

April 20, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I wanted to connect with you to provide an update on several topics. Over the past couple of weeks, students and teachers across the Richmond School District have begun to engage in learning opportunities. Although we are early in the process, I am hearing stories from around the district of creativity, innovation, and positive connection between schools, students, and families. Senior district staff have been meeting with representatives of the Richmond District Parents' Association (RDPA) to gather feedback from the parent's perspective. They have shared with us a number of questions and issues that the district would like to address in this news bulletin.

### Learning Opportunities:

*How much time should my child be spending engaged in learning each day?*

The chart below outlines the suggested guidelines for each grade level. Please note that these are only guidelines and we understand that they may need to be adjusted for individual students and parents.

Learning ideas and time frames for Elementary and Secondary. Please note that these may adjust over time and need to be responsive to student/family needs.				
Teachers may also suggest other activities for the day including physical activity, helping out at home, etc.				
Areas of learning	K-1 Suggested Lengths of Time  Daily Total: 60 min	Gr. 2-3 Suggested Lengths of Time  Daily Total: 90 min	Gr. 4-7 Suggested Lengths of Time  Daily Total: 120 min	Gr 8-12 Suggested Lengths of Time  Daily learning/work time for students should not exceed 3 hours per day.
Literacy (Reading, Writing, Oral Language)	20-30 min daily	30 min daily	40 min daily	Wherever possible, departments will coordinate to offer cross curricular inquiry learning.
Numeracy	20 min daily	20 min daily	40 min daily	
Core Competencies – setting and reflecting on goals	Embedded weekly			
Curiosity/Questions to investigate	Embedded weekly			
Maker Time/Design Time	Embedded weekly			
Integrated curricular content	Embedded weekly as applicable and appropriate			

*What if the amount or type of work my child's teacher is providing is just too much for my child or our family to manage at this time?*

We recognize that the amount or type of work assigned may present challenges for some families. Although the Ministry of Education has mandated that school districts continue to provide learning opportunities for the remainder of the school year, how this is carried out can look different for each

family. Your child's teacher will communicate regularly with you, and we encourage you to reach out to them to speak honestly about your family's needs. We do not want families feeling overwhelmed through this process and we are committed to being responsive in the best interest of your child. If, after discussions with your child's teacher, you are feeling the need for further discussion about your child's learning, please contact your school principal for support. We are in this together and maintaining open lines of communication is more important now than ever.

*How will teachers assess and evaluate my child's progress for the remainder of the school year?*

As students continue to work on the learning opportunities provided by their teachers, families can expect their children to receive feedback on how they are progressing in each area of learning. Families should also expect:

- that teachers will prepare year-end progress reports for each student.
- That teachers will determine a final performance/proficiency scale or grade for each student. This will be based on a combination of work completed to date, and the assessment of learning opportunities that students are able to participate in.
- that the evaluation of learning taking place will be in relation to a smaller selection of learning standards, which students are able to complete at home.

It is very important that a child's ability to progress not be negatively impacted by the current situation. During this time, if your child and/or family is having difficulty with the workload, work expectations, or has any concern about the assessment feedback, please contact your child's teacher or school counsellor immediately to work out a plan that your child can succeed at.

#### **Access to Technology:**

*My child and I are finding it very challenging to access the e-portfolio/portal. What is the district doing about this?*

One of the main learning technology platforms used in the Richmond School District is the Scholantis Portal. The Scholantis Portal is used for online class sites, assignments, class discussions, file sharing, and student e-portfolios. As a result of the suspension of in-class instruction, the number of people using the portal has increased exponentially and the demands on the system have been extremely high. As a result, the platform speed and stability has been impacted. We acknowledge that this has caused increased challenge and frustration for our staff, students, and parents.

The District Technology Team has been working extremely hard to address the various issues that have surfaced. Last Friday, the District doubled the infrastructure capacity to improve the stability and speed of the system which resulted in improved performance. Our technology team will continue to monitor the system very closely and will do everything possible to provide an effective learning platform to support our students. We regret that you have had this added challenge as part of the transition to remote learning and we thank you for your patience and understanding.

*Will the School District be using the Zoom videoconferencing application? Are there still privacy concerns with it?*

We are pleased to announce that the district has now implemented the video conferencing application, Zoom. A critical piece of K-12 education is the personal connection between our staff and students and using a video conferencing tool will provide another way to maintain this connection during remote learning. We have partnered with the Ministry of Education to access a provincial education license for

this application which includes enhanced security features. This software also complies with BC's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Students will not need to create accounts and will be provided with a secure, private link and password that will provide them with access if their teacher decides to use this tool. We are mindful that students and staff have a range of comfort with participating in video conferencing from their homes. We also understand that students' have varying levels of access to technology and that it may not be possible for students to always be available to join a call. Our staff will continue to demonstrate sensitivity and flexibility to support all families as we work through this together.

*My child does not have access to a device such as an iPad at home and my child's teacher is asking us to engage in e-learning. Can the district help?*

Teachers were asked to check in with families in order to determine which families might need assistance with access to technology at home. As a result, the district is in the process of loaning out over 800 iPads to families. If your family does not have access to an appropriate electronic device such as an iPad, and you have not already discussed this with your child's teacher, please reach out to your teacher to request a device.

### **Picking Up Belongings at School:**

*My child has an essential item at school that would be helpful to have for learning at home. Can we pick it up from school?*

If you believe your child would benefit from having an essential item that is currently at school, such as a binder, etc., please feel free to contact your school principal in order to make an appointment for you (or an older child) to pick up the item(s). In order to ensure that health and safety protocols such as physical distancing are followed, we are unfortunately not able to accommodate any 'drop-ins' without an appointment.

### **Family Circumstances**

We understand that as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, circumstances for each family may change. Parents who are essential service workers, who have not requested a placement for their child in one of our school sites providing on-site care during the school day, may decide at some point that they wish to apply for this service. Please visit <https://bit.ly/2yfZiJV> if you would like to apply for on-site care for your child.

The district is now offering grocery hampers to a number of families across the district whose children would normally receive assistance with breakfast and/or lunch at school. If your child would normally receive help with food at school, or your family's circumstances have changed to a point where you need assistance with food for your children, please reach out to your child's principal. We want to help.

### **Information for Parents and Guardians:**

Please continue to refer to the [Richmond School District website](#) for information about [continuity of learning](#) as well as updates from the Ministry of Education, including the regularly updated [Q & A document](#) for parents and guardians. New information is posted regularly as it is received from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your continued collaboration and patience as the school district implements each new phase of learning opportunities. I recognize that these are complex times for families and we are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside you to support your child's learning. I would also like to reiterate the importance of reaching out to your child's teacher, school counsellor or principal if you require assistance. During these uncertain times, the Richmond School District is committed to supporting our students and their families to the best of our ability. Our team of dedicated teachers, support staff and school leaders are here to help.

Sincerely,



Scott Robinson  
Superintendent of Schools