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## How Can I Stay Informed?
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Distance learning is a new experience for all of us. We recognize these are challenging times and that individuals are affected in different ways. We are all learning how to navigate this new reality together. Our goal is to support the GECDSB community in service to our students, as best as possible. We are here to support teaching and learning for all GECDSB students.

Distance learning is not the same as in class learning or home schooling. The supports being provided by the GECDSB educators are not intended to replicate the school day. These are temporary measures in response to the school closures. Families can support their child/ren with learning activities provided by the educators as much as possible, given individual circumstances, but are not expected to take on the role of the classroom teacher.
## What Can I expect as a parent/guardian?

### Caring Connections:
- Students' best interests are our number one priority.
- No student will have a reduction in grades/marks as a result of the school closure.
- Teachers will continue to connect with individual students and families to answer questions and provide feedback.
- Support staff will continue to be available to help students and families.

### Access to Materials:
- Every effort has been made to deploy a device if students did not have a device at home.
- Offline learning materials have been made available to students who need them. If you would like to make a request for offline learning materials please contact your child's teacher.
- If students and families need help in troubleshooting issues with technology please contact your classroom teacher or Principal for assistance. Alternatively you can go to the board website: [www.publicboard.ca](http://www.publicboard.ca) and search for Student Technology Assistance FAQ’s that can help with general information about devices, passwords, Edsby and Lexia.

### Flexibility:
- As the learning, in most cases, is occurring through online channels without real-time interaction, students/families have choice in how they organize their day. Any real-time sessions are scheduled in advance.
- Educators and students can communicate and connect safely using a variety of methods.
- Students can learn through a variety of activities.

### Inclusive Support:
- Students have access to learning resources where they see themselves represented and reflected.
- Staff will continue to listen to and work with families and community partners to identify needs and find solutions in the best interest of students.
- Supports are being provided to students and families in response to changing needs and circumstances.
What are some guiding principles and tips to engage in distance learning for parents/guardians?

GECDSB Guiding Principles and Tips to Engage in Distance Learning for Parents/Guardians

- Ensuring your child has access to safe and reliable devices
- Setting a regular learning time every day
- Ensuring your child’s learning is fully engaged and ready to support their learning
- Remembering if participating in a synchronous (live) session, only one speaker at a time and wait for the facilitator to call upon you
- Avoiding being on hold for 10 minutes or more
- Remembering if you need help, please ask your teacher
- Distance Learning Environment in the GECDSB Guidelines for Parents/Guardians
- Distance Learning Environment in the GECDSB Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

GECDSB Guiding Principles and Tips to Engage in Distance Learning for Students

- Set up a quiet learning area where you can focus on learning
- Set up a regular learning time every day
- Ensure your child’s learning is fully engaged and ready to support their learning
- Be sure to schedule a synchronous (live) session, only one speaker at a time and wait for the facilitator to call upon you
- Avoid being on hold for 10 minutes or more
- Remembering if you need help, please ask your teacher
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GECDSB Guiding Principles and Tips to Engage in Distance Learning for Parents/Guardians

- Establishing a general set schedule for activities
- Providing a visual schedule or checklist for activities
- Setting a specific, quiet learning area
- Change routines frequently based on learning style
- Provide scheduled breaks
- Use high-reinforcing and motivating activities
- Provide a choice of activities alternating difficult tasks with easier tasks
- Make use of coaching/teaching times to establish expected work/activity practices
- Here to Help:
  - Maintain consistent communication with your child’s educator
  - Contact your child’s educator if you have questions about your child
  - Contact your child’s educator if you are concerned about how your child is engaging in distance learning
  - Contact your child’s educator if you are concerned about learning differences and special education needs
  - If needed, contact your GECDSB Student Support Services for additional resources
  - Contact your child’s community program (e.g., Johnston McCulley Children’s Centre, Regional Children’s Centre)

GECDSB Guiding Principles and Tips to Engage in Distance Learning for Students

- Distance Learning Environment in the GECDSB Guidelines for Parents/Guardians
- Distance Learning Environment in the GECDSB Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

GECDSB Guiding Principles and Tips to Engage in Distance Learning for Parents/Guardians

