



## COVID-19 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

**March 25, 2020**

**To: All Parents/Guardians**

**From: Cheryl Gilmore, Superintendent**

Dear Parents / Guardians,

First, I want to convey my sincere thank-you for your patience and hope that everyone in your family is well. I know that these times are very stressful. It is challenging to keep all of our young people positive, and healthy in mind and spirit. These are unprecedented times, and I want to express my appreciation for staff who are working tirelessly to prepare and deliver learning in a manner that, for the most part, is not part of their experience. I am proud to be part of a school division with staff that have an unwavering commitment to students and each other. Staff are experiencing an incredibly steep learning curve and are collaborating in an effort to engage students in meaningful learning. High school delivery kicked off on Tuesday, and Middle Schools did their first trials of curriculum using technology Wednesday. Elementary schools are on track for formalized delivery starting Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.

The learning that is being delivered is structured in an effort to keep stress levels of our students and families as low as possible. Please don't hesitate to contact your school or communicate with your teachers if you are finding access to delivery challenging or frustrating. We are doing our best to have the on-line platforms flexible and accessible, and for those families who do not have technology, learning packages that are not too difficult to support.

The Government of Alberta put out a questions & answer document regarding delivery of learning. It can be accessed on Lethbridge School Division website.

<https://www.lethsd.ab.ca/download/241426>

### **Elementary**

I feel that the most important advice I can give to parents/guardians of elementary children is to relax, and do what you can. The expectation that the province has established at this level is about five hours of work per week. There are many other things your children may be doing that will contribute to growing their minds and character. We know that families are under extreme stress, and learning at home does not need to add to the stress. Doing what they can, when they can, is truly enough.

For online learning, all schools will be using websites to support parents with at-home learning. When the websites are ready on Monday, you will find a tab at the top of your schools' website that reads Grade Team Websites. Under this tab, you will find links for Kindergarten to Grade 5 pages. Teachers will be communicating with parents on how to navigate these websites as well as how to support learning in the home from these sites.

Some teachers are also using other delivery platforms to enhance learning, and/or communicate with parents and students, especially if they have been using something with families and students throughout the year.

Schools are also figuring out how to work with families who do not have access to technology. If there is not technology in the home, the schools are providing alternate methods of delivery.

### ***Middle School***

As mentioned, the middle schools have started their first trials of curriculum delivery using technology today, and will continue with these trials over the next few days. The more formal curriculum roll out will start on Monday, March 30. Schools sent information that was specific to the school site delivery system to every family. If a student is unable to connect, the school is there for support. I ask that students and parents/guardians try to be patient with the “assessment” part of the learning until teachers have worked with this system of delivery over enough time to professionally consider what assessment will look like. Be assured that all of the learning is linked to learning outcomes in the provincial Programs of Studies, and that students should not focus on whether or not something will be “marked.” Much of the learning is structured to engage and move students forward in covering the essential outcomes for this year and prepare them for the next school year. There are also activities that are structured for the purpose of keeping students interested, curious, and inspired to be active learners. As schools engage students and move forward, assessment strategies will be determined and communicated.

### ***High School***

The high school delivery is more intense because teachers will be doing their best to cover the curricular outcomes that will best prepare students for successful transition to life after high school (post-secondary, credentialing, or work) as well as to the next level of courses if in grades 9-10-11. We are very fortunate to have creative and innovative teachers who are also continuing many option courses with students learning at home. There is some information that is specific to high school that students and parents will want to know.

### ***Question & Answer for HIGH SCHOOL BELOW***

#### **Will a Grade 12 student get credits for Off Campus (Work Experience and Registered Apprenticeship) if they have been laid off work?**

A School Messenger message was sent out this past Monday asking students to forward hours by email if they are continuing to work and requesting that they inform us if they have been laid off due to the COVID 19. If the latter is the case, we will predict hours they would have worked and award credits. If they would like to begin work experience during this time, that is certainly possible. Please email the coordinator, Andrew Krul at [andrew.krul@lethsd.ab.ca](mailto:andrew.krul@lethsd.ab.ca). If you did not receive the message on Monday, please inform him.

