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British Columbia News

## Taking steps to keep kids learning during in-class school suspension

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/21898>

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**Victoria** - New guidelines for school leaders and a new website are being introduced to support B.C.'s K-12 students while in-class education is suspended to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"This is a challenging time for families in B.C. as we work together to stop the spread of COVID-19, but it is vital students have a sense of routine and continued opportunities to learn while they are at home," said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. "These guidelines will ensure the needs, health and safety of students are put first as school leaders actively plan to serve the unique needs of their communities."

While in-person classes are suspended, the B.C. school system remains open to continue to support students and families in a variety of ways. Note that parents should not bring their children to school on Monday, March 30, 2020, as they usually would after spring break.

However, essential frontline health-care workers, like those directly involved in patient care, who need urgent care for their school-aged child the week of March 30 are advised to contact their school principal as soon as possible to discuss care arrangements available during the first week back after spring break. Other parents who are deemed an essential service worker and who may need child care for their school-age children can expect to hear from their school regarding care options by Friday, April 3, 2020. Schools will be doing their best to accommodate urgent child care needs while meeting the guidelines and directives of the provincial health officer.

Since there are many students who will have challenges working online, schools have been directed to look at alternative approaches for continued learning that will fit with the individual needs and circumstances of their communities. School leaders are actively working on these plans, and families will hear from their school superintendent and/or school principal in the coming week with an update on their timelines.

Government is working with all 60 school boards, independent school authorities, First Nations schools, teachers, school leaders, support staff, public health officials and all education partners on a co-ordinated approach. Guidelines for developing education plans for students will follow these principles:

1. Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students, families and employees.
2. Provide the services needed to support children of essential workers.
3. Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance.
4. Provide continuity of educational opportunities for all students.

These principles will also guide planning and support for students who need extra learning support or those with disabilities, important services like meal programs and child care services operating on school grounds.

"Boards of education across the province are working on ways to ensure continuity of learning in their communities," said Stephanie Higginson, president, BC School Trustees Association. "Local boards of education understand the unique needs in each community. That local connection will be key as boards roll out plans tailored to each school district in the province."

launched Keep Learning BC. This is a central place where families can find ideas for everyday educational activities, annotated links to free learning resources, as well as how to help children learn and how to ensure their well-being while they are at home. Keep Learning BC is available at: [www.openschool.bc.ca/keeplearning/](http://www.openschool.bc.ca/keeplearning/)

The Keep Learning BC website will have helpful guides to maintain routines and stay safe online, giving parents information about how to talk to their children about COVID-19, along with other mental health resources to manage stress or anxiety. A comprehensive set of frequently asked questions is also available, with continuous updates about school services and programs as things progress: [www.gov.bc.ca/safeschools/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/safeschools/)

Fleming added, "While it's important for kids to keep learning, there is no expectation that we can duplicate a normal school day at home, and every family will need to figure out what works best for them, in discussion with their children's teachers. I understand that many children are experiencing anxiety, while also missing their teachers and friends, and that's why it's important they know the actions we're taking are designed to keep everyone safe, and we will return to regular school life down the road. By working together and supporting each other, we will get through this."

Adrian Dix, Minister of Health, said, "We are proud of the parents, families and school communities who are working together to keep their children safely at home, and recognize how important it is for children to have continued learning opportunities in these challenging times. Parents who are health-care workers are also eagerly waiting for support, and it's our job to work as a team to make sure they can continue their essential services."

#### **Quote:**

#### **Andrea Sinclair, president, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils —**

"The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils is truly appreciative of the united effort that is being undertaken across the education sector resulting in the continuity of an educational program while our children are at home. Parents understand that alternative instruction plans are being created to best meet the needs of children and that learning will vary by grade, district and region. As we try to maintain a daily routine in our homes, including academics and recreation, parents acknowledge that educators play a critical role supporting our children during this extraordinary time."

#### **Quick Facts:**

- On March 17, 2020, under the direction of the provincial health officer, all schools were ordered to immediately suspend in-class instruction until further notice.
- Every student in K-12 will receive a final mark for the 2019-20 school year, and all students who are on track to move to the next grade will do so in the fall. Every student eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this school year will also graduate. On average, about 45,000 students graduate every year.
- The Ministry of Education is also working across government to ensure all students graduating high school will have a smooth transition to post-secondary education.

#### **Learn More:**

Students, parents, guardians and teachers can find learning resources and accurate, timely information about schools, programs and educational services, including regularly updated frequently asked questions at: [www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/SafeSchools/)

A new website is constantly being updated with the latest information: [www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19)

The best source of COVID-19 health information can be found at the BC Centre for Disease Control website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

For non-health-related questions, please visit [www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19](http://www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19), email [servicebc@gov.bc.ca](mailto:servicebc@gov.bc.ca), or call 1 888 COVID-19

For those who think they have symptoms of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health has developed an online self-assessment tool at: <https://covid19.thrive.health>  
People with symptoms can also call 811 to pre-arrange health testing.

If children are struggling with a problem big or small, encourage them to call the Kids Help Line, a free resource available at 1 800 668-6868.

### **Translations:**

For a traditional Chinese translation, visit: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Continued\\_Learning\\_during\\_COVID19\\_Mar27.Chinese.pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Continued_Learning_during_COVID19_Mar27.Chinese.pdf)

For a Punjabi translation, visit: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/COVID19\\_March27\\_Continued\\_Learning\\_during\\_COVID\\_Punjabi.pdf](https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/COVID19_March27_Continued_Learning_during_COVID_Punjabi.pdf)

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