
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

Education leaders help students stay fed while in-class instruction suspended

VICTORIA – To ensure vulnerable students do not face barriers to learning while in-class instruction is suspended, B.C.'s school districts are finding innovative ways to provide families with more than 75,000 healthy meals a week.

“No student should ever have to go without food, whether they’re learning in class or at home,” said Rob Fleming, Minister of Education. “Despite the challenging times we’re living in, school-district staff have partnered with local non-profits and businesses in a community effort to ensure kids and their families are getting the nutritious food they need, no matter where they live or learn.”

The Government of B.C. provides \$53.2 million through CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) annually for the province’s 60 school districts to support vulnerable students with services that include meal programs. Twenty-five school districts also receive a combined \$11.2 million from the Province through the Vulnerable Student Supplement, which addresses growth in vulnerable student populations.

In school districts of all sizes, staff acted quickly to use their resources and work with community organizations and local businesses to ensure students who normally received meals at school would continue to have them at home.

Teachers, education assistants, administrators and school support staff are putting together weekly grocery hampers for families, delivering food boxes and bagged lunches to homes and setting up designated hubs for meal pick-up. Some school districts are also providing grocery store gift cards and vouchers, while others have formed partnerships with caterers, non-profits, restaurants, local businesses and food banks to support vulnerable families. More than 16,000 families are receiving these services throughout the province.

“So many people are stepping up to make sure students are getting nutritious meals at home,” Fleming said. “This important work is giving vulnerable families throughout the province the support they need to help their children thrive away from the traditional classroom setting.”

School districts from every corner of the province are developing their own unique plans to meet the needs of their communities.

The Surrey School District immediately implemented a meal pick-up and delivery program, with staff in various positions stepping up to help bring food to students. In the Cowichan Valley, the school district teamed up with Shawnigan Lake school, Nourish Cowichan, Rotary and other community partners to deliver meals to students and families.

About 40% of families in Arrow Lakes are being supported by their school district with meals

through a combination of hamper and food-box deliveries, food vouchers and partnerships with local caterers.

In the Bulkley Valley, school district administrators have worked with the Smithers Volunteer Fire Department, as well as district staff, to co-ordinate food delivery for families in need. In Richmond, the school district collaborated with its Feed-U-Cate-38 program, non-profits and local businesses to have groceries delivered straight to students' houses.

And in the Kelowna area, Central Okanagan Public school has teamed up with Brown Bag Lunch and Food for Thought to provide thousands of meals for local families, with weekly pick-ups that help maintain physical distance.

In addition to CommunityLINK and Vulnerable Student Supplement funding, the Province is supporting families by shifting the focus of the B.C. School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will deliver fruits and vegetables to low-income families with children through Food Banks BC, in partnership with schools and community-based youth programs.

Quotes:

Paul Faoro, president, CUPE BC –

“CUPE K-12 support staff including education assistants, custodians, bus drivers, clerical and IT (information technology), to name just a few, are here when you need us. Members throughout B.C. are stepping up to support students and their families through this pandemic. We're all in this together.”

Teri Mooring, president, BC Teachers' Federation –

“The creative and meaningful ways the Ministry of Education, school districts, teachers and CUPE staff are coming together to ensure children and families get the support they need is a great example of how well the sector is working together during these challenging times. When in-school classes were suspended, finding ways to support vulnerable children and youth was top of mind for everyone. The K–12 sector is working extremely hard and I'm very proud of what's happening in our communities.”

Learn More:

Learn more about the Ministry of Education's CommunityLINK program:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/communitylink>

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/>

Or follow @CDCofBC on Twitter.

For the provincial health officer's orders, notices and guidance, visit:

www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance

For non-health related information, including financial, child care and education supports, travel, transportation and essential service information, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/Covid-19

Or call 1 888 COVID19 (1 888 268-4319) between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. (Pacific time), seven days a week.

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