#### **Will Grade 12 students still graduate this year?**

Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate. Students who are moving on to post-secondary studies will not be penalized. Government will be working with post-

secondary institutions to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not prevent students from being eligible for admission to post-secondary studies for the upcoming school year.

### **What is happening for Grade 12 diploma exams?**

All Grade 12 diploma exams are cancelled through to the end of June 2020. Students currently registered to write diploma exams during June sessions will receive exemptions, without the need to apply for one.

### **Under what circumstances will some students still be able to write diploma exams? And how do they make that arrangement?**

- Special circumstances where diploma exams may be administered include:
- Home schooled students due to some post-secondary institutions specifically requiring a standardized test result for home schooled students.
- Adult students (students with mature student status) can challenge diploma exams without taking the course. These students cannot be exempt from diploma exams as they do not have a school awarded grade. Students who do not study under a school authority, such as home school students, can contact exam.admin@gov.ab.ca for assistance.

### **How will students receive enough credits to graduate high school? Please explain how students will still achieve the 100 credits they need to graduate?**

Students on track to receive 100 or more credits will still be eligible to graduate and receive a high school diploma. Principals will have the ability to award up to 15 unassigned credits to students in Grade 12 whose program has been negatively impacted by class cancellations. For any courses that had started, schools will complete them with the student to the best of their ability, provide a final mark and award credits. If the student is unable to complete a course that would have led them to achieving a high school diploma, such as work experience or a career and technology studies course, principals have the ability to award unassigned credits to ensure the student graduates.

### **Why not just lower the credit requirement to graduate this year?**

It is important for student transcripts to be complete with 100 credits or more as to not create issues for students in the long-term. Most students graduate with more than 100 credits, so the 15 unassigned credits that principals will be able to use are only for students whose program has been negatively impacted by class cancellations, affecting their ability to graduate this year.

### **Why did Alberta Education wait to cancel Grade 12 diploma exams, when other provinces had already canceled them?**

Alberta Education's first and foremost priority for Grade 12 students was to ensure those that are eligible to graduate would still be able to do so, and continue on to post secondary studies without being penalized. However, feedback from the education partners over the last few days has identified a number of challenges in having Grade 12 students write diploma exams. Based on this feedback, government decided to cancel Grade 12 diploma exams through to the end of June 2020. Students will receive a final mark for classes they are currently taking by the end of the school year, which will appear on their transcript. They can then use their transcript for post-secondary entrance, scholarships and other purposes, as they normally would.

### **How will classes in option courses such as fine arts, music, culinary arts, automotive mechanics work?**

Where possible, schools will work with high school students to complete their courses to the best of their ability, providing a final mark and awarding credits. Government recognizes this might not be possible with some courses with hands-on learning or requiring specialized equipment. If a student is unable to complete a course that would have allowed them to progress to the next grade, principals have the ability to award credits to ensure student progression.

### **For grades 10 and 11 courses, can unassigned credits be used to move students to the next level?**

A student's grade is important in high school as it indicates a certain level of knowledge and learning was demonstrated by the student. Student learning for grades 10 and 11 course is continuing, and teachers have the flexibility in determining alternative ways for students to still learn the course material and to use their professional judgement to assess the student and assign a final grade. There will be some courses where there just is not an effective alternative to in-class learning with specialist equipment, such as automotive or hairstylist classes and students won't be able to complete these courses in this school year. However, our education system has the flexibility to find ways for students to still complete the courses they want to at a later date.

### **High school classes have more students per class than lower grades, so how are teachers going to manage that many students in an online environment?**

At-home is going to be new for many students, and many teachers. Teachers and students can work together to determine how best to achieve the learning outcomes.

Students not having face-to-face time with a teacher does not mean student learning is over. Some students have been using distance learning for many years and have told us that learning this way becomes easier as you go.

### **How are high school graduation ceremonies going to be affected?**

Graduation ceremonies are important milestones for high school students. It is still too early to know how long this situation will last, but any plans being considered will have to follow the direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health at that time.

### **What about Off Campus Education (Work Experience and Registered Apprenticeship)?**

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