- Kindergarten to Grade 3 (6 hours per week, 2 sessions, 1 hour per session)
- Grade 7 to Grade 12 (10 hours per week, 2 sessions, 1 hour per session)
- Additional Grade-Specific Guiding Principles:
  - kindergarten to Grade 3: focus on Math, Language, Science and Social Studies
  - Grade 7 to Grade 12: focus on Math, Language, Science, History, and Geography
- Engaging your child in distance learning
  - Ensuring your child’s learning is fully engaged and ready to support their learning
  - Contacting your child’s educator if you have questions about your child
  - Contact your child’s educator if you are concerned about how your child is engaging in distance learning
  - Contact your child’s educator if you are concerned about learning differences and special education needs
  - If needed, contact your GECDSB Student Support Services for additional resources
  - If you are concerned, contact your child’s community program (e.g., Johnston McCulley Children’s Centre, Regional Children’s Centre)
Supporting Distance Learning - What Does it Look Like?

Educators will continue providing materials and learning activities and be flexible in their approach and expectations of students.

Educators are supporting learning in the following ways:

- Staying in regular contact with students and their families to provide for continuity of learning and to maintain a positive home-school relationship
- Responding to student and family questions and/or requests in a timely manner
- Documenting ongoing communication with students and their families
- Providing feedback to students on their progress and producing final reports cards or the Kindergarten Communication of Learning at the end of the year
- Using Board approved learning platforms (i.e. Edsby, Office 365 Microsoft Suite Products, Brightspace-D2L and myBlueprint) to help keep students learning safely online
- Providing printed learning materials (GECDSB offline learning packages K-8) for students when needed
- Being as flexible and creative as possible to support students who may not have access to technology or the Internet (e.g. accepting student work via email attachments, two way conversations to assess student understanding or curricular expectations)
- Planning for and designing learning that is based on the overall expectations for each grade from the Ontario Curriculum
- Co-planning to integrate additional content (e.g. French, Art, Physical Education) within the minimum focus areas set out by the Ministry of Education
- Providing students some choice in how they demonstrate their learning in response to students' circumstances and/or learning needs
- Providing learning activities that are safe to do at home with the appropriate communications as to safety guidelines
What will be the focus and time allotted for learning at a distance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>What is the focus of Student Learning?</th>
<th>How much time are students expected to spend on teacher assigned learning?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-3</td>
<td>Literacy and math</td>
<td>5 hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>Literacy, math science and social studies</td>
<td>5 hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Literacy, math science and social studies</td>
<td>10 hours/week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Focus on achieving credits and graduation</td>
<td>SEMESTERED COURSES: 3 hours/week NON-SEMESTERED COURSES: 1.5 hours/course per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

07
For students in secondary schools, teachers will assign learning tasks, projects and culminating activities for both formative and summative purposes with the intention of enhancing learning and understanding as students cope with stresses during COVID-19.

On April 27, 2020, the Minister of Education stated, “If students can improve their marks over this period, let them do so. It’s not a time to reduce their mark. It’s really a time to see how we can strengthen their marks.”

Teachers will provide feedback for assessments during the period of Distance Learning to students. These assessments can be used only to improve students’ final course marks.

Furthermore, we are committed to ensure students who are on track to graduate are not impeded by the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the Ministry announced that the literacy requirement and 40-hours of community service requirement have been waived for students graduating this year.

Grade 10 Careers/Civics: Teachers engaged students in the second half of their Careers/Civics on April 6, 2020. Unlike other courses, teachers of Careers/Civics designed the courses to be taught and learned on a distance platform from the course beginning on April 6. Teachers have been sending formative tasks to students, and they have been providing feedback to students to prepare them for their final summative assignment. This culminating assessment will begin later in the semester. Teachers will use distance student achievement and their professional judgement in assigning a final grade for the second-half course.

We encourage parents/guardians and students to contact their Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Principal, Vice-Principal or other school staff, if they have any questions about their academic progress or pathways. We are all here to help.
How will student learning be assessed, evaluated and reported (Elementary)?

- On April 27, 2020, the Minister of Education stated, "If students can improve their marks over this period, let them do so. It's not a time to reduce their mark. It's really a time to see how we can strengthen their marks."

- Final report cards will be provided for all elementary students at the end of June. Final report cards will be full reports and will include grades/marks, learning skills, work habits and comments.

- All forms of student work will continue to be assessed during our distance learning phase, including learning tasks, conversations, and projects. Teachers will provide feedback on these assignments to enhance student learning and understanding and will communicate the results of these marked assignments to students and parents in order to report on growth and inform next steps.

