

March 20, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As communicated to all Parents/Guardians and Staff on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, Minister of Education Rob Fleming directed schools to suspend all K-12 in-class instruction in British Columbia until further notice. We recognize this decision was made to protect the health and safety of students, staff and families, and it likely brings relief for those who have become increasingly concerned about the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the school setting. It has also raised many questions about what teaching and learning will look like for the remainder of the school year, should the suspension of in-class instruction continue until then.

On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, the Ministry of Education directed school districts to begin planning for the continuity of educational services. The suspension of in-class instruction means school districts will need to look for different ways to provide educational services to students in British Columbia. The Ministry was clear that students would not be returning to their classrooms on March 30 and encouraged school districts to take some time to carefully consider options for remote instruction and learning. Teams have been established to develop the NVSD's plan for continuity of learning for our students. We continue to work toward finalizing a preliminary framework for early April, with detailed plans to follow.

The Ministry of Education also received a provincial call to assist in providing public service for those who are delivering essential services in our communities. We are waiting for more information and will provide an update once we have clarity about this directive. In the meantime, we are considering options as to how we can support essential services and updated information will be provided next week on any measures that we plan to enact.

School districts were also asked to consider local solutions to provide support for our most complex and vulnerable learners. Again, we are waiting for further clarification about what kind of support the school districts should be offering and by whom. We know this is an area that brings great concern to many of our parents and staff and we thank you for your patience as we continue to look ahead with those students' best interest in mind.

We are only in our first week of spring break, which is normally the time for school staff to rest and recharge. We want to ensure we are being respectful of their time and are not contacting staff with questions about educational programming right now. I thank you in advance for giving our staff the time they deserve while on break, before we move into next steps for learning continuity. Further, we ask students to please refrain from entering the schools to pick up resources or personal items until a co-ordinated approach can be developed and communicated.

We encourage parents to reinforce with their children the importance of social distancing. We have a shared responsibility to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Allowing children to play together or gather in groups goes against the orders of the Provincial Health Officer to limit close contact with others. As such, we have closed all school playgrounds until further notice and we thank you for your co-operation.

We recognize that this is a stressful time for our school communities. Our Social Emotional Learning and Safe and Caring Schools staff have prepared a [document and list of resources](#) for parents that you may find helpful as you support your children with their emotional well-being and mental health.

We will continue to be measured and thoughtful in providing educational continuity during this global pandemic. We thank you for your continued patience and understanding and shared commitment to support community and family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain
Superintendent of Schools