

March 31, 2020



Dear Students & Parents -

We certainly wish that you had a good spring break and were able to find some time to relax and connect as a family in these unsteady times. We had a great PD day yesterday and your teachers were getting ready for this new distance learning format for MCHS. It's going to be a little different for all of us but there have been students learning at a distance for years who have been very successful. We will all figure it out with some patience and grace. :)

There's going to be a lot covered in this email, so here we go...

KEY INFORMATION TO GET STARTED

Email Communication

Thank you so much for following our requests in regard to picking up personal items from lockers during spring break. I'm glad to see so many of you checking emails. This will become our primary form of communication now. Please be sure that email addresses are current in [PowerSchool](#). You can update by logging in if needed.

Classes Resumed This Morning

Teachers went live with their instruction this morning. They have been emailing their classes advising how they are going to be proceeding with instruction from a distance. If your child has not been checking their PSD email account they should be now.

School Office Hours

They have been adjusted temporarily to 9am to 3pm until further notice.

Coming to the School

Access to the school will be limited to the front foyer. As we are required to have both less than 15 people and ensure six feet between them, we will be asking families/students to drive up to the school and enter one at a time. As one student leaves the school and drives away, the next student can come in.

Locker Items - We still have about 40 lockers that weren't cleaned out and have bagged those personal items. *Please call in advance if you are picking up locker items.* They are being stored securely so will need advance notice to retrieve the appropriate bag.

Print Materials or Other Instructional Items - Teachers will notify students who have items prepared when they are available at the school. Please do not come prior to receiving notification.

Dropping Off Materials - There is a large bin for student work to be dropped in the foyer.

INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL IN GENERAL FOR NOW

The timing of the cancellation of K-12 classes in Alberta and our spring break provided the perfect storm for communication breakdown regarding what is expected for our students going forward. There were some initial announcements prior to spring break with the subsequent details being released during spring break. There are a few items that I would like to address by sharing the details the government has now provided.

I Thought They Said My Child Was Just Going to Advance to the Next Grade?

Government expects that every student, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status, will continue to learn while in-school classes across the province are cancelled. This includes students in public, separate, Francophone, charter and independent schools, and Indigenous students attending provincial schools.

Continuing to learn is critical for students overall academic performance through their lives. There is abundant research that shows that even our two month break in the summer negatively impacts student skill development and memory. A five month break would be a significant detriment to students.

What subjects will be covered/taught? (Grades 10-12)

Education content will focus on specified and core courses required for high school graduation requirements, including language (English, French and French language arts), social studies, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. Content from other courses will be delivered where possible, and accommodations for students unable to complete courses are in place. Teachers will assign an average of three hours of work per course per student per week, and will be expected to work with their students and parents on the delivery of these materials. For any courses that have started, schools will complete them with the student to the best of their ability and provide a final mark and award credits.

Three hours per week for a course is obviously much less instruction than when students were attending classes and completing their homework. In the week prior to spring break our teachers worked within their departments to analyze their courses to determine which items from the curriculum were essential to know to be successful at the next level. Their instruction between now and the end of the year will focus on just those outcomes.

In regard to performance based courses (PE, CTS, Fine Arts), each of these courses has a theory component in addition to the performance aspects of the courses which will be taught. In addition, some of these courses do lend themselves to online delivery. As well, there are a variety of online tools which will aid instruction.

How will you enforce these guidelines for at-home learning?

Together, the government, superintendents, administrators, school authorities and the Alberta Teacher' Association, determined how to continue teacher-directed learning for students across Alberta. All agree that these are reasonable guidelines for learning at-home for students to continue their course work and complete the school year. Teachers bring with them a breadth of professional knowledge, skills and experience. Our teachers are in the best position to determine what is best for their students during this unique situation, and do the best they can with the tools and resources they have.

As we discussed moving to a distance learning format, teachers realized that much of what they do in the classroom can be transferred to a distance delivery format. Is it ideal? Perhaps not. But it is doable. As much as possible, teachers and the school will try to mirror our existing practices as if we were in attendance in the building.

Will students still get final grades?

Every student will receive a final grade and students who were on track to progress to the next grade will do so for the next school year. Teachers will be responsible for assessing a student's progress and reporting on their progress including assigning a final grade. We trust the professionalism of teachers and education leaders to assess their students' progress, no matter the learning environment, to determine suitable final grades.

A key phrase here is "on track". Teachers will still be providing key assessment tasks (exams, essays, projects) though they may look different in a distance learning format. For a student to be on track, just like in the classroom, they must complete those key assessments to a passing level.

Will Grade 12 students still graduate this year?

Every student who is eligible to graduate from grade 12 this year will graduate.

Again, a key word is "eligible". To be eligible, students must complete all of their graduation requirements to a passing level. It is recognized that this distance learning format may compromise some teaching strategies or cause hardships for some students. There are provisions to address those situations. Each grade 12 student's program (grad requirements and marks) will be reviewed just like they are each year. Any anomalies that occur because of the distance learning format will be remedied. However, students must still participate in their courses and earn their marks to graduate.

