



April 3, 2020

Dear Teachers and Designated Early Childhood Educators,

As we approach our first official day of the continuation of learning for TDSB staff and students on Monday, April 6, I wanted to connect with you to provide an update and further information as we all prepare for this new phase and the logistics of remote learning. In these uncertain times, I know information is critical and we have been working to get details confirmed as quickly as possible so we are all well prepared heading into next week.

This week, you have begun re-establishing contact with your students and I thank you for that. These relationships are so important and I have heard from parents and families how much they have appreciated this initial contact. My hope is that you have also found this exercise helpful to inform plans of how you will meet the specific needs of your students moving forward. What works for one classroom may not work for another and there will also be a range of needs within each classroom. However, you know your students best and it is our collective responsibility to ensure that each and every student has the ability to engage in some of the learning activities available to them.

As we move forward, let us continue to collaborate and work together through this challenging time. Your insights are so important and we truly value all the work you are doing to support all students so they remain as connected and engaged as possible under the circumstances.

We also understand that educators are managing many challenges at home. You may be supporting your children; you might have a partner/spouse who is also working from home. You may even be supporting your own parents who are in need of additional support. This time of social distancing and self-isolation is hard on everyone. Please know that we understand this as you read the expectations below. Having said all of this, we know that Covid-19 is changing so much about how we live and work and this reality will inform our work going forward.

### **Ministry of Education Direction**

The Ministry has notified all school boards that, *“The government expects that every student will continue to learn while in-school classes are suspended. Given the range of circumstances of students and their families, the continuity of learning will require a range of delivery options that are reasonable and practical. Teaching and learning in this evolving context will not look the same as the customary in-class experience.”*





School boards have been provided with guidelines in terms of the suggested hours of work per student per week, including areas of curriculum focus:

Grade Range	Hours of Work and Curriculum Focus
Kindergarten to Grade 3	5 hours per student per week Focus: Literacy and Math
Grades 4 to 6	5 hours per student per week Focus: Literacy, Math, Science and Social Studies
Grades 7 and 8	10 hours per student per week Focus: Core Math, Literacy, Science and Social Studies
Grades 9 to 12	Semestered students: 3 hours per course per week Non-semestered students: 1.5 hours per course per week Focus: Achieving credits/completion/graduation

With the expectations and guidelines outlined above in mind, we recognize that student and family circumstances and expectations vary widely, as do the circumstances of educators. During this time, we are all managing increased and different responsibilities, including caring for children and other family members. This is a fact that cannot be ignored and we are committed to ensuring that expectations are reasonable and manageable. We ask that you pay close attention to the guidelines above when engaging your students.

### **Teaching Staff**

Elementary teaching staff have significant experience working creatively and collaboratively and this will continue in the remote learning environment. Teacher teams, including homeroom teachers and specialist teachers who do not have homeroom class lists, will be developing assigned work for students in subjects such as art, music, French as a Second Language, and physical activity, as it enhances the core curriculum focus areas listed above. Contributing to supplemental resources for learning at home should also be part of the teacher teams' collaborative work. All classroom teachers who have students supported by an ESL itinerant teacher, or special education teacher, should be collaborating with those specialist teachers when planning for students.





All teachers play an important role in ensuring all students feel connected to their classroom and have equity of access to learning during the school closure period. Working with the principal, all non-homeroom teachers will collaborate with classroom/homeroom teachers to ensure no student is excluded from remote learning and to support student engagement as much as possible.

Secondary teaching staff such as guidance, student success, credit recovery, and special education regularly support specific students and/or work with other teachers to support students. Such teachers will continue to connect with and support these students. Teachers in these roles also work with other teachers in a consultative and supportive manner and will continue to be available to colleagues.

We will continue to revisit our expectations for teaching staff, and continue to dialogue with union partners, to refine our expectations in the coming weeks.

### **Students with Special Education Needs and English Language Learners**

Special education inclusion consultants and support staff (e.g., educational assistants, sign language facilitators (SLF), and ABA facilitators) continue to work remotely with classroom teachers to support them in developing digital and non-digital learning resources that can be accessible to students. It is expected that students who receive special education programming will continue to be supported by classroom and itinerant teachers, as outlined in the student's individual education plan (IEP).

