

March 27, 2020

Dear Teachers and Designated Early Childhood Educators,

As efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 continue all around us, I hope you and your families are doing well under what continue to be very challenging circumstances. I know the stress of social distancing, lack of routine and trying to balance work and family life as best as we can is continuing to mount for many of us.

As you know, the Ontario government has announced that schools will not be returning on April 6, as initially scheduled. We have not yet received any additional information on the length of school closures from the Ministry of Education but will update you as soon as we do.

While this period is marked by uncertainty, I want to reassure you that there have been many people working behind the scenes to ensure we are set up for success in the continuation of learning on April 6. Please know that we have kept our commitment to equity and anti-oppression at the forefront of all of our efforts to get us ready for April 6. Teams have been working all week on creating learning resources that address issues of differentiation, accommodation, equity, and student learning and well-being. These resources will be available early next week for you to use.

We continue to work with the Ministry, federations and unions to discuss issues connected to the re-engagement of learning on April 6.

**We have the following three priorities for the week of March 30 to April 3:**

**(1) Re-establish Relationships with Your Students/Parents**

As a first step in implementing this plan, we believe it is important for students and their parents/guardians to feel reconnected to their teachers, and where possible, their classroom peers.

To achieve initial contact, we are asking teachers to reach out to their students and/or parents/guardians beginning on Monday, March 30 to check in to see how they are doing, re-connect, and determine their needs with regard to technology and access to the Internet.

Our students have experienced a great deal of uncertainty and loss of social connections over the past several weeks, so teachers can choose the method for this outreach that they feel students will be most comfortable with including phone, email, text, Google Classroom, etc. Teachers should also consider connectivity of all students and age appropriateness.

Your message for this initial contact should include the following:

- The Board is working to create conditions that will restore connectivity between teachers and students/parents/guardians on a system-wide basis to come into effect **the week of April 6**.
- Please inquire if students/parents have access to a computer/laptop/tablet and internet access and are able to learn online.
- Please note any exceptional challenges or conditions for resuming learning for students/parents/guardians.
- You may be prompted by your Principals to share any feedback you receive so we can continue to troubleshoot issues of access and other challenges.
- Ask parents/students if they have any questions/concerns.

### **(2) Re-establish Relationships Between Staff**

It is important that staff have the opportunity to reconnect with their colleagues to be prepared to work as a team and meet the needs of their students during these extraordinarily challenging times. This potentially includes entire staff teams, grade level, department, or divisional staff teams. There may be opportunities for virtual staff meetings, grade planning time, using tools like Google Meet, Skype, Zoom meetings, etc. We encourage staff to support their colleagues.

### **(3) Getting Prepared For the Week of April 6**

To get everyone ready for remote learning to begin the week of April 6, a variety of supports will begin the week of March 30. Professional learning opportunities will be available through Key2Learn (more details will be sent to all educators). Examples of learning that will be available to educators will include using virtual learning platforms such as Google Classroom or Brightspace, online learning resources, and other remote learning tools. We expect that each educator will avail themselves of opportunities that meet their learning needs. This will ensure that all staff are prepared to lead learning come April 6.

School staff should also organize their own opportunities for collaborative planning time, individual capacity building, and more formal virtual learning/training for teachers.

School staff can explore the links to the Ministry of Education's [Learn at Home](#) resources and the TDSB's [Student Learning Resources](#). All of us also play a key role in monitoring and supporting student mental health and well-being and this should be a primary consideration as you reconnect with students. Please take an opportunity to review our mental health and well-being [online resources](#). Your mental health and well-being is also extremely important. Soon, we will be posting information and resources that will offer support for you.

We do not expect a replication of the school day when we begin learning again on April 6, but we do expect students will have lessons and resources available to them for learning. To help support teachers with this, we are creating learning resources that teachers will be able to access for their own virtual classrooms. In order to have maximum participation of all students, teachers need to consider multiple formats including using digital and non-digital resources/tools/accommodations. Each teacher must be in a position to be able to post/share lessons – based on the internet access of their students – and include resources, instructional strategies and accommodations, so students can continue to be engaged in the core curriculum areas.

I would ask that you be in touch with your Principal to share with them any exceptional circumstances you are dealing with at home that could impact your ability and capacity to undertake the plans and expectations above.

We also cannot expect that all parents will be “home-learning” with their children for hours every day. You know your students best. Students and families will have different capacities to work with their children, just as they will have different resources and supports. As you prepare for April 6 and beyond, I ask that you do your best to take these factors into consideration in terms of how you deliver learning and engage students.

### **Next Steps:**

We know that you must have many questions about important issues of teaching and learning including assessment, credits, loss of the school year, graduation just to name a few. We continue to receive direction from the Ministry of Education and are committed to getting answers to your questions as soon as possible.

We have teams of teachers and centrally assigned staff working on developing plans for support and we continue to meet with your federation/union to share strategies and information, and to receive their input on the unfolding plan to reconnect learning. Your feedback is vital and always welcome. Please take some time to answer the online [Pulse Survey](#) that was sent to all teachers and ECEs. Your responses will inform plans moving forward.

The above information is meant to get us all ready for the continuation of learning on April 6. We will continue to communicate with you as we enter into Phase Two of the school closures after April 6. I don't for a moment underestimate the enormous challenges we face. This situation is unprecedented and we have had very little time to prepare. However, working together, I am confident that we can find a way forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Malloy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Malloy  
Director of Education