For grades 10 and 11 courses, can unassigned credits be used to move students to the next level?

A student's grade is important in high school as it indicates a certain level of knowledge and learning was demonstrated by the student. Student learning for grade 10 and 11 courses is continuing, and teachers have the flexibility in determining alternative ways for students to still learn the course material and to use their professional judgement to assess the student and assign a final grade. There will be some courses where there just is not an effective alternative to in-class learning with specialist equipment, such as automotive or hairstylist classes and students won't be able to complete these courses in this school year. However, our education system has the flexibility to find ways for students to still complete the courses they want to at a later date.

Unassigned credits is one of the remedies that can be used to address student programming anomalies. For grade 10 and 11 students, this would not be a 'go to' solution given that teachers will have flexibility in teaching and assessing students and students have time in future grades to gain needed courses. That said, hardships can be addressed in this manner on a case by case basis.

How are high school graduation ceremonies going to be affected?

Graduation ceremonies are important milestones for high school students. It is still too early to know how long this situation will last, but any plans being considered will have to follow the direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health at that time.

At this time the Parkland School Division is choosing to wait for some time to make a decision on whether or not to proceed with graduation ceremonies.

What supports will be provided for students with special needs?

Staff who provide specialized supports and services to children with disabilities should consult with families to find ways to support learning outcomes at home, while avoiding direct contact to protect students' health.

Our Student Services team met yesterday to discuss a communication plan to reach out to particular families. They are identifying who they will be contacting and will be in contact likely via email within the next week or two.

This is a stressful time for students. What considerations are being made for their mental health?

With this disruption in their education, students will be experiencing a range of emotions and will deal with the stress in a variety of ways. School authorities should reach out to health partners to ensure supports are in place for students during this difficult time.

In our Student Services meeting yesterday, the team indicated that they had compiled a list of mental health resources both for teens and families. Please click [here](#) if you wish to check it out. It will also be posted on our website and shared with teachers to post in the google classrooms for future reference if needed. The team is available via email, phone or in online conferencing formats should any students or families require support. Please reach out!

The items shared above come from the Education Continuity Plan: COVID-19. Please click [here](#) if you would like to read the entire document. There are a number of additional details provided.

Please know that throughout our communication with Alberta Education, there has been a tone where decision making is to be favourable towards students in supporting them through this abrupt change in learning. Students just need to continue to engage and complete their work and we will problem solve together should that be required.

MORE MCHS INFORMATION

Instagram Wellness

I would like to point out a support our PE department has created for our students. We all know that being cooped up in the house is draining and does not help with personal wellness. Daily physical challenges will be posted on their new Instagram account @pe_mchs. We encourage students and their families to get moving for twenty minutes a day and check in for additional wellness resources!

[Responsible Use of Technology Agreement](#)

As we move into an online format, this is just a reminder that every student and parent has signed off on this document. Please review if you need a reminder of expectations for student responsibilities in a digital environment.

Grade 10 & 11 Course Selection for Grades 11 & 12

Beginning later this week our EAs will be contacting students via telephone. We will be using home numbers or student cell phone numbers on file in [PowerSchool](#) so please make sure they are up to date. Also please empty your voicemail box if it's full so we can be in touch. Basic questions will be answered and selection information collected. Our EAs are not course advisors, so they will record any further questions to be passed along. From there data will be entered into PowerSchool and reviewed. Follow up for questions will happen in early to mid May by counsellors and/or grade administrators.

[PowerSchool Parent Portal](#)

There is always assistance for parents in managing their account. This will now occur via telephone. Please call the school if you need assistance.

Newsletter

Given that we no longer have school events to share, the newsletter will no longer be distributed until we return to classes. Please check our [website](#), [Facebook Page](#), [Twitter Page](#) or [Instagram Page](#) for information regarding school events.

Textbooks

Many students still have their textbooks at home which is a good thing to continue their learning. Please be reminded that families are responsible to return them at the end of the semester. Next week families will be notified of what materials are currently checked out to their child. Please take good care of these important resources for us. We will still need them when we return in the fall.

Fees & Refunds

We are aware that parents have questions about fees. At this time, we are still awaiting information from Alberta Education in this regard. Stay tuned for more information.

Who Do I Contact?

As when students were attending classes:

- In regard to learning or course concerns, contact the teacher.
- In regard to program concerns, contact Student Services or the Grade Administrator.
- In regard to personal support, contact Student Services.

Please click [here](#) for a list of our staff email addresses.

The one thing I have said repeatedly about Stony Plain kids (and their families) is that they are good, really good. Students and parents take care of business with a sensible and practical approach. We very much appreciate our school community and will continue to support students and their learning.

Take care, stay healthy and stay in touch.

Ms. Jensen