



# DEHCHO DIVISIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

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Dear parents, staff and community members,

As you can understand, we are concerned for both the health of our students/staff and the Continuance of our Learning plan. We want to assure you that we are strictly adhering to the guidance that we receive from our Minister and the NWT's Chief Public Health Officer. We are implementing appropriate measures to control the spread of the virus and we are making best efforts to ensure that our learning packages are aligned with the Alberta Curriculum.

For the time being we are observing the following guidelines:

- Classes are cancelled for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year
  - Returning travellers are isolating for at least 14 days upon their return
  - Employee duty travel is postponed or cancelled where possible
  - Student activities (after school hours) have been cancelled.
  - All recommendations are dutifully followed (Social distancing, deep cleaning of our schools, etc).
1. We are conducting regular meetings with our staff to ensure that their pedagogy is planned carefully. We still have the same expectations when it comes to providing our students with a quality education.
  2. We are working with our Technology provider to see how we can increase the connectivity and bandwidth in our remote communities and, at the same time, we are buying chromebooks for High School students who may not have a computer at home. This might take some time but it is already in the works.
  3. For information about public health concerns related to COVID-19, please visit the Department of Health and Social Services <https://www.gov.nt.ca/en/covid-19-coronavirus-disease> and [www.hss.gov.nt.ca/coronavirus](http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/coronavirus)

## Continuity of Learning Q & A

- **How do we ensure that teachers are able to provide a continuity of learning?**

Principals have shared the *NWT Education Bulletin* with their staff and discussed how to implement these recommendations in their classes. This document clarifies the average numbers of hours of homework per grade or high school course, each week. This bulletin is on our District's WebPage ([ddec.ca](http://ddec.ca)).

- **Will our students receive the same quality of education while staying at home?**

There are many things to consider here: *First, we trust that our staff and students will rise to the challenge and develop activities that are engaging and relevant.* One challenge might be that there aren't as many interactions with the group (other students and teachers) but at the same time, it is also an opportunity for our students to explore new ways of learning and develop some level of autonomy.

It is an opportunity for us to completely review our technological needs and strive to provide all students with the same tools, and the same opportunities. This is forcing us to think differently. We are focusing on the key outcomes and subject matters so that time is really spent on the most critical educational components. We will think of making some adaptations next year to give our students who struggle an opportunity to catch up.

- **It all sound good in theory, but is the continuity of learning realistic in light of current issues?**

- Some houses have poor connectivity
- Some students do not have computers
- Some parents do not have the time or the skill set to provide continuous support to their children.

For the time being, most packages going home are in paper form. We will gradually incorporate technology as we improve our connectivity (in the next few weeks) and start sending chromebooks to our students. They have already been ordered.

We are also going to train all teachers with the Google classroom concept so that their lessons can be uploaded and easily accessible.

Teachers are making themselves available for their students, be it by phone or by email.

- **Food programs**

Our government and our DDEC have made food security a top priority. Our students may not have access to the breakfast or lunch programs in their schools as they did before, however, food programs continue in the Dehcho. The only difference is that our food programs are delivered differently based on a conversation with the Band Councils. In some communities, parents received gift cards that can be used at the local Northern store. In other communities, food was delivered directly to the household and in others we opened accounts at the Northern store for our parents. This is happening where the needs have been identified but we can assure you that we invested more money in the food programs than we have received.

- **Social and emotional well being.**

As we know, being confined can be very difficult, especially for students who are used to be running around and/or have intense social lives. Our principals have received information on call-lines that have been made accessible and they should have shared this information with their staff. This should have been passed down to you in the learning packages.

- **How do we ensure the health and safety of our students and staff who may access the school to prepare learning packages and/or pick up these learning packages?**

- We minimize the potential for infection by strictly monitoring school access. We keep social distancing and individuals who access the building are given a window of time to avoid being in contact with others.
- We continue with constant deep cleaning of the buildings.
- **We follow all the recommendations** of the NWT's Chief Public Health Officer.

These are difficult times but as they say, every cloud has a silver lining. Let us take this opportunity to rethink education, focus on the need to improve our technologies, and bring our students and communities up to speed with what is available elsewhere. Let us also work together to really focus on what matters.

Education is critical for the future of our children and our communities throughout the NWT. Let us not see this Covid 19 as a problem that will drag the Dehcho behind because all Boards are in the same boat! Let us believe in our children and in the dedication of our staff.

Mahsi cho,



P. Brulot, Superintendent  
Dehcho Divisional Education Council