



## Q & A for Parents

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*The COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent closure of schools across Canada, has created challenges for educators and families as we have had to move quickly to an online learning environment. Our goal is to provide continuous educational opportunities and learning for students while schools are closed, but also to eliminate as much stress as feasibly possible for students, parents, and teachers. In the process, we want to be sensitive to the variety of difficulties that our families and educators face, and we want to be flexible in responding to the needs. We don't have all the answers, but are working to continually improve our service to you. We ask for your patience and support as we continue to explore a range of ways to ensure the successful completion of the school year for all students.*

### 1. What can I expect distance learning to look like for my child?

Though we have moved online, this is not truly online school, a program of studies planned for virtual delivery. Instead, we have moved to “emergency remote learning,” using a variety of approaches to provide your children with an educational program that addresses their academic and social-emotional needs. The strategies will differ from grade to grade and from school to school. In all cases, students are expected to continue their learning by completing assignments that are guided by the plans and priorities set out by the province and the local school, recognizing that some students may not have easy access to specific learning resources. As a result, school schedules may be altered to facilitate student engagement and the meeting of key learning goals. As instructional decisions are made, the following factors are considered:

- Students’ need for movement and breaks from screen time; finding a balance between online and offline learning opportunities will be the goal.
- Consideration of “age & stage” aspects of student development.
- Varied levels of student commitment, attention, and learning needs, as well as the availability of parental supervision and family schedules.
- The need for a continued sense of community connection beyond academics.
- Time needed for educational staff to create and respond to e-learning programming (which typically takes 2-3 times longer than in-class instruction/programming).
- Equitable access to resources.
- Authentic and fair assessment.

### 2. Why is the program for online school in Adventist schools different from the program being used by the local public schools? (For example, Adventist schools seem to be requiring more online time and more work than what some provincial ministries are requiring.)

In general, Adventist schools across Canada moved to an online learning platform long before the provincial ministries of education mandated it for public schools. It is a priority for us to continue to provide a quality, Christ-centered education for your children that focuses on key concepts and curriculum-based learning goals. Teachers will continue to guide student learning; parents are not expected to homeschool their children during this time. As a result, decisions have been made at the conference and local school levels to ensure that quality education continues, regardless of what may initially appear to go above and beyond the minimum expectations for public schools. Faith

integration continues to be a priority in all Adventist schools. Encounter Bible instruction continues online, and most schools also provide virtual class worships, school assemblies, and even Weeks of Prayer for their school families.

**3. What supports are in place for students who don't have access to technology or Wi-Fi?**

Our goal is to ensure that every student has access to learning during the closure, and local school administrators and teachers are working diligently to ensure all learning needs are met. In some cases, this may mean alternate learning activities, and schools and teachers are exploring options that will work best for their local context. In some cases, equipment may be available for loan during the time that schools are closed. Please contact your child's teacher or principal for further information and assistance.

**4. What is expected from me as a parent to assist with my child's learning at home?**

The time commitment required from parents will depend on a number of factors including the grade level of the student and the approach used by the school and individual teacher. Some support from parents will be needed, especially for younger children. For specific details on expectations for parents, please contact your child's teacher or principal.

Please note that parents/guardians are NOT expected to deliver curriculum or plan learning activities. Teachers will continue to plan for instruction based on the curriculum goals and standards. You can assist the teacher by ensuring that your child has a workspace and by reinforcing the learning expectations outlined by the teacher.

**5. We are having technical issues and are confused about how to submit homework, etc. What should I do?**

Many of the technologies being used to facilitate learning during the COVID-19 shutdown is new to both educators and families. If you are having difficulty connecting to the internet, contact your internet provider to troubleshoot connectivity issues. If you are having difficulty logging in to the online platforms being used (e.g., you do not have a password or are unable to access the programs using the links provided), contact your child's teacher or principal. If they are not able to provide the technical support needed, they will direct you to tutorials or to someone who can work with you.

**6. Why are most schools using Zoom when I have heard that there are security concerns with this platform?**

Zoom has been reviewed by various government and educational organizations, and meets both privacy and security requirements. The application's data for Canadian users is housed at its Canadian-hosted data centres in Vancouver and Toronto. The application's platform is known to offer a smooth audio/video experience with minimal interruptions if any for users with fast or slower Internet connection speeds. The Zoom organization continues to upgrade its security features and does not provide personal information to third party businesses such as Facebook and Microsoft.

**7. Is attendance taken during this time when schools are closed and students are expected to learn from home?**

Yes, most schools will continue to take attendance during the school closures to ensure that student learning continues in an intentional manner. Should a student need to miss academic time, parents

are asked to email the teacher with the date/time/reason for the absence. Students will be expected to make up any work missed to ensure that there are no gaps in learning.