All staff, and not just ESL/ELD teachers, can access resources found on the ESL/ELD website on TDSBweb to support English Language Learners. In addition, all staff can also access over-the-phone interpretation when needed to assist with ongoing communication with families.

### **Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting**

#### **Elementary:**

For elementary students, teachers will use formative assessment approaches to gather evidence of student learning. It is expected that teachers will provide meaningful feedback to students on their progress. Students' marks on the June report card will be based on a demonstration of learning of curriculum expectations up until March 13, 2020 (the time of school closures). Teachers may include (but are not required to consider) formative assessment data after March 13 when preparing final report cards only when this data improves the student's final mark. Reporting on work habits and learning skills should also





reflect information gathered prior to March 13. Teachers may choose to include comments on the final report card only if they feel that doing so would support the student's progress.

It is our expectation that students will do assigned tasks and teachers will provide the needed feedback during this time of school closures; however the individual circumstances of students and their families must also be considered. Again, this is why Ministry guidelines and Board direction must be followed. Students and their families who wish for additional learning opportunities are invited to use the resources on our TDSB website as well as the Ministry website.

The Kindergarten Communication of Learning will be based on teachers' observations of key learning and growth prior to March 13. Teachers may choose to include comments on growth in learning demonstrated during the school closure period when it is to the child's benefit.

#### Secondary:

**Grade 12 students:** Mid-term marks will be entered for Grade 12 students by April 23, 2020, to meet the deadline to report grades to the Ontario Universities' Application Centre ([OUAC](#)) and the Ontario College Application Service ([OCAS](#)). Marks will reflect work done up until March 13, 2020. However, student work that was submitted prior to March 13 or was not submitted prior to this date may be resubmitted by the student or handed in by the student to be evaluated. This mark will be used if it improves the student's midterm mark. Further, additional assessments may be assigned prior to April 23 but again, this mark will only be considered if it improves the student's mid-term mark.

**Grade 9, 10, 11, 12 students:** Teachers will assign learning tasks, projects and culminating activities to students for both formative and summative purposes. Teachers will communicate results and feedback to students about these marked assignments. Results will be used by teachers to inform students' final course marks. Teachers can adjust the weighting of all assigned tasks in their determination of a final mark, if needed, based on teacher professional judgement and guidelines from Growing Success. In other words, in light of the challenging circumstances that we are in, and the very different learning environments our student are experiencing at home, these summative assessments may not be counted if they do not support the overall achievement of the student.

All subjects a student is taking will be reported on in a June report card. Final marks will be entered in June, and will be based on work done until March 13, as well as after April 6 with the following caveat. Summative and culminating tasks can be used for these final marks; however, the intention is not to lower a grade as of March 13, 2020. Reporting on Learning Skills and Work Habits should reflect information gathered prior to March 13. Teachers may





choose to include comments on the final report card if they feel that doing so would support the student's progress.

As per the Ministry of Education's direction, all school boards will issue final report cards, including the Kindergarten Communication of Learning, for all students. Midterm reports will be issued for graduating (Grade 12) students only.

**MarkBook:** We understand that in the current circumstances there are some questions and concerns about access to Markbook and the Backup Files. This week the company announced that [MarkBook Web is available](#) to all teachers free of charge for the remainder of this school year. Your principals and vice-principals will share more details with you shortly.

TDSB is working with MarkBook to determine if the web version provides the functionality required for reporting purposes, mainly the generation of the .trc file. We are also exploring other web based mark entry options. A status update will be provided next week. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to find a solution.

### **Graduating Students**

The graduation requirement to complete 40 hours of community involvement is suspended for this school year but those hours that have been completed should be reported on report cards. As you have already heard, the literacy test/course requirement has also been waived for graduating students this year.

### **Professional Development and Webinars**

During this time, professional development opportunities are available to support the transition to remote learning. The first sessions became available to staff via [Key to Learn](#) this week and all sessions are also archived on the [Remote Learning web page](#). A [one-page brochure](#) has also been created that outlines the professional learning opportunities and resources available to educators; including great resources for integration of curriculum and global competencies. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has developed a series of training webinars and videos to complement TDSB resources. To register, please visit [Ontario.ca/learnathome](#) under 'Resources for Teachers'.

