



UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Martha Rogers

Director of Education & Secretary-Treasurer

Board Office: 500 Victoria Road N. Guelph, ON N1E 6K2

Email: martha.rogers@ugdsb.on.ca

Tel: 519-822-4420 ext. 720 or **Toll Free:** 1-800-321-4025

April 6, 2020

Dear secondary students and parent/guardians,

As many of you are aware, the Minister of Education has signed a new school closure order extending the current closure until at least May 4, 2020. The closure could be extended at any time and will be dependent on the current COVID-19 situation at that time. All decisions regarding closures are made by the Minister at the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario. Please remember that all school grounds are closed to the public under this order. This includes tracks and fields, and playgrounds located on school and board property.

The transition to distance learning may not be simple or easy for everyone. In the coming weeks, we know you will continue to love and provide incredible support to your child(ren), while managing a number of stressors. We want you to know that we do not intend to place additional burden on our families. We know that many parents are caring for elderly parents and young children, and many are still working during the day.

Learning continues during school closures

Beginning April 6, teachers will move to a teacher-led distance learning platform. Students are welcome to use the supplementary resources provided through the Ministry of Education, but must participate in their teacher-led component in order to receive credits. The focus of this learning is the completion of course credits, and for our Grade 12 and 12+ students, graduation. In order to achieve this, students will be assigned 3 hours of course work per week per course, which will include work assigned by teachers such as lessons, readings and assignments. There will be an evaluation component to each course and a final grade will be assigned.

Last week, teachers and schools began working on re-establishing connections with the students in their classrooms. If you have not yet been contacted by your school, please ensure that you reach out via phone or email and contact your principal or vice-principal.

UGDSB's Learning at Home program

Learning at Home is the Upper Grand District School Board's distance learning program, which will provide teacher-led instruction to UGDSB students, assisted by our support staff. Teachers will use various forms of communication to deliver a teacher-led distance learning model of instruction that focuses on ongoing connections with students for the duration of the closure.

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Teachers will be planning by using the overall expectations that are contained in the Ministry of Education curriculum for each course. Their course content will be adapted and refined for a distance learning model. It will be impossible for teachers to replicate face-to-face instruction, assessment and evaluation in such a model and so they will focus on the key learning outcomes for each of their courses.

Student responsibilities

There is no daily attendance requirement for students with respect to distance learning. Teachers will be asked to establish an 'office hours' approach in which they will inform students when they will be checking email, voicemail and online platforms for student inquiries on a daily basis. Feedback and assessment will need to be provided on an individual basis as opportunities for 'whole class' work online will be limited if not impossible. The key component for students will be to fully participate in the distance learning platform, including the completion of materials used for assessment and evaluation.

During distance learning, students will be required to shift and create habits of success in their new learning environment. Your child's teacher will help with this and will communicate clear expectations for students. Students, in consultation with their parent(s)/guardian(s), and to the greatest extent possible given their individual circumstances, should:

- Establish daily routines for engaging in learning experiences.
- If possible, identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully.
- Monitor the established lines of communication with your teacher(s), to check for announcements and feedback.
- Check your UGCloud email regularly.
- Do your best work by completing assignments with integrity and academic honesty.
- Do your best to meet timelines, commitments and due dates.
- Communicate proactively with your teacher(s) if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
- Adhere to the School Code of Conduct.
- Comply with the Board's Policies and Procedures including the Responsible Use of Digital Technologies Policy.

Parent/Guardian responsibilities

Learning activities will be assigned with careful consideration of course content and accommodations that may be required for students. We know parents want to be there to guide their children through distance learning, but students should be able to complete their work with minimal adult support. If you have concerns, please contact your child/teen's teacher(s).

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As we move forward with distance learning, we ask for your continued support as we navigate uncharted waters and explore innovative ways to engage parents/guardians at home. As always, as a key stakeholder in your child’s development, your engagement with your child can play a crucial role during this time.

It is important during these times to monitor and take care of our mental health. The board has prepared some resources to help parents and students with supporting overall mental health: <https://www.ugdsb.ca/community/coronavirus/mental-health-resources-during-covid-19/>

Resources for students with special education needs

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) remain in full effect. Teachers will be providing accommodations to the greatest extent possible in order to accommodate students with IEPs.

Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) will be supporting students and classroom teachers during this closure period in the areas of instruction, assessment and evaluation. Parents are encouraged to contact their child’s classroom teacher(s) or SERT(s) if they have any questions or concerns.

