

## Frequently asked questions

### Support for students and families

**My child is very worried about the impact of COVID-19 in our community. What can I do to help my child? What mental health supports are available to me and my child/teen?**

[School Mental Health Ontario](#) has shared [resources online](#) that we can use to support student mental health during this challenging time. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has also shared information on [how to talk to children and adolescents about COVID-19](#). Mental health resources for adults are also available on the [CAMH website](#).

Support is available in Simcoe County.

**24-hour mental health crisis line** 1-888-893-8333 or 705-728-5044

**Canadian Mental Health Association** 1-800-461-4319

**Kids Help Phone** 1-800-668-6868

**Kinark** 1-888-454-6275

**Mobile Crisis Line** 1-888-893-8333 or 1-855-310 COPE (2673)

**Newpath** 705-725-7656

Access the 211 directory by phone (dial 2-1-1) or at [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca) for information on [community resources related to a specific concern](#)

### Continuity of learning/online learning

**Will students be provided with online learning opportunities during the closure?**

On March 20, 2020, the Ministry of Education launched [Learn at Home](#). This online portal provides resources for families in order for students to continue learning while schools are closed. The learning resources are available for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12.

SCDSB staff have developed a distance-based plan for the continuity of learning for all SCDSB students. SCDSB educators have been and will continue to contact students and their families to discuss how best to communicate moving forward and determine their level of access to technology and the Internet. Beginning the week of April 6, students and families began to receive direction about the continuity of learning from their teachers. Teaching and learning in this evolving context will not look the same as the customary in-class experience.

**Will my child’s teacher be contacting us regarding the provision of school work?**

At this time, families are encouraged to access the [Learn at Home](#) resources provided via the Ministry of Education. SCDSB staff have developed a distance-based plan for the continuity of learning for all SCDSB students. SCDSB educators have been and will continue to contact students and their families to discuss how best to communicate moving forward and determine their level of access to technology and the Internet. Beginning the week of April 6, students and families received direction about the continuity of learning from their teachers. Teaching and learning in this evolving context will not look the same as the customary in-class experience.

**What should the time commitment for distance learning for my child look like? What will they be expected to focus on?**

The SCDSB has developed a distance-based plan for the continuity of learning for all SCDSB students. The Ministry of Education has provided guidelines for the development of this plan, including the approximate amount of time students should expect to spend on the work assigned by teachers. Teacher engagement with students is expected, but will vary depending on circumstances, and will include a range of ways that teachers will connect with their students.

<b>Grade Range</b>	
K-Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Five hours of work per student per week</li> <li>- Focus: literacy and math</li> </ul>
Grades 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Five hours of work per student per week</li> <li>- Focus: literacy and math, with science and social studies</li> </ul>
Grades 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ten hours of work per student per week</li> <li>- Focus: core math, literacy, science and social studies</li> </ul>
Grades 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Three hours of work per course, per week for semestered students; one and a half hours of work per course, per week for non-semestered students</li> <li>- Focus: achieving credits/completion/graduation</li> </ul>

**Is the online learning provided by the Ministry of Education mandatory? Will it be graded or used for credit?**

The resources provided through the [Learn from Home](#) website are intended as supplementary resources for elementary and secondary students to practice math and literacy skills. They are not mandatory and will not be used as part of student assessment.

**I don't have access to technology/reliable Internet at home. How can I support my children in continuing learning while schools are closed?**

The SCDSB has developed a distance-based continuity of learning plan which may include non-technology based solutions for those who do not have access to devices or reliable Internet. SCDSB educators have been and will continue to contact students and their families to discuss how best to communicate moving forward and determine their level of access to technology and the Internet, and began providing resources related to the continuity of learning to their students the week of April 6.

**I heard that the provincial government is providing iPads for students to support distance learning. How do I get one for my child?**

The SCDSB has been able to meet the demand for technology by distributing our existing devices to students in need; therefore, we do not intend to purchase or rent Apple iPads at this time. We will continue to work through our established procedure to ensure that all SCDSB students continue to have access to the tools they require in order to learn during the school closure period.

**My child has an IEP. What help is available to assist them in learning from home?**

The SCDSB's continuity of learning plan includes direction for educators on supporting students with IEPs.

As well, many of the tools traditionally used to support students with IEPs at school (e.g. text-to-speech programs such as Google's Read and Write) are web-based and may be accessed from home.

## **School year status - assessment, progression and graduation**

**Will schools be closed for the remainder of the year? Do you know when schools will reopen? Will the summer break be shortened to make up for missed time?**

The Minister of Education issued a Ministerial Order to close schools across Ontario on March 12, 2020 until April 6, in response to COVID-19.

On March 31 and April 26, 2020, the Premier's Office announced extensions to the provincial school closure period.

On May 19, 2020, the Premier's Office announced that all publicly funded schools in Ontario will remain closed for the duration of the 2019-2020 school year. As such, Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) schools and adult learning centres will not reopen on May 31, 2020.

The decision to extend the school closure period for the remainder of the school year is based on advice from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health in order to protect the health and safety of students, families and staff. Please read the statement from the government here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/05/health-and-safety-top-priority-as-schools-remain->

[closed.html](#). The decision to extend the school year would also be made by the Ministry of Education and, at this time, we have not received this direction.