**8. Will students have to make up any lost school time during the summer?**

Because the COVID-19 emergency measures are continually being assessed and revised, this decision may not yet have been made by either the provincial or conference level in most jurisdictions. It is still too early to determine if this will be necessary, though information received thus far makes it seem unlikely that school will be extended into the summer. Most of our schools will follow the lead of the provincial ministries of education, but this is a decision of the conference and local school boards who will communicate with you when a decision has been made.

**9. How will my child be assessed during the time the school is closed? Should I expect to get a report card at the end of the year?**

Our goal is to support every learner, not to penalize them for the circumstances that they find themselves in. At the same time, it is our expectation that learning will continue and that students will do their best to complete all assigned work, and this work will be assessed and included in the determination of each student's final grade. Summative end-of-year assessments will be required in most classes, though the types of assessments used will vary from classroom to classroom.

All students will receive final report cards at the end of the school year. Final marks will reflect work completed up until the time schools were closed as well as the demonstration of learning on work assigned since that time, and will represent the most accurate reflection of student learning in the teacher's professional judgment. As always, students and families are encouraged to connect with their teachers if they have questions about assessment and evaluation.

**10. I understand that the government has said no student will fail this year due to the COVID-19 crisis. Is that true for students enrolled in Adventist schools?**

How final grades and promotions will be determined varies from province to province. Teachers in Adventist schools are committed to the success of every student and will do everything possible to ensure that they successfully complete the program in which they are enrolled. This will require the engagement of students and their families to complete the learning expectations outlined. Students who were passing prior to the school closures should have no problem successfully completing the year if they remain engaged in the learning process.

**11. Will students have to write the provincial exams for this school year?**

This decision is made at the provincial level. To date, most (if not all) provincial ministries have cancelled or waived provincial exam requirements for this school year. Please check with your child's teacher or principal for more specific information regarding whether these exams have been cancelled or postponed.

**12. My child left needed school supplies or personal items at school. Can I arrange to pick them up even though the school is closed?**

For your safety, all schools are closed to the public at this time in accordance with federal and provincial directives to close all non-essential businesses. Each school will work with the local

conference to determine how best to permit access to schools and classrooms if deemed absolutely necessary. Please contact your child's principal for further information.

**13. Will parent-teacher conferences be scheduled during this time when schools are closed?**

Some schools may arrange for virtual parent-teacher conferences during school closures. Other schools may decide to cancel their regularly-scheduled conferences during this time. Please check with your child's teacher or principal for further information.

Please note that whether or not formal parent-teacher conferences are scheduled, it is vital that parents and teachers communicate regularly during these challenging times. Your school staff wants to stay connected with you. Please reach out through email, text, or phone calls with any questions or concerns you may have.

**14. Are school playgrounds open to families for recreational purposes?**

For the safety of all students, staff, families, and community members, all school playgrounds, including sports fields, and basketball and tennis courts on school property are closed until further notice. Families are asked to respect these closures and refrain from visiting school properties.

**15. Why am I still being charged tuition when the school is closed? Will I be given a refund of any portion of my school fees?**

Though the physical school building is closed, education continues. Teachers are still employed and continue to provide learning instruction for students, and students will continue to complete grade level requirements and earn credits as appropriate. Some services, including meal plans and dormitory housing, have been suspended, however, and parents can expect to receive reimbursements for those fees which were prepaid. Each school board and conference continues to assess the financial impact on the school and our families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine what temporary measures can be put in place to ease the burden on families and provide them additional time as needed.

**16. I have been laid off during COVID-19, so am unable to keep up with tuition payments. What should I do?**

As schools and conferences continue to assess the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and families, they are committed to supporting parents as they complete the current school year and plan for next year. Temporary measures to help ease the burden on families may include an extension of payment deadlines and/or an adjustment in monthly fees. Please contact your school principal and/or school treasurer to work out a plan that works for you. The Adventist Church is unwavering in its support of Adventist Education, recognizing the important role that it plays in the mission of the church and the reaching of our children for Jesus. We will do whatever we can to ensure that Adventist education remains accessible to all families who desire a Christ-centred education for their children.