- The final report card marks/grades will be based on work completed from September until March 13, 2020. For information gathered from April 6th, for the duration of the school closure, teachers will use their professional judgement to inform the final report card if the assessment data is used to improve marks/grades.

- Every effort will be made to report on all of the strands with information gathered since September. If there is insufficient evidence of student performance or if there are content areas not addressed during the school closure period, teachers would indicate an "I" with a comment as to why the "I" has been issued (due to school closure).

- Reporting on Learning Skills and Work Habits will also reflect information gathered prior to March 13th, 2020.

- The Kindergarten Communication of Learning will be based on teachers' and ECE observations of key learning and growth in learning prior to March 13th, 2020 in each of the four frames. Teachers may include comments on growth in learning demonstrated during the school closure period when it is to the child's benefit.

- The Alternative Report Card for students in GAINS classrooms will be based on teacher and support staff observations of expectations in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) prior to March 13, 2020. Teachers include comments on growth in learning demonstrated during the school closure period when it is to the child's benefit, for example, data collected from Boardmaker On-line or Lexia.

- We encourage parents/guardians to contact their Teachers, Principal or Vice-Principal, if they have any questions about their academic progress or the final report card for their child. We are pleased to be of assistance and support to students and families.
What are learning resources parents/guardians can use to support distance learning for their child?

The central office team (Program, Special Education and Student Success) have worked and continue to work to provide resources to support educators in supporting students in distance learning. Resources are available on the Board website. Hotlinks are found below to the resources listed.
A comprehensive list of Virtual Library Online Resources K-8 of library resources

Step by Step instructions as to how to access the databases

GECDSB Parent Guides K-8
The GECDSB and the Windsor Symphony Orchestra (WSO) joined to create a Read Aloud series with accompanying lesson plans to support student learning. A Read Aloud is added each week. Enjoy!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Book With No Pictures</td>
<td>B.J. Novak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Remarkable Farkle McBride</td>
<td>John Lithgow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumpy Monkey</td>
<td>Suzanne Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella’s Magical, Musical Balloon Ride</td>
<td>Robert Franz, Maestro, Windsor Symphony Orchestra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Celebrating Earth Day, Every Day and From a Distance

* We were unable to celebrate Earth Day as we traditionally do in schools. We have developed resource pages that are division specific that educators may use with their students to engage student in learning to demonstrate environmental responsibility.

Week at a Glance

Mental Health Week at a Glance
Water Conservation Activities

We want to celebrate Water Conservation Month with activities that are simple and easy to help students understand the importance of conserving water- a precious resource on earth! Activity pages are designed for varying student age groups.

myBlueprint is a powerful tool that can be used by students, parents/guardians and educators to facilitate the exploration of careers, pathways, and course selections. The Individual Pathways Plan on myBlueprint will help students explore their interests, abilities and identify their strengths to plan for their initial post-secondary destination.

Students go to publicboard.ca and select myBlueprint from the Quick links at the bottom of the page.
D2L/Brightspace Environment  
(all names refer to the same platform):

**Brightspace** (D2L) is the virtual learning environment (VLE) provided to Ontario school boards by the Ministry of Education. This common platform allows teachers to offer online and blended learning opportunities to students while promoting consistency in school boards around the province. Courses and class lists are pre-loaded based on our student information system (Trevlac) and content developed by teachers in the province can be loaded into these courses for student use or professional development. Teachers can also load in their own content and files, record video lectures, and hold web chats and meetings with students. Other features include: announcement posting, discussion area, quizzes, surveys, email, O365 account linking, and many more. To access tutorial videos on the use of D2L, follow this link:

*This student orientation video will give you a general overview of some of the essential things you need to do to be successful in an online course, such as logging into your course, accessing the lessons, emailing your teacher, and submitting assignments.*

Ministry of Education Learn At Home

* Please refer to the section about Special Education for specific teaching resources and supports for Special Education students.
Technology Support for Distance Learning

The Information Technology Department has created a number of resources that will help all staff and students use the Board supported technology platforms. Our Board supported platforms include Edsby, Office 365 (Microsoft Suite of Products), Brightspace (D2L) and myBlueprint. By using these Board supported resources the IT Department can offer service, support and protection from privacy concerns. This also allows us to communicate with all our families in consistent ways.

What Technology supports are available to support student learning?

