



April 7, 2020

## **RE COVID 19: Update on learning at home and access to technology**

Dear Students, Parents/Guardians, Families and Staff:

In these uncertain times, I want to let you know that, first and foremost, our thoughts continue to be the health of everyone in our HPEDSB family. We urge you to continue practicing physical distancing in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

I am communicating with our entire school community to share primarily two key messages. The first is to inform you of what is happening this week and in the weeks ahead, in terms of your child's learning and progress, and teacher contact with all of our students. I will also speak to accessing technology, for families who may require assistance.

Our teachers and school principals/vice-principals are eager to reconnect and re-engage with their students. By now, your child's teacher will have contacted you about what to anticipate for learning expectations. This is in response to [a letter to parents](#) from the Minister of Education last week. The letter outlined the minimum expectations for teachers to provide school work/learning materials, which are as follows:

- JK-Grade 6 will be provided with 5 hours of work per student, per week;
- Grades 7-8 will be provided with 10 hours of work per student, per week; and
- Grades 9-12 will be provided with 3 hours per course, per student, per week.

I also want you to know that we are aware of many families who have limited access to, or are totally without technology at home. Principals have been in touch with families who they know could use assistance in this area. As a result, next week we will be distributing school-owned Chromebooks to our most needy families on a loaner basis. I want to reassure our families and students that any laptop or Chromebook that is loaned to you will have undergone a cleaning and met the required local public health cleansing protocol before being distributed.

The other matter I wish to raise is parent/staff expectations of their children learning at home, and ensuring that report cards, marks/grades and assessment (as it might have occurred in the normal classroom experience) are approached from a very non-traditional perspective. We are not living, working, teaching and learning in the "regular" classroom environment. Assignments, lessons and assessments are going to look very different. While we maintain high expectations, it is a cause of great concern for me, as Director of Education, that the stress level in households is exponentially increasing during these incredibly challenging times.

Calls to the Kids-Help Phone have increased in recent weeks by 350% nationally and calls provincially to domestic violence centres are seeing dramatic spikes. The last thing our families need is an additional stressor by feeling that their children are not keeping up, or have concerns about marks. I ask—both as a teacher myself and as a father—for all of us to do the best we can to be reasonable and understand that every one of us is working in very challenging environments.

We must never lose perspective that our kids need us to be there for them, now more than ever.

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