**17. Will my child cover the needed content required to be prepared for next year? What is being done to ensure that there are no learning gaps during this period of school closures?**

It is very true that students may not get the same kind of instruction that they would have in a face-to-face school setting. The "emergency remote learning" that has been put in place during the

COVID crisis will focus on the big ideas and central concepts of the curriculum that students will need to advance to the next year or earn the credits they need to graduate. Though they are not able to replicate the traditional school experience, teachers will continue to do their best to provide both the instruction and support that students need to make a smooth transition to the next grade or level of learning. In addition, schools and conferences will soon begin planning for next school year, putting in place safeguards and strategies and opportunities for teachers to collaborate to ensure that there are no learning gaps as students begin school in the fall.

**18. My child was scheduled to graduate in June. Is his/her graduation in jeopardy? What plans are being made for graduation ceremonies?**

As in any given school year, students on track or eligible to graduate will be able to graduate provided they have demonstrated sufficient learning in their coursework. This includes what they have learned since the course started, along with the learning they will complete from now until the end of the school year. It is important for senior students in particular to stay focused and engaged in learning since teachers will need to assess whether they are prepared to pursue further learning in each content area. Provincial ministries are currently working with colleges and universities to ensure that students' admission will not be adversely affected as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Students should check provincial websites and should contact the colleges and/or universities directly to ensure that they are meeting the revised requirements for admission.

Each senior academy will work with their local conference to determine how to proceed with graduation ceremonies. Some may choose to host a face-to-face event as soon as public health authorities lift restrictions on group gatherings. Others may choose to host a virtual event, or to postpone the ceremonies until the fall. The situation remains fluid, and all previously scheduled school events, including graduations, will be assessed regularly to determine whether to cancel, postpone, or modify each event.

**19. Will the school open before the current school year is over?**

Across Canada, schools are currently closed until further notice. Provincial governments are assessing the situation regularly to determine whether or not schools will open before the end of the school year. Some provinces have already stated that all schools will be closed until fall, others are anticipating reopening in May, and still others are continuing to assess the situation on a daily basis before making the call. As an Adventist school system, we are prepared to complete this school year online, but each local conference will make this decision for their schools as more data becomes available.

**20. I don't want my child spending so much screen time. Are there any alternatives for ensuring s/he can still successfully complete the school year?**

Teachers and principals continue to work hard to explore a variety of options for distance learning, including both on-screen and off-screen strategies. Most schools have shortened class periods for live instruction and have included more independent study activities for students to complete at their own pace. Teachers continue to explore alternate learning methods and have been provided with resources and support to assist them. As you are aware, the sudden transition to a learn at home model has created a variety of challenges for teachers, most of whom had no previous training in this mode of learning. All are working hard to use this challenge as an opportunity to learn new methods and try new strategies, but all of this requires time. Your patience is requested and appreciated.

## **21. My child is experiencing increased mental and emotional stress. What can be done to help students cope?**

This is a stressful time for everyone, and it's normal to feel anxious and worried. Students may also be struggling with time away from school and friends, or a lack of understanding about COVID-19 and the reasons for school closures. Changes to routine, financial uncertainty, and other stressors may also be impacting you or your family's well-being at this time. Teachers and principals are also facing increased stress as they, too, adjust to the new reality and work to balance working from home and caring for their families.

Public Health departments in most provinces have shared resources online that can be used to support student mental health during this challenging time. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has also shared information on how to talk to children and adolescents about COVID-19. Mental health resources for adults are also available on the CAMH website.

Children and teens can also reach out to counsellors at Kids Help Phone who are available 24/7 via phone, text, or online chat, and also has a number of online resources.

**Kids Help Phone:** kidshelpphone.ca; 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

**Canadian Mental Health Association:** <https://cmhakeLOWNA.com/coronavirus-managing-stress-anxiety>

If your family is struggling or feeling overwhelmed during the COVID-19 crisis, please reach out to your local school or church. Teachers will be as flexible as they can, and pastors are online and willing to provide emotional and spiritual support during these challenging times. You are not alone.

*Thank you so much for your patience and understanding as our schools continue to adjust, like you, to the significant changes brought on by COVID-19. We appreciate the extraordinary efforts that our teachers, principal, students, and parents have made to work together, to be flexible, and to stay connected during these challenging times. We are also grateful for our frontline medical staff and other essential services personnel for all they are doing to keep us safe and healthy. Thank you for your continued support as we seek to inspire in each student a life of faith, wisdom, and service, especially during these unusual times. Please know that you will continue to be in our prayers.*

### **Whom to contact:**

- For questions regarding learning expectations: Relevant Teacher/Mr. Kibbee
- For questions on assessment or final grades: Relevant Teacher/Mr. Kibbee
- For technical difficulties: Mr. Dias/Mr. Kibbee
- For financial questions: Mrs. Kinney/Mr. Kibbee
- For general inquiries and/or long term plans: Mr. Kibbee/Mrs. Ferreira