



Ministry of Education

PRESS STATEMENT

School System COVID19 Updates

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Minister of Education

Wednesday 25 November 2020

11:30am

Good morning Bermuda, Members of the Media, and thank you for joining me today.

We are all now aware that COVID19 disrupted our school system this previous weekend. Out of an abundance of caution, the Department of Health made the cautionary step to require the students and teachers who spent the most significant time with the students indoors to quarantine. These affected schools are St. George's Prep P2 Class, Paget Primary's ASD Class and as of yesterday, West End Primary's P5 Class.

Despite these actions, I would like to stress there have not been any students testing positive for COVID19 to date.

This morning I wish to lay out the plans and preparations in place to address COVID-19 safety and health protocols in Bermuda's Public Schools. It is important that we continue to keep our students, teachers, parents and the general public aware of these guidelines. We do not take this situation lightly and will continue to stress and enforce these Safety and Health protocols.

We must operate our schools in strict adherence to the public health guidelines developed by the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

Students, teachers, parents and the broader community must understand that every care is being taken to safeguard our children and community from further COVID infections or community spread. While some may find it inconvenient to wear masks, social distance, wash hands and stay in your bubbles, these things must be done in order to maintain our relatively good handle on this pandemic and keep our schools open and our children learning.

With that in mind, let me outline the following measures that are in place to address this and any potential risk associated with COVID 19 related incidences in our schools.

ENTRY SCREENING

Entry screening and Safety and Health protocols will remain in place. Staff and students must be diligent with following safety and health protocols. We are urging public school families to adhere to the guidelines and be prepared to answer the daily questions and follow mask-wearing protocols. This is the first line of defense in keeping our schools safe.

SCHOOL FACILITIES:

The Department of Education continues to provide schools with cleaning, hygiene and PPE supplies on an ongoing basis. The Department has a system in place for monitoring the cleanliness of school facilities with random inspections. To date, forty-six (46) inspections of facilities have taken place.

In the event of potential COVID19 exposure as what was we have experienced this weekend, classrooms and any affected areas are deep cleaned and inspected before students and staff are allowed entry.

EDUCATION EMERGENCY MEASURES COMMITTEE:

As the Safety and Health of students and staff are of paramount importance, at a meeting with the officers of the Bermuda Union of Teachers and the Ministry of Education, in October 2020, it was proposed that an Education Emergency Measures Committee (EEMC) be formed.

The purpose of the EEMC would be to provide support and direction to schools for mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any COVID 19 related emergency in the public school system. The EEMC will ensure schools are supported appropriately.

The formation of this Committee is derived from the existence of the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) that takes responsibility when the Island experiences a National Disaster. Similar to the EMO structure, the EEMC will be chaired by the Minister of Education; and, comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Education Headquarters, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Unions and the Department of Communications.

The final make-up of the EEMC is being finalized and their initial meeting will take place within the next 2 weeks.

COMMUNICATIONS

Parents can expect official notifications from school principals and administrators in a coordinated method.

Official announcements from the Commissioner and Department are done by way of Power School accounts, the Department's Facebook groups for parents, the Department of Education's social media network and the www.MOED.bm website. Updates are also listed in the Department's online newsletter The Scoop.

Let me use this opportunity to ask parents to update their PowerSchool accounts and join your respective Facebook groups.

Upon notification from the Department of Health of a COVID19 related issue the following will happen:

- Principals and School Administrators will contact the affected staff and parents;
- Principals will hold Zoom meetings with staff and follow up with letters.
- Schools will conduct Zoom meetings with school parents.
- Staff and students will be COVID-19 tested.
- Information will be posted on www.moed.bm; Department's social media network and PowerSchool
- A public statement issued after the internal notices.

REMOTE LEARNING READINESS:

In the event a class or year level at the primary or middle schools has to transition to remote learning, the Department will prepare learning packets. The Department will within 48 hours provide, based on current resources, laptops for up to four (4) classes to use while students are quarantining. The laptops will be delivered to students during the two-day transition from the classroom to remote learning. The Department of Education has prepared guidelines for remote learning by school level. Teachers have received initial training on Schoology,

which is a web-based learning management system that allows schools to administer educational courses and training programs; and to track the progress of its users. A Schoology Support Team will assist teachers who have to transition to remote learning.

Teachers can use Schoology to assign work to students electronically; collect and grade work from students; and return that work to students for quick, high-quality feedback. Schoology allows teachers to create lessons quickly and differentiate instruction for each student, when necessary.

Schoology allows for a variety of input formats so that students are not limited to producing traditional word documents. Students can provide audio or video recordings to teachers as evidence of their learning. Schoology also allows parents to track their child's progress easily and communicate with teachers directly.

CONCLUSION

As the Christmas Holidays are around the corner, and I am urging that travel be limited to emergencies only. Anyone travelling, upon return to the island, must note that the Health Regulations prohibit you and anyone you live with, from entering a school facility until you have quarantined for a minimum of eight (8) days.

In closing, I would like to urge our students, teachers, parents and the general public to understand the procedures outlined are to be followed in order to accurately provide updates on our schools and keep our schools safe and healthy. To reiterate we need to wear masks, practice social distancing, wash your hands and keep your bubbles small. We all play a critical role in keeping our island safe. Let's all do our part.

Thank you