



## David Livingstone Elementary School

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Sunday, March 29, 2020

Dear Families,

Our scheduled Spring Break is officially over tomorrow. Rather than welcoming children back to school and sharing holiday adventures, the doors of the school will remain locked. Students will not return to in-class schooling as per the direction of BC Health officials in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A global pandemic is completely new terrain for educators, families and students. I appreciate the additional stress this has put on families and will do anything I can do to support you and your child.

Fortunately, we had the luxury of Spring Break. No one is falling behind. We had the gift of two weeks to consider how we will approach this challenge. Although educators have been on a regularly scheduled holiday, I know the work ethic of my staff. I'm willing to guarantee that more than one educator is already dreaming about kids, thinking about the days ahead, and creating a list of things to do.

Teachers are dedicated individuals who go into the profession because they want to enrich the lives of children. At this point in the school year, teachers know their students personally and have a good understanding of their individual learning needs. Teachers will be participating in conversations and online planning meetings on Monday and Tuesday and contacting parents in the coming week. Administrators have been participating in online meetings with district staff and dealing with a barrage of email to prepare to meet the most immediate needs. Our superintendent is communicating online with staff, being interviewed and creating YouTube videos to reassure people that we've got this. At home, there are some basic things that families may find helpful to support their child(ren) in learning at home.

The new curriculum in British Columbia has garnered worldwide attention because it has effectively incorporated current research about learning. This involves looking at learning through a different lens than what most adults grew up with. Learning has never been something that happens between the hours of 9 – 3 pm. The redesigned British Columbia curriculum tries to capitalize on the curiosity of a typical 5-year-old entering kindergarten and put the supports and structures in place for that same

curiosity to continue to exist in the typical 17-year-old student in secondary school. It capitalizes on the role of student interest, self-regulation, and benchmarks to signal a need to loop back for more repetition and practice, or to move on to the next phase of learning. Learning may be happening for all of the waking hours but “school time” allows for the time for deep thinking and the front-end loading for skill development. It is not intended to be painful, but it is intended to be deliberate. Although not all parents are educators, all parents educate their children in one way or another through-out their lives. Here are some things you can do with your children to facilitate learning at home.

### **Set up a workspace for school times.**

Support kids in setting up a workspace for 9 am to 3 pm. Currently at home I am taking up the entire dining room. Pencils, paper, journal, iPad, plug in. Have your child make a list of things required. They are best at “doing school”. I would encourage one notebook designated for questions. Questions might be for teachers or for future inquiry projects. Let the teacher know if there are things you require when you are contacted.

### **Set up a daily routine for “school”.**

Sit down and create a daily schedule with your child. In my classroom, it was called *The Shape of the Day*. Kids will recognize this process, as it is done in one form or another in most classrooms and posted on the board. Showering, getting dressed, eating breakfast and brushing teeth should happen before the start of the school day. Be sure to build in “recess” and “lunch” breaks. Be on time. You could be teaching your child the structure so they can have a successful home-based business in the future 😊

9:00 am – Review daily schedule.

Make any necessary changes to incorporate Skype calls to interview Grandma, chats with friends about books they are reading, or interesting programming that fit in with student learning.

9:15 am – Online yoga or physical activity to stretch and exercise.

9:30 am – Literacy Time

Children get better at reading and writing by reading and writing daily. This may involve taking turns reading with a parent. It could involve listening to a parent read and stopping to discuss issues and interpretations. It could be listening to an audiobook and following up with discussion with peers via messenger or illustrating while listening or writing a journal entry afterwards. It could be writing a personal blog or a story.

10:30 -11:00 am – recess break / Snack preparation by the child and free choice play

Snack preparation is another opportunity for developing literacy and numeracy skills as well as teaching about nutrition and independence. Let your child participate. Opportunity for more physical activity.

11:00 am – Numeracy Activities

The type of activities done during numeracy time may involve some skill and drill practice of basic facts (ie. Flash card), playing store that involves pricing items, paying for them with real money and making change, budgeting for future trip planning. It could involve measuring everything that you can find that is 2 metres or 2 cm or 2 mm. There are also a number of online options to develop numeracy skills.

12:00 pm – lunch break / lunch preparation by the child and free choice play

Again, children should be involved in the preparation and clean-up of lunch. Go outside for a break while practicing physical distancing of at least 2 metres.

1:00 pm – Project Based Learning

Supporting students in asking questions and developing a plan to find answers is at the heart of Project Based Learning. Hard questions make for interesting projects. My children learned early on that they would not be as likely to get in trouble for making a mess if it was done in the name of “Doing Science”. The question can be as easy as “What kind of bird is that?” Spring in Vancouver guarantees that kids can look out any window or go for a walk and see several species to make close observations with field notes that include dates, times, drawings, notations, comparisons, and questions to pursue.

Generally big questions cross many different disciplines of subjects which should be encouraged. Successful learners in adult life are divergent thinkers. This is to be encouraged. At this point in history, it is not possible to master all of the relevant content because new content is generated at such a high rate. We are teaching kids to think about the application of content to answer new questions.

This time can also include outdoor physical activity, as long as there is attention to physical distancing recommendations of two meters from others. There are also a number of online opportunities to sign up for or follow along on television.

2:45 pm – Make a schedule for the following day and clean up.

In many families, a student workspace may also be a family living space. Clean it up. The learning may continue but school is over.

3:00 pm – Home Time

I encourage you to draw lines around “school time”. My caution is that if ALL time is designated school time, I anticipate you will get considerable pushback from your child(ren). Take the time to play games together and let your children make personal choices. Limiting screen time will undoubtedly be necessary but brainstorming a list of other possibilities is helpful.

Teachers will be in contact with families in the coming week to provide more information. Teacher communication with families has taken many forms this year. Some teachers communicate using the online platform My Blueprint, while others communicate via a class newsletter and email.

I encourage you to begin with the structure of learning at home on Monday. The content of work times will change over time with teacher input, but the routine of school will create a predictable structure that will be reassuring to students. The goal is to minimize the struggles that often emerge during assigned homework times. If daily school at home is not successful, we have more work to do with our students to enlist their engagement and support.

I can guarantee as educators, we will not have all the answers this week. I can tell you that I was emailing a question to a colleague on Friday night at 9:05 pm and getting an instant reply. Educators are on high alert and doing their best. They may have pressing issues to deal with immediately and they will have a myriad of concerns that you will not be aware of. Currently I am thinking about the little salmon that are part of the Salmon Enhancement Program at school. For some this is a relatively small concern in a myriad of more pressing matters. For me it matters because my response to my students about their fishy friends demonstrates my investment in their questions and concerns. Please be sure to share the letter I have written to Livingstone students with your child. I want your child(ren) to know I am thinking about them.

At the end of the day, we are all directly accountable to our kids. Our collective task is for “school at home” to be another way to go about learning in the midst of a significant pivot. It will be an exercise in teaching our kids to be resilient. I hope we will be working together with our kids to meet their needs as learners and as young people experiencing a historical first. We are all writing our own story in this moment in history. Let’s make it one of creative thinking, collaboration, and victories – big and small.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Graessle".

Principal