



May 06, 2020

Dear Educators:

I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy. Through my discussions with educators, including the NWTTA President, Fraser Oliver, and the President-Elect, Matthew Miller, I've heard about some of the challenges many of you are facing - feelings of isolation, frustration with technology, irregular hours, long hours, concerns about students, working from home while caring for your own children, and so on. I just wanted to let you know that I truly appreciate you for continuing to forge ahead and do your best despite these challenges. I am doing my best to ensure that we learn from these challenges so that we can mitigate them for the upcoming school year if we don't see a return to normal operations.

As you're aware, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has also been working hard to find ways to support you, your students and their families during this unprecedented time. Specifically, we are all committed to ensuring that our Grade 12 students, who are on track to meeting graduation requirements, will still be eligible to graduate and receive a NWT High School Diploma in June 2020.

I recognize the unique pressures our high school teachers face in resuming Grade 10-12 courses via distance education. This work is extremely important, and I applaud each of you for working so hard to help your students complete their courses and finish this year on a positive note. This includes supporting their transition to post-secondary life or work opportunities following graduation.

Obviously we know that 3 hours per course, per week, is much less than what would normally be required to cover content in high school. I understand the difficulty you face in identifying essential learning outcomes, letting go of some courses and even being reassigned to new courses where necessary. All of this is further challenged by the need to use new technology, without the same connections with students.

To help support our senior secondary students, ECE staff have worked with your education bodies and the NWTTA to establish some temporary processes that provide options for course completion and credit acquisition. These are found in the Senior Secondary Course Completion Processes supporting document for teachers. This resource is meant to make things clearer for you, your students and their families, to mitigate the negative impacts that school closures may have on course completion, and to help students end the school year successfully.

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Of course, this document won't fill the void in the relationships and celebrations we are all missing, especially the graduation ceremonies typically planned for the spring. I've been very moved by what I've seen so far from students making the best of this disappointing new reality. A couple of powerful examples are a [video made by the graduates](#) of the Early Learning and Child Care Diploma program at Aurora College this week, as well as a [video made by the 2020 graduating class](#) of École Sir John Franklin School in Yellowknife, thanking their teachers. If you haven't seen these yet, I strongly encourage you to check them out. I expect to see a lot more of this level of creativity from our tech-savvy youth as they celebrate this special milestone in their lives, regardless of the circumstances.

As always, continue to reach out to your colleagues for encouragement, connection and support. Remember that with as much effort as you are putting in right now to support your students, you also need to take time for yourselves.

Thank you again for all the incredible work you do. The role you're playing in your students' lives right now is critical, impactful and life-changing.

Sincerely,

R.J. Simpson
Minister, Education, Culture
and Employment