have closed their campuses. All dual credit programs have been cancelled until further notice. We will provide you with more details as it becomes available.

Will the school year be extended into the summer months?

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

Mental Health & Well-Being****NEW****

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.

****NEW****

As a parent, you may be wondering what mental health 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.

- [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](#)

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 will be closed for the period of March 14, 2020 to April 5, 2020. This also includes EarlyON programs and Youth Hubs.

Will Adult and Continuing Education classes and programs continue?

These programs will be cancelled during the closure from March 14, 2020 to April 5, 2020.

Other Impacts

****NEW****

Can we use the playground equipment at DDSB schools?

For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, we kindly request that parents, guardians and children please stay off any playground equipment situated on DDSB schoolyards, as they are not routinely cleaned/sanitized. This is critical to help protect your family and stop the spread of the virus. Also, please continue to utilize physical distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19 while protecting your fellow community members. Recent reports from [the New England Journal of Medicine](#) indicate that the virus can survive up to three days on plastic and stainless-steel surfaces, and four to five days on other materials.

Will permits be cancelled?

All Community Use of Schools permits have been cancelled until April 30, 2020. We will provide further updates on Community Use of School toward the end of April.

What will happen to out of province trips?

All board sanctioned trips scheduled to depart up until May 15, 2020 will be cancelled and no additional new trips will be booked until further notice. Staff members from schools who have organized trips will be in contact with families to address logistics of cancelling.

****NEW****

Will schools be closed beyond April 5, 2020?

The Ministerial order is that all schools remain closed from March 14th until April 5th. However, the Province has recently announced that our schools may be closed for a longer duration than originally anticipated. While we wait for further direction from the Ministry of Education on when schools will reopen, we are implementing strategies to ensure that we are able to facilitate learning in ways that will be meaningful for your children and with accommodations for those with special education needs. Once these are finalized, they will be communicated with parents.