You are encouraged to continue to access these resources for support and new sessions are being added regularly to meet demand. I also want to highlight the importance of collaborating with your colleagues. We have amazing educators in the TDSB who have learned with and from each other in formal and informal ways prior to school closures. Please continue





supporting each other post-April 6. Your expertise and creativity is needed now more than ever.

### **Supporting Continuation of Learning and Well-Being**

Early next week you will receive a link to a resource, *Supporting Continuation of Learning and Well-Being in the Toronto District School Board*. This resource has been developed to provide guidelines and act as a support resource. It outlines guiding principles and provides planning checklists and considerations for all staff. This document is meant to be a support for the Continuation of Learning. We encourage you to review the contents and as your planning continues, please refer back to assist you in your work.

### **Keeping Students Informed**

We are continually providing information updates to parents and students on a number of platforms such as the website, and TDSB social media channels — [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). More recently, we have been using social media as a tool to better engage our students and hear how we can support them, their ideas and more. Follow along on TDSB's channels as we hear from our students directly. We will share what we are learning from students as these insights emerge on social media.

### **Digital Curriculum Resources**

A selection of digital curriculum resources for [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) educators is now available online. There are also specific resources available on the [Early Years website](#) to support early years educators in facilitating remote learning for young children. These resources may be helpful as you plan for rich remote learning experiences for students that can incorporate global competencies.

Many curriculum resources are also readily available through the [TDSB Library](#) and [Virtual Library](#), for which we currently have agreements and licences in place. There are also a number of resources highlighted that are operated by organizations outside of the TDSB. Please note that reference to these resources does not imply endorsement and these organizations are solely responsible for the operation and information found on their sites.

Throughout this process, when assessing any resource, it is essential to consider the following: [Code of Online Conduct](#), [Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources policy](#) and [privacy policies and procedures, guides and fact sheets](#). Keep in mind that understanding and following copyright rules is a professional and legal obligation for





educators to exercise due diligence under the Copyright Act when developing remote learning opportunities for students. More information is available on the [Remote Learning website](#).

### **TDSB Approved Web-Conferencing Tools**

There have been a number of questions regarding TDSB approved web-conferencing tools. The following tools are supported by TDSB IT Services and are available to staff and students at no cost:

#### **Google Meet ([https://meet.google.com/\\_meet](https://meet.google.com/_meet))**

- All TDSB staff can create and join meetings and it is very easy to use.
- All students (K - 12) have access to join Google Meet but do not have the ability to create meetings.

#### **Virtual Classroom ([Brightspace Learning Platform](#))**

- All TDSB staff can create and join meetings (from within Brightspace)
- All students (K - 12) have access to join but do not have the ability to create meetings

In response to the consultation and discussions with our federation partners, there is additional clarity on the use of Zoom. Zoom had initially been suggested as a tool for staff to reconnect as it was familiar to many. However, it should not be used with students, as it is not currently a TDSB supported tool and we have no contract or relationship with the company. As such, the TDSB does not recommend it for use. Should you currently be using Zoom with students, we ask that you please transition to one of the approved tools.

Teachers have several options using web conferencing tools that will protect both students' and their personal privacy. Google Meet does not require the use of a webcam. When a webcam is off, the individual's first initial is displayed as their icon. A teacher can record a lesson from their computer using Google Meet with no other participants in the virtual room. This recording can be saved and then posted into a secure online classroom such as Google Classroom or Brightspace. Another Google Meet option is Stream in which a teacher broadcasts a lesson or set of instructions but there is no chat pod or live participants, basically like watching a YouTube video. Lastly, a teacher can mute students or remove them from a Meet session should the need arise. Please note that while educators are welcome to use video conferencing, the Board is not requiring them to do so.

There are recommended tools, provided and supported by TDSB, for teachers to use in support of remote learning and connecting with students such as G Suite for Education and the Brightspace Learning Platform. These are established tools in TDSB that have been used for years by staff and students and TDSB provides a safe and secure environment for our





staff and students. District-provided tools are strongly encouraged over tools not provided by TDSB.

