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April 9, 2020

Dear Families,

Greetings on the eve of what, for many of us, would normally be a holiday weekend. Easter and Passover, two spring holidays normally observed with family and friends, will be marked in a startlingly different way this year.

Do take the time to enjoy the weather this weekend in a responsible way and celebrate with your family – even if what you celebrate is simply spring and renewal.

I want to share some information with you as we end the second week of our new reality.

I realize that many of you are wondering about the expectations for teachers in designing and delivering “Continuity of Learning” plans for your students. It is important to remember that we are not providing a full-service model in our efforts to provide instruction. Providing learning opportunities for students and monitoring their progress is our professional responsibility and we are all doing that to the best of our ability as we navigate the current situation.

In order to help guide our work over the coming weeks, the Ministry of Education has said that *“it is expected that students will be connected to their teachers no later than mid-April”*. In order to meet this timeline, we have asked teachers to reach out and connect with their students and to gradually begin providing learning opportunities.

The Ministry of Education is currently drafting policy which we understand will provide additional direction and assist us in assessing and providing final decisions about student progress (e.g. letter grades). Until then, to the best of our abilities, we are following interim guidelines:

***SD62 Interim Continuity of Learning Guidelines:***

- Each student should have direct contact from a teacher two times per week.
- Teachers will provide learning opportunities in an online format and may consider other resource materials based on need.
- Plans are developed in partnership with parents and include the student’s school and district support team, where appropriate.
- EAs, IS/LA teachers and classroom teachers are working together to develop a plan for supporting students.
- Working collaboratively, teachers are providing the following amount of learning opportunities for their students:

- Elementary: 5 hours per week
- Middle: 6-7 hours per week
- Secondary: 2-3 hours per course per week

Students will be supported with a variety of options such as video posts, work assignments, inquiries and investigations. These learning opportunities will enable students to further develop the competencies and understandings outlined in the BC curriculum despite circumstances that have interrupted usual school attendance.

The Sooke School District believes that the most important element when considering the adoption of any online tool are its implications on student privacy and safety. To that end, we request all parents/guardians visit this link <https://consent.sd62.bc.ca/> to sign the Online Learning Platforms Consent form. We have provided teachers with an approved list of platforms that meet privacy requirements but we need to ensure that all students have signed consent forms before we can proceed with additional online learning.

Some families have asked whether attendance and participation in online learning is mandatory given that the Education Minister has said that everyone who was in a position to transition grades prior to spring break will transition. While school buildings are closed to in-class instruction, there is an expectation that students will maintain their education through the online opportunities offered by the District. We appreciate circumstances differ from family to family and encourage those with issues meeting the expectations to speak to their teacher or principal about additional ways we can support you.

Finally, I encourage you to see the learning around you in everyday activities. Whether out for a walk, cooking meals, playing board games or puzzles – there are lessons everywhere.

Thank you again for your continued support and patience as we adjust to a new way of doing things.

Scott Stinson,  
Superintendent of Schools