Edsby

- Edsby is the platform that teachers use to communicate with their students and parents. As a parent/guardian you can see all of your child’s work and communicate with their teacher through this platform. To help you get started, here is a link that contains a number of short videos that demonstrate how to use many of the functions in Edsby.

Office 365

- Microsoft Office 365 is available to all students in GECDSB. Students can take advantage of all of Microsoft’s tools such as Microsoft Word, Powerpoint and Excel. Microsoft Office makes it possible to create, collaborate and share files with their teachers and other students. They are also entitled to five downloads of Microsoft Office for use on multiple devices.

Brightspace (D2L) Support

- Brightspace (D2L) is the virtual learning environment provided to Ontario school boards by the Ministry of Education. This platform allows teachers to offer online and blended learning opportunities to students. While many of the courses are pre-populated with course material, teachers can also load in their own files, record video lectures, and hold web chats with students. Other features include: announcement posting, discussion area, quizzes, surveys, email, O365 account linking, and many more.

myBlueprint

- myBlueprint is a powerful tool that can be used by students, parents/guardians and educators to facilitate the exploration of careers, pathways, and course selections. The Individual Pathways Plan on myBlueprint will help students explore their interests, abilities and identify their strengths to plan for their initial post-secondary destination. Students go to publicboard.ca and select myBlueprint from the Quick links at the bottom of the page.
We have created a 'Parent Portal' on the GECDSB Homepage – a one stop shop for resources, supports and information for parents/guardians during the COVID-19 Emergency.

Parents/guardians can also access resources to support student learning at home at the GECDSB Home Study site.

Parent/Guardian resources and supports for Well-Being, including videos, links and podcasts are located at Supporting All of Us Through COVID-19.

Our goal is to engage our parent/guardian community, to hear their voice and to gather information about the successes and challenges that they face in our current situation. This information will help inform our work moving forward.
What support is available for Students?

- Resources to support student well-being at a distance include:

**The website - Web pages under the “Supporting all of us through COVID-19” banner:**

There you will find a student survey for students and/or parents to complete, podcasts and videos, resources (for students, staff and families), weekly activities for student well-being (divided up by age group), community supports for families, and soon, KIS (Kids Information Sheets).

The data from the student survey informs what resources, Podcasts or KIS need to be developed by our personnel in Social Work and Psychology departments.

**Other Resources:**

On our webpages, we have many Kids Information Sheets packed with great information. For example, this one deals with birthday during COVID-19.
Students answer the question:

“What are you doing to make yourself happy?”

Ways We Can Help in Windsor-Essex County
This one page handout provides ideas on how we can support our community.

Follow us on Twitter at GECstudentwellbeing
Or
Instagram at gec.studentwellbeing
Or
Check out Edsby or our webpages
Supporting Special Education Students

What support is available for students with special education needs?

Delivery of our Special Education Services looks very different during this period of school closures. Our focus continues to be math and literacy as well as activities that promote independence. We have endeavoured to share resources that can be created from materials at home where necessary. The links below will take you to current Special Education resources that we have available to support our families. The links include activities to develop language development and fine and gross motor skills. Links will be updated regularly.

Special Education Week at A Glance

Literacy Activities
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/LITERACY%20ACTIVITIES.pdf

Math Activities
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/MATH%20ACTIVITIES.pdf

Fine Motor Activities
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/FINE%20MOTOR%20ACTIVITIES.pdf

Social Skills
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/SOCIAL%20SKILLS.pdf

Fine and Gross Motor Skills
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/FINE%20AND%20GROSS%20MOTOR%20WEBSITES.pdf

Literacy Resources
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/LITERACY%20WEBSITES.pdf

Math Resources
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/MATH%20WEBSITES.pdf

Virtual Field Trips
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/VIRTUAL%20FIELDTRIPS.pdf

ASD Websites
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/Documents/ASD%20WEBSITES%20and%20RESOURCES.pdf

Technology Resources for Students with Special Needs
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/TechnologyResourcesforStudentswithLearningDisabilities/Pages/default.aspx#

Speech and Language Activities
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/SpeechandLanguageActivities/Pages/default.aspx#/

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Speech and Language Activities
https://www.publicboard.ca/News/HomeStudyandStudentCurriculumResources/SpecialEducationResources/SpeechandLanguageActivities/Pages/default.aspx#/
What support is available for English Language Learners?