Schools are actively working on innovative and creative ways to deliver, support and instruction to our students in our Specialized Class Placements and more information will be coming to families in the coming days. The board is actively planning ways to ensure that students have access to SEA technology devices.

Access to technology and internet

The UGDSB fully recognizes that not all students have reliable devices or internet connectivity. Our goal for the week of March 30 to April 3 was to have classroom teachers reach out to families to collect information regarding their technological needs. The school board is currently working on a plan to supply students with a device should they need one. Students who indicated that they require a device will be contacted by their school in the coming days. The board is also exploring alternate ways of accessing the internet in areas where it is limited or not available.

Please remember that teachers will use the communication method that is accessible to both themselves and each student. Teachers will also make accommodations to deliver and receive instruction and assessment in hard copy format if necessary for those students who require it.

Assessment and evaluation

Students must participate in their teacher-led distance learning in order to receive credits. Final marks will be entered in June and will be based on work done until March 13, 2020 prior to the school closure, and after April 6, 2020. Teachers will assign learning tasks, projects and culminating activities for both formative and summative purposes. Teachers will communicate results of these marked assignments

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to students. Results will be used by teachers to inform students' final course marks. Work on summative and culminating tasks will be assessed with a focus on student achievement, understanding that distance learning is not an environment that is conducive to learning for all.

School boards will be issuing final report cards with marks at the end of the school year for all students from JK to Grade 12.

Graduating students

We know that for our graduating students, this has been a particularly difficult and disappointing time as they look to complete their graduation requirements and obtain the necessary credits and experiences for their future plans. Rest assured that we will do everything possible to support our graduates and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the pursuit of their post secondary goals. While plans for graduations and proms have been put on hold, we will re-evaluate these important events and will follow, as always, the direction of both the Ministry of Education and Public Health in planning future events.

Midterm marks for graduating students only

No midterm report card will be issued to any secondary student. However, midterm grades will be provided only for students in their graduation year (12 and 12+) and will be issued to these students sometime between April 23 and May 1. We are currently working on how these grades will be distributed to students and parents. The midterm grade for these students will be based on work evaluated up to March 13, 2020. In addition, teachers may choose to use ONE additional assignment in the period between April 6-23 to calculate a student's mark. However, this additional assignment cannot be made mandatory and cannot have the effect of reducing the mark the student would otherwise have received on the work completed to March 13, 2020. This includes marks for Grade 12 students who are in other grade level courses. University and college application centres have indicated a willingness to be flexible in their submission deadlines.

Community Service Hours

Graduating students will have their 40 hour community service requirement waived for this year. Students in all grades are asked to hold onto their community service hours documentation for the time being.

Requests to drop courses

Guidance staff will be busy in the coming weeks supporting students in this new model. As a result, they will not be processing requests for dropping courses until the week of April 20. We are asking students to do their very best in this new online learning and to work with their teachers in coming

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weeks. The loss of even a single credit can impact a student’s opportunity to graduate, and our goal is to keep students enrolled in all of their courses

Cooperative Education

For students who are enrolled in Cooperative Education courses that involve a classroom component and a community placement component, their in-person community placements will need to be suspended. These students can work with their co-op teachers to modify their co-op Learning Plans so that they may work through the curriculum expectations. Where feasible, these learners will be provided with opportunities to connect virtually with industry partners on career exploration activities, and experiential learning opportunities. Co-op teachers will be in touch with students to discuss the specifics related to their situation.

SHSM

Graduating students involved in the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program who are unable to complete their SHSM requirements due to extenuating circumstances, including the impacts from COVID-19, will be supported through the override request process. SHSM Leads in our secondary schools will be reaching out to students to explain the process in more detail.

Dual Credit

We have been in contact with all of our students in Dual Credit programs and have confirmed with them if their program has continued or not. We will be offering other credit courses to ensure graduation opportunities for all students if their program was cancelled.

Careers and Civics

The end of Term 1 for Careers and Civics courses will be extended by two weeks from the original April 14 date. This will allow teachers to complete the courses and assign a final grade.

Existing eLearning Courses

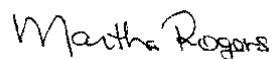
eLearning teachers will have reached out to students this past week to reconnect with students. These courses will be running normally beginning the week of April 6.

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If you have any questions, concerns, or comments please reach out to your child's teachers or to the administration at your child's school.

Sincerely,



Martha Rogers
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