



FUNCTIONAL CLOSURE

Overview of the processes and timelines of a temporary school closure due to COVID-19

Abstract

This document outlines the process by which a school is functionally closed to students and for how long, how school communities are notified, and what at-home learning looks like during a functional school closure due to COVID-19.

Potential School Closures Due to COVID19

COVID19 continues to present challenges in our communities and in our schools. Most notable is the impact of student and staff absence due to COVID19 which might limit the ability of schools to function as usual. To this end, school districts have been required to develop plans for continuity of learning in the event a school must undergo a 'functional closure' for a period of time. To be clear, even though we are developing plans in the event a school must be functionally closed to students, the last thing we want is to temporarily close a school building and we will do everything we can to keep schools open for in-person learning.

Closures may be for health reasons relating to excessive student absence, for transportation reasons where a school can no longer transport students to school, or for operational reasons relating to school staff absences that make it impossible to operate safely and effectively. Regardless of the reason, **during a functional closure in-person learning shifts to at-home learning until such time a school can resume normal operation.** District planning for a functional closure, then, attempts to outline the process by which a school is functionally closed to students and for how long, how school communities are notified, and what at-home learning looks like during a functional closure.

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Types of functional closure, length of closure, and who decides

(1) Health Closure

A health closure may be determined for a school **by the local health authority in consultation with the school district** due to an unusually high student absence rate.

How long will the closure last?

The length of the closure will be determined by Island Health in consultation with the School District. Based on current expectations of five days of self-isolation and self-monitoring for fully vaccinated individuals, we are planning for approximately seven (7) calendar days; however, this *may vary* depending on the direction from Island Health. For example, once a school is functionally closed due to student absence, it is no longer able to provide student attendance information to health authorities, meaning that health and school officials will need to make a judgment call regarding functional closure dates and any possible extension.

(2) School District Closure – Transportation

While there are provisions to consider a school closure where school bus services are no longer able to bring students to school, **it is highly unlikely that schools in Pacific Rim School District would be functionally closed for this reason**. Instead, bus driver absence might result in the adjustment or cancellation of some bus runs, and it is expected that parents would find alternate methods to take their child to/from school on these days. **Should a school be closed due to school staff absences, however, school bus services for the affected school will be cancelled for the duration of the school closure.**

(3) School District Closure – School Staff Absence

A school closure may be determined for a school **by the school district in consultation with the local health authority** due to an unusually high number of school staff absences. Of the three possible reasons for a functional closure, this is the most likely to happen in the school district since it pertains to not only teachers but also support staff (Education Assistants, secretaries, and custodians) and the operational threshold for employee absence is the lowest. The school district will work with individual schools to do its best to minimize discretionary staff absences, maximize on-call and casual lists, reorganize students, and redeploy staff to prevent school closures, but there might be a time when the safety and effectiveness of a school is compromised, and it must temporarily move to at-home learning.

How long will the closure last?

The length of the closure will be determined by the school district in consultation with Island Health. Based on current expectations of five days of self-isolation and self-monitoring for fully vaccinated individuals, we are planning for approximately seven (7) calendar days; however,

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this *may vary* depending on the operational challenges facing the school district. For example, it is possible that a school closure might be extended based on new or ongoing staff absences that continue to compromise the school's ability to operate safely and effectively.

Who makes the determination of functional closure?

The determination of a functional closure will include close collaboration between the Superintendent of Schools and Island Health officials. Health is the prevailing authority when it comes to a functional closure for student health reasons, while the Superintendent of Schools will make the decision on operational challenges associated with staff absences due to illness.

Neither Island Health nor the Superintendent of Schools want to prematurely determine a functional closure. To this end, we will explore a variety of options and strategies to reduce the need to functionally close a school and/or minimize the impact of COVID19 on entire school populations.

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Notification of a functional closure

Student and employee attendance is monitored daily by the school district, Ministry of Education, and health authorities. Should it be deemed necessary to functionally close a school, the following guides our notification process:

1. Should it be determined to functionally close a school **prior to the start of a school day**
 - a. School administration will notify school staff, parents, and community partners as soon as possible
 - b. School closure information will be posted to district and school websites and pushed to parents through the Pacific Rim Schools app and social media
 - c. School bussing **to the affected school** will be cancelled for that day and for the duration of the functional closure
 - d. The school will not receive students, and this day will be considered “Day 1” for the purpose of transitioning to at-home learning.

2. Should it be determined to functionally close a school **after students have arrived for the start of the school day**
 - a. School administration will notify school staff, parents, and community partners
 - b. Students will be sent home according to early dismissal procedures outlined in Section 3.0 of AP 3000: School Closure [3000schoolclosure-adverseweatherpoweroutage.f1d290971.pdf \(windows.net\)](https://www.windows.net/files/f1d290971/3000schoolclosure-adverseweatherpoweroutage.f1d290971.pdf)
 - c. School closure information will be posted to district and school websites and pushed to parents through the Pacific Rim Schools app and social media.
 - d. Once school buses have returned students home, school bussing **to the closed school** will be cancelled immediately and for the duration of the closure
 - e. The **following school day** will be considered “Day 1” for the purpose of transitioning to at-home learning.

Parents and community partners are strongly encouraged to download the Pacific Rim Schools app at <https://sd70storage.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/medialib/how-to-download-our-app-final.c3d1972756.png> This app is free and offers parents and community members one of the fastest ways to be notified of issues affecting their child’s school, including notification of a functional closure or the adjustment and/or cancellation of school bus routes.

Social media feeds also include <https://www.facebook.com/PacificRimSD70/>
<https://twitter.com/PacificRimSD70>

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Transitioning to Temporary At-Home Learning

Because schools cannot predict which staffing shortage may result in a functional closure, **Day 1** of a functional closure will be spent planning and preparing for a transition to at-home learning based on known staffing shortages and available staff. It is expected that students will receive at-home learning materials starting on the next school day, but students will not physically attend Days 1-7 of the closure.

Similarly, because **staffing shortages might also increase during a functional closure**, the anticipated end of a closure and the return to in-person learning - **Day 8** - may need to be extended. District and school leadership will continue to monitor employee attendance daily and will notify parents as soon as possible of any extension to published closure timelines. **Regrettably, parents are advised to anticipate and to plan for the possibility of extended functional closures.**

A summary of the seven-day functional closure is as follows:

Day 0	Day 1	Days 2-7	Day 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm and Communicate• District and school staff continuously monitor staff attendance to confirm ability to operate as usual• Should a school need to functionally close to students, parents and community members will be notified• Notification may come prior to the start of a school day or, more likely, once a school day has started. If after the start of a school day, students will return home following processes used for emergency school closures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan and Prepare• Schools will spend the day planning and preparing for the transition to at-home learning based on available staff• Students do not attend and no direct instruction will be provided on this day• Children of ESW's and learners with special complex needs will be supervised based on available staff, and according to priority order including health care, emergency services, and educators required by school operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition to At-Home Learning• Instruction shifts to at-home learning and students do not physically attend• Instructional time matches regular school days and regular school hours• At-home learning is likely to be different according to grade level or subject area, and teachers will communicate with students/parents• Children of ESW's and learners with special complex needs will be supervised based on available staff, and according to priority order including health care, emergency services, and educators required by school operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Return to in-person learning• in-person learning resumes based on the successful resolution of staffing shortages• should staffing shortages persist, a functional closure may be extended and a new timeline will be established and communicated