ESL Coaches (Elementary), Newcomer Staff and the ESL Teacher Consultant (Elementary/Secondary) continue to work with teachers and families to support English language learners.

The GECDSB has online reference materials to support English language learners found in the Online Teacher Resource by Content Area. There is a column that reads “Features for ELLs”. If the site supports ELLs, then there is a check under this column. A snapshot below is an example under “Math Literacy”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mathematical Literacy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Features for ELL</th>
<th>Features for Accessibility</th>
<th>Early Years K-3</th>
<th>Primary 1-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GECDSB Student and Educator Resources</td>
<td>GECDSB Math Resources for Parents and Educators.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iGD Math Park</td>
<td>Free online math games for students k-Grade 6.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Storytime English with Storytime French</td>
<td>Math Storytime can help you explore simple math concepts with your children</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) are available to support English language learners and their families. Please work through your school Principal or Vice Principal to contact the Newcomer Canadian Centre of Excellence (NCCE) if you need SWIS staff to provide translation services.

Recently, the GECDSB dispensed basic school supplies for all of our newcomer students who registered to our board from September 2019 to March 2020.
What support is available for Indigenous Students?

The GECDSB Open Minds team are in regular connection with Indigenous students and their families to provide wellness checks, connect with community supports and provide culturally relevant and responsive learning. Cultural learning packages are posted on the Board website. Hard copies have been provided to families at their request.

Over 160 learning resources/tool packages (pencils, paper, pens, colour pencils... and nutritional snacks) have been provided to Indigenous students. Tutors are available for distance learning support for families at request. Should educators or administrators have questions for the Open Minds Team please refer to the link below to determine your school contact.
What About Proms? Graduations?

- Proms are cancelled due to social distancing requirements.
- The GECDSB has not made a determination as of yet on the status of graduation ceremonies.
- More information to come in the near future.

What About Summer School or Summer Camp Opportunities?

- Please visit our website for information on Summer Learning: www.summerlearning.ca
- Student Success:
  - Please visit our Student Success Instagram Account at: instagram. @gecdsbssss
- Summer Learning Opportunities
  - More information as to summer learning opportunities such as Reach Ahead and Camp Wonder.
  - Stay tuned!

Celebrations Occurring at a Distance

Music Monday

Monday, May 4, 2020 was Music Monday across Canada. The theme this year is Hymn to Freedom by Oscar Peterson lyrics by Harriette Hamilton. Due to COVID-19 we are unable to host our annual event which was to take place at the Capital Theatre. Instead, we have reached out to our elementary and secondary schools to ask them to encourage their own students to celebrate Music Monday with their families, classmates virtually. A list of districtwide events are posted on the eBoard website.

There is a Facebook link for the day’s events:

https://www.facebook.com/CoalitionCanadaCA/

As well as a YouTube link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTjk-DsFWM6XNi9HeUpLKA
GECDSB Digital Photography Exhibition

The GECDSB 14th annual Digital Photography Contest and Exhibition will take a new twist this year and the exhibition will be virtual. Please click on the link to see information as to the criteria and method for submissions. Student participation is voluntary. We look forward to posting all the submissions and results of the exhibition on the Board website on June 12th.

GEC Stronger Together

We are developing a Greater Essex exclusive program entitled “GEC Stronger Together”. This program will feature messages of hope through themes of “You are not Alone”, “Keeping Healthy”, “Do what makes you happy” and Making Lemonade”. Watch for it!

The Pluralist

This year’s Pluralist theme is "Speaking Truth to Power." Writing categories are divided into Junior (Grades 9 & 10) and Senior (Grades 11 & 12). All art submissions are considered for the cover contest. The final submission date from students is May 8th. Winners will be selected and communicated to the system during the week of June 8th. The final version of The Pluralist will be produced by August 2020 and hard copies will be available to schools in the fall, with a virtual copy with audio recordings available online.

How Can I Stay Informed?

Where can I find the most up-to-date information about school closures and distance learning?

- Visit the Board Website for the most up to date information
- Follow social media accounts 🌐🔗🔗
- If you have questions, please call your school and leave a message. Someone will return your call in a reasonable time-frame.
- Refer to the regularly posted Director’s notepad to see what we have accomplished to date and actions on the horizon.
OUR VISION:
Building tomorrow together-
every learner, every day

WE ARE GECDSB PROUD!

OUR MISSION:
Excellence in public education-
confident learners, engaged communities,
ethical stewardship