

Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development
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Date: April 9, 2020
To: All school district personnel (Part II)
From: George Daley, Deputy Minister
Copies: Craig Caldwell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Educational Services
Robert Penney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Subject: **Bulletin #11: Extended school closure (COVID-19)**

The last few weeks have been difficult for all New Brunswickers, whether we are working long hours providing critical functions, without income because of the economic impact of the pandemic, or at home taking care of our children during the school closure. This disruption to our work and personal lives will continue for some time given recent developments.

The provincial government recently extended the state of emergency for an additional two weeks and our Department announced that schools will remain closed to students for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Daycares remain closed to the general population, remaining accessible only to the children of essential workers.

In light of these developments, I want to provide an update on some of the exceptional measures currently in force.

Childcare responsibilities

Since GNB reduced its operations to critical functions only, most employees in non-critical roles are able to take care of their pre-school or school-aged children at home during this period. It may not be possible, however, for all employees in critical positions to find daycare services for their children.

Spaces in the emergency daycares are limited and are intended for essential workers only. They are not available to staff working in the public education system at this time.

The following measure for employees in critical functions (or deployed to critical functions) with children requiring care ***is extended until April 24, 2020***:

- **as a first step**, ***if you are unable to access daycare services***, we ask that you attempt to the best of your ability to make safe alternate childcare arrangements;
- **as a second step**, if you are unable to make safe alternate arrangements, we ask that you work from home if you are equipped to do so. We know that your ability to work from home will also depend greatly on the level of care your child or children require;

- finally, as a last step, where employees are unable to make alternate arrangements and cannot work from home, they will be provided with leave with pay.

Home learning

To support the continuity of learning, our Department has announced that school districts will send home-learning plans and resources to families. Students between kindergarten and Grade 12 are asked to dedicate between one and two and a half hours a day (depending on their grade level) to complete home-learning assignments. Parents are not asked to home-school their children, rather they are expected to share and encourage the learning opportunities provided by teachers.

While those among us not actively working at the moment will have more opportunity to share the home-learning assignments with their children, we recognize that this presents additional challenges for employees who remain on the job, especially where another parent or guardian is not available to help when the child or children need assistance to complete the assignment.

If you find yourself in these circumstances, please talk with your supervisor about the possibility of finding an hour during the workday to allow you to help your child or children with their learning assignment, or the possibility of modifying your hours slightly (e.g. flex time) to accommodate this.

If you are working from home, spending that hour with your child or children will be easier. If you are working on-site, it will require some ingenuity. Facetime or Skype calls may be an option.

As an employer, we want to support you in your childcare responsibilities as much as possible during these challenging times. Unfortunately, the operational requirements in certain workplaces, especially where employees must be on-site and on task for their entire shift, may not allow managers to support this type of request.

To managers, I ask that you support these requests where possible. Parents and their school-aged children are going through challenging times. Our Department is asking parents to help to the best of their ability with their children's learning. Doing so in the evenings, after long and demanding work days, could be challenging. It may not be best time for the parent or child.

We recognize how challenging it is for many of us to balance work, parenting and now home learning during these extraordinary times. Please remember to take care of yourself, your loved ones and remember that [EFAP resources](#) are available to help.

We will continue communicating significant developments as we monitor events. Stay informed by checking GNB's coronavirus [website](#) regularly for up to date information.

You can find additional COVID-19 related resources [here](#).



George Daley
Deputy Minister