## **Technology Deployment**

As you know, we have been working together to collect information about student access to technology, internet, etc. At this time, the distribution of devices to identified students will begin late next week. Over the past several days, staff from various departments, including IT Services, Communications, Research, and School Operations and Business Operations have been working to develop and execute a detailed plan to provide a wifi enabled device to every student who requires one, in order to ensure continuity of learning.

We are now at the point in the process where staff will begin recovering devices from schools (beginning with secondary and middle schools where the largest number of devices are available) so that they can be redistributed immediately to those in need. It is important to note that staff are following Toronto Public Health recommendations and taking every precaution necessary to ensure social/physical distancing as they enter schools to recover devices.

This part of the plan will proceed as follows and will begin tomorrow, continuing through the weekend. Principals and Superintendents of the schools selected will receive an email informing them that IT staff need access to the school to collect devices. Caretakers (or designates) will ensure that carts of devices are located and brought to a central location. IT staff will check the devices, attach power adapters and place all devices in bins/boxes for transport. Our Board Courier will assist in picking up the devices and processing them for delivery through Purolator. Families expecting a device will receive an email or call from Purolator providing them with a delivery window. Start date for delivery of devices is Monday, April 6. Estimated date of final delivery is Tuesday, April 14. We will provide regular updates.

Please note that we are still accepting parent submissions for devices if they have not completed the survey yet. A button has been added on the TDSB website for parents/guardians. At this time, we have not been able to reach all parents/guardians by phone or email, and we are taking a two-step approach to ensure we can reach them. Over 4000 parents/guardians will receive a letter next week explaining the process if they are in need of technology. A hard copy of the survey and a return envelope will be included. As a second step to reach out to those parents, we will be asking their child/ren's school principals to continue to call them until we can confirm their needs.

We are setting up mechanisms to support families with technical issues. Details will be included with the delivery of the device. All information provided to students and families will







also be shared with teachers who may also call the help desk with any questions they may have related to students' abilities to engage in a remote learning environment.

### **Staff Absences and Replacements**

Should a teacher or DECE need to be absent due to illness, they will advise their Principal in writing via email. Principals will enter those absences into SmartFind Express as per the instructions received around absences on April 2. In cases where an absence due to illness is going to extend beyond three days, the Principal will contact the appropriate staffing officer (teaching) or staffing administrator (DECE) to discuss next steps around a possible replacement. It is advisable that Principals work with teachers and DECEs who are going to be absent concerning communication to students/parents about the teacher's unavailability.

For staff requiring miscellaneous leave, they should request the leave through MyInfo as per regular processes. Once approved, absences for such leaves will be handled in a similar manner to absences due to illness.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In closing, I know this is a lot of information to digest but our goal was to provide as much information as possible in one document so it is easily accessible to reference as needed. I thank you for your continued patience, and we are committed to listening and responding as a system as new information and insights emerge.

I apologize that you are receiving this email very late on a Friday evening. We thought about waiting until Monday to send this, but we felt that some of you would want this information now. There are so many factors that we are working through, and I trust that you would understand.

These are unprecedented times. We are trying to figure out how to provide learning to students when we cannot be physically present to one another. We know that there will be challenges ahead, but we also trust the wisdom and expertise of our staff. We will create ways for you to share your insights and wisdom with the system as we go forward.

Further, we are so committed to equity in TDSB. This means we cannot leave the most underserved behind. I trust that we will consider this in every school community as we do this work, in remote ways, over the next while.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for your ongoing efforts and your commitment to your students and their families. My hope is that you feel supported as we move forward and continue to navigate this situation together. We will continue to share any additional details with you once they become available.





And lastly, please know that we understand all of this preparation and adjustment to new ways of learning are happening while at the same time we are all also dealing with growing concerns related to COVID-19 and changes in our personal and family lives. Please take advantage of the [mental health and well-being resources](#) available to you and know that we are here to support you.

We know that educators in TDSB care about their students and want to serve our students in these challenging times. As the Director of TDSB, please know that I understand and the system acknowledges that you also must support your own families during the days ahead.

Let's do this together. Tell your principal what we need to hear and he/she will share these ideas with your superintendent. And I trust, that no matter what lies before us, we will make a positive impact on our students.

Thank you so much for all you do. Stay well and safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Malloy".

John Malloy  
Director of Education

