



March 17, 2020

Ref: 218690

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff:

The health and safety of our students, staff and their families is our highest priority.

The global pandemic COVID-19 is moving quickly and its impact on British Columbians is growing.

We have followed the direction – daily – of public health officials and scientists in making fact-based decisions when it comes to B.C.'s school system.

Today, under the direction of the Provincial Health Officer we are directing all schools to immediately suspend in-class instruction until further notice.

While classroom lessons are suspended it is expected that schools will implement a variety of measures to ensure continued learning for students.

We are urging teachers, principals, school districts and independent school authorities to begin planning now to ensure continuity of learning and I have tasked Ministry of Education staff to work with our education partners to coordinate these initiatives.

We expect school districts and independent schools will develop plans to maintain some level of service for children of people who are performing essential services across our province – like medical health professionals, first responders, pharmacists and critical infrastructure workers.

We also know there are vulnerable students who have unique needs; important services like school meal programs, and child care services operating on school grounds that need to be addressed. We expect schools to consider these issues in their planning while we work together through these extraordinary times.

Every student will receive a final mark, and all students on track to move to the next grade will do so in the fall. For grades 10 and 11 students, graduation assessments will be postponed.

Every student eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate. The only graduation assessment required for current Grade 12 students is the Grade 10 numeracy assessment. The Ministry of Education will ensure Grade 12 students who have not yet completed this assessment and who are otherwise on track to graduate are able to meet this graduation requirement.

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The ministry will also work with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training and with post-secondary institutions on admissions and the smooth transition of graduating students in this extra-ordinary year.

We will continue to work in consultation with our education partners as we plan for ongoing learning, including frequent contact with school districts to ensure we work through this together as plans are developed.

This is a very challenging time in B.C. and around the world. Please take necessary preventative measures to keep you and your families healthy. If you think you have symptoms the Ministry of Health has developed an online self-assessment tool at [covid19.thrive.health](https://covid19.thrive.health). If you do have symptoms you can call 8-1-1 to pre-arrange health testing. While symptomatic, self-isolate.

The province has a launched a new non-medical information line for British Columbians who have questions about COVID-19: **1-888-COVID19**. Phone lines are open 7 days a week from 7:30 AM to 8 PM, and information is available in more than 110 languages.

These measures are temporary. But we must act together and act now to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Rob Fleming  
Minister

Date: March 17, 2020

## In Person Classes Suspended

The Minister of Education has written a [letter to parents, guardians and school/school district staff](#) regarding updated direction from the Provincial Health Officer to all schools to immediately suspend in-class instruction until further notice. Please share with your school community.

This letter follows up on a joint announcement from the Premier, Minister of Education and Minister of Finance earlier today regarding COVID-19.

## Continuity of Educational Opportunities

A reminder that the Ministry is convening a K-12 working group to support the development of continuity of instruction guidelines. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Eleanor Liddy at [Eleanor.Liddy@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Eleanor.Liddy@gov.bc.ca).

## Daily Provincial Update

There are currently 103 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in B.C. The Provincial Health Officer has reiterated [updated guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada](#), for Canadians to avoid all non-essential international travel and self-isolate for 14 days following return from international travel (*exemptions are in place for workers who are essential to the movement of goods and people*). Travellers returning to B.C. should call 8-1-1 or their local health care provider immediately if they develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.

The BC Ministry of Health has also developed a self-assessment tool to help determine whether you may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>. You can complete this assessment for yourself, or on behalf of someone else, if they are unable to.

## Federal Updates

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister of Canada [announced](#) the closure of Canadian borders to foreign travellers from all countries except the United States to help limit the spread of COVID-19. The restrictions will come into effect on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and will not apply to air crews, travelers arriving in Canada to transit to a third country, Canadian permanent residents, diplomats, or immediate family members of Canadian citizens.

Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to board a flight to Canada. To assist asymptomatic Canadians in returning to Canada, the federal government has also established a COVID-19 Emergency Loan Program for Canadians Abroad.

## Supports for Schools and School Districts

The Ministry has set up a dedicated email address and phone number [for school/school district administrators](#) regarding COVID-19 related inquiries. If you have any questions or requests for assistance, please email [educ.covid@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.covid@gov.bc.ca) or call 236-478-2712.

[For parents and guardians](#), we encourage you to share B.C.'s new dedicated phone service for non-medical information about COVID-19: **1-888-COVID19**. Service representatives are available seven days a week from 7:30AM to 8PM, and information is available in more than 110 languages.

Specific public health questions re COVID-19 should be directed to your local health authority for response.

# DEPUTY MINISTER'S BULLETIN

Ministry of Education



## Useful Links

- [Mar. 16, joint statement from the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Officer](#)
- [Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control – Information on COVID-19](#)
- [HealthLink BC – Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

*Please note that DM Bulletins are intended for school/school district staff and are not intended for direct distribution to parents/guardians. Feel free to extract or adapt relevant excerpts for your own communication purposes.*