



## Learning at Home Updates: Synchronous Learning

May 15, 2020

Dear parents and guardians,

I would like to provide our families with updated information regarding synchronous learning in the Upper Grand District School Board. Synchronous learning includes real-time, interactive communication such as phone calls, chat functions and live video.

Over the last several weeks, the board has rolled out a phased-in approach to synchronous learning. Connecting with students using synchronous methods can be beneficial to some students and areas of program, for example, by allowing staff to visually demonstrate concepts of study, engage in face-to-face discussions and provide immediate feedback and guidance to students.

The board is using Google Meet as its live video conferencing tool - Google Meet is the only board-approved tool for this type of communication. All staff are required to complete mandatory training prior to using Google Meet. Phase 1 involved rolling out this option to our Speech and Language Therapists, Social Workers, Mental Health and Psychology staff. In Phase 2 we rolled it out further to our Special Education Resource Teachers and teachers in specialized class placements. In Phase 3, the board made the use of live video available to all elementary and secondary teachers, as well as support staff from the Student Support and Program Services department.

On May 8, 2020, the Minister of Education provided further guidance and clarification to school boards regarding expectations related to synchronous learning. The Ministry's expectation is that synchronous learning be incorporated into the instructional options available to students. To support and promote the Ministry's direction, the board has provided staff with ideas in order to assist them in connecting with students using synchronous methods. We continue to value the unique situation of all learners and their families and trust that staff will continue to support such diversity.

As a board we believe that asynchronous learning is the most fair and equitable mode of delivery for all students and have focused our efforts on supporting teachers in creating distance learning programs through this lens. We encourage staff to continue their excellent practices in supporting students through asynchronous means, including recording videos and lessons, using Google Classroom and providing paper copies of work where requested.

However, with the Minister's recent direction, we are expanding our instructional practices in order to make more synchronous learning options available to our students. We have provided staff with several options and ideas for providing synchronous learning, for example by holding office hours, providing one-on-one support, small group sessions, whole class instruction, real-time feedback opportunities, FAQ sessions, modelling skills and activities, making connections, and so on. Teachers will use their professional judgement to select an appropriate synchronous learning approach for their students.

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### Upper Grand District School Board

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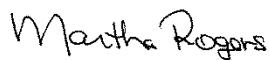
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Students may be invited to participate in these sessions as they are able to, given their unique learning and personal situations. We recognize that not all students will be able to participate in synchronous learning.

These weeks of physical distancing and isolation have been difficult for many. I thank our students for their hard work and resilience through these challenging times and parents and guardians for doing what they can to support their child's learning while juggling many obligations. I would also like to thank our staff for their dedication, compassion and commitment to our students.

I hope that you and your family are staying well and taking care of yourselves as best you can.

Sincerely,



Martha Rogers  
Director of Education & Secretary-Treasurer

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**Upper Grand District School Board**

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