**If schools do not reopen before the end of the school year, will my child still graduate, progress to the next grade and/or receive their current credits?**

Our shared goal is to ensure the successful completion of the school year for all students, and to support students to advance to the next school year, earn credits and to graduate. A priority will be placed on students scheduled to graduate this year and any student on track to graduate will be supported to graduate.

The Ontario government is holding discussions with colleges and universities about the adaptations required to support the admission process for students applying for post-secondary education, and further information will be provided as it becomes available.

**I am graduating and have not completed my community/volunteer hours. Will that requirement be waived?**

The graduation requirement to complete 40 hours of community involvement is suspended for this school year. Community involvement hours that have been completed should be reported on the report cards of graduating students. Graduating students should be encouraged to complete their hours wherever possible, where the health and safety of the student can be assured.

**How are secondary students being assessed during distance learning?**

During the school closure period, teachers will continue to engage students in distance learning. Learning tasks, projects and culminating activities will be assigned for both formative and summative purposes.

Final marks will represent student performance prior to March 13, 2020 and where reasonable and in the best interest of students, will include assessment of work submitted during the school closure period. Recognizing that these are challenging and unprecedented times, students who remain engaged in learning will not see their marks negatively impacted.

**Will my child receive a final report card?**

The Ministry of Education has directed school boards to issue final report cards, including the Kindergarten Communication of Learning, for all students.

**I am currently in a co-op or SHSM program. How will I achieve my credits and/or complete my SHSM?**

All in-person community placements are currently suspended. Co-op teachers will work with their students to modify their co-op learning plans so that they may work through the curriculum expectations.

The SHSM program has an override request process already in place. Graduating students in the SHSM program who are unable to complete their SHSM requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be supported through the override request process.

**Will EQAO assessments and the OSSLT resume next year?**

EQAO assessments and the OSSLT have only been cancelled for the 2019-20 school year.

**How will courses and credits taken through the Learning Centres be affected?**

We are making every effort to minimize the effects of the closure on students and to ensure continuity. Once we receive more information from the Ministry of Education, we will share it with students and families. SCDSB staff have developed a plan for the continuity of learning for all SCDSB students. SCDSB educators have been and will continue to contact our adult learners to discuss how best to communicate moving forward and determine their level of access to technology and the Internet. Beginning the week of April 6, adult learners ~~can expect~~ began to receive direction about the continuity of learning from their teachers.

**Other inquiries**

**My child left personal belongings at school before March Break. Is there an opportunity to get them from the school?**

SCDSB staff are finalizing a plan for students and staff to gather personal belongings and learning materials from schools. These plans will be communicated on a school-by-school basis through your child's principal and/or teachers. Plans will follow strict protocols based on direction from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, and parents/guardians and staff will be provided specific direction.

**I have paid for hot lunches, etc., for my children via SchoolCash Online. Will I receive a refund?**

SCDSB staff will be working with schools in the coming weeks to identify hot lunch, milk and other programs that were underway, and determine next steps on a school-by-school basis. Families who have purchased these types of products via SchoolCash Online will receive communication directly from their school when next steps have been finalized. Schools will continue to work with SCDSB central staff to process refunds for programs that were scheduled to run through to the end of June.

**We ordered products through my child's school fundraiser. What is the status of these orders?**

Schools will work with SCDSB staff to determine the status of any ongoing fundraisers and similar activities. Families who have participated in these activities will receive communication directly from their school when next steps have been finalized.

**Will the schools be cleaned/disinfected before students return?**

Yes. We will implement a deep cleaning protocol for all SCDSB buildings based on recommendations from our public health partners.

**How do I get my secondary school transcript while the schools are closed?**

We are unable to process requests for transcripts at this time, as schools and the Education Centre are closed. Once schools re-open, please submit your request to the last school you attended.

Transcript upload requests from the Ontario College Application Centre (OCAS) will be processed.

**Will the SCDSB be donating supplies to the health care sector?**

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services is coordinating this work on behalf of government and the broader public service and have asked that we work together to identify items that may be available in school boards to reallocate to health and social services.

The SCDSB donated 3500 pleated masks and 500 N95 masks to area hospitals.

**Are school playgrounds, equipment and school yards open to the public?**

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, school communities are not to use playground equipment until further notice.

On March 31, 2020, an emergency order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act was issued to close all outdoor recreational amenities, such as sports fields and playgrounds, effective immediately. This order resulted in the closure of all communal or shared, public or private, outdoor recreational amenities everywhere in Ontario, including but not limited to playgrounds, sports fields, basketball and tennis courts, off-leash dog parks, beaches, skateboard and BMX parks, picnic areas, outdoor community gardens, park shelters, outdoor exercise equipment, condo parks and gardens, and other outdoor recreational amenities. Green spaces in parks, trails, ravines and conservation areas that aren't otherwise closed would remain open for walkthrough access, but individuals must maintain the safe physical distance of at least two metres apart from others.

On May 9, the Government of Ontario began to lift some restrictions on access to outdoor spaces. Under the updated orders, playgrounds and other outdoor spaces at SCDSB schools remain closed.