

**Ministry of Education**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

Update – Public Education Schools

**The Hon Diallo V. Rabain, J.P., M.P.**

Thursday, April 2, 2020

5:30 pm

Good Evening,

This evening, I will share information with our education family and the community, concerning what is expected for students, and school staff during the weeks of April 6th and 13th, 2020

I will start first with the:

**Week of April 6th, 2020**

We will be extending the students’ spring break for next week, April 6th 9th 2020. However, while students are on an extended spring break, we encourage them to find time to read and to engage in some form of physical activity each day in their respective homes and yard spaces, while Bermuda is adhering to "shelter in place.".

As all public officers are still expected to continue the provision of Government services during the 14 day "shelter in place." period, Principals and school staff will be working remotely and planning for the reopening of schools. This planning is critical because when schools reopen, the schools will not jump back into business as usual. Instead, schools will commence with a recovery period before they transition to the regular school schedule and routines.

We recognize that our staff and students have been impacted by the pandemic, and therefore we are taking this approach to have a period of transition to normal school schedules and routines. The main purpose of having a recovery period is to restore the normalcy that had prevailed in the school prior to the crisis. This decision to include a recovery period for our schools is aligned with research and international best practices.

During the recovery period, which will be implemented the first week when schools reopen or the week of April 20th, schools will have revised schedules; students and staff will be able to wear casual clothing and there will be a focus on activities to help staff and students to gradually transition to the regular school schedule and routines.

These activities will include:

* Reteaching and re-establishing routines
* Reviewing the expectations for learning
* Preparing students to re-commence the learning for specific subject areas
* Providing stress management during class time
* Attending to the social-emotional well-being of students and staff
* Providing support services
* Conducting safety audits
* Introducing new environmental and health protocols
* Reorganizing classrooms and the building to incorporate any new environmental and health protocols
* Assessing the emotional needs of students and staff
* Holding regular debriefings with staff
* Evaluating the progress with the recovery phase
* Determining lessons from the crisis
* Communicating with families

**Now I will move to expectations for the Week of April 13th, 2020**

We will suspend the remote learning strategy during this week. However, students will be provided with a menu of activities from which they can complete each day. We recognize that all of Bermuda is required to ‘shelter in place’, and that continuing with the remote learning strategy may present additional challenges and stress for families and households. Principals and school staff will carry out individual planning to ensure they are prepared for the implementation of the recovery programme once schools reopen.

At this point, let me share on the **Preparation of School Buildings**.

It is important to make clear that there is no evidence that any student or teacher have been infected by the Corona Virus or that there has been any contamination in Bermuda schools. The Department of Education, however, understands that it is critical to maintain a clean and sanitary learning environment for students, teachers and principals. Therefore, out of an abundance of caution Deep Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols were developed by Dr. Kent Simmons of Bermuda Water Consultants Ltd. so that we could achieve this. As such, the deep cleaning commenced the week of March 23rd, following four steps:

1. Deeping cleaning of all classrooms and other activity/meeting rooms throughout the schools.
2. Disinfection with bleach-based disinfectant
3. A final and specific cleaning of high touch surfaces like door handles, handrails, desks, countertops, telephones, toys, water fountains, playground equipment, bathroom toilet levers and dispensers, etc.
4. School inspections using a checklist and signoff process.

There are only three schools remaining to be deepcleaned and this will occur by end of day tomorrow. So at this point, I want to recognize the work of our school custodians. They have been diligent in following these protocols and undertaking this deep cleaning regime in preparation for receiving our students back to school. Our facilities team is now conducting inspections of the school buildings using a checklist. We appreciate the work they are doing on behalf of our children to contribute to safe and healthy school buildings.

In closing, I encourage our education family to continue to review the Ministry of Health’s official webpage at www.gov.bm/coronavirus for information related COVID-19.

**Thank You**