Functional Closure Framework Information

Preamble

This document was developed to provide an overview and guidance in functional closure circumstances due to COVID-related factors. These guidelines are not an exhaustive summary for all the possible scenarios but rather a foundation to help support the decision-making and implementation process.

What is a Functional Closure?

Functional closures are short-term measures, lasting from a couple of days to over a week depending on the circumstances and availability of replacement staff. A functional closure may be necessary due to staffing shortages and/or Public Health orders that do not allow for regular educational programming at school. The District could encounter a range of outcomes, from full closures where no one remains on-site to partial closures where some staff and students continue in school.

A functional closure may still include having a limited number of children of essential health services, special needs and/or vulnerable students attend in-person. Students on-site will have supervision and some programming if staffing is available.

Before moving to a functional closure due to staffing shortages, the District would explore contingency planning to minimize disruptions.

For more details:
- [Jan 7 Re-Start Protocols for Administrators](#)

Types of Circumstances

1. **Public Health Closure** is determined by the local health authority due to the COVID19 health factors

2. **Potential Activity Signal** is a threshold that indicates further investigation by Northern Health to determine if additional actions are required due to an unusual increase in illness in a particular school, grade, or classroom. Northern Health can provide testing guidance and support, implement additional measures and communicate public health information.

3. **Functional Closure** of a site is determined by the school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. Depending on staffing levels, schools or sites could be partially or fully closed to students and staff.

4. **Transportation Cancellations** is due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of transportation services for students. This would be due to the absence of bus drivers and/or mechanics. Schools would remain open, but students' attendance could be limited depending on the extent of the route cancellations.

Advanced Planning (if possible)

Situations may occur where staffing levels decline due to illness over a period of a day or a couple of days that prompt the need for functional closure planning.

- HR will provide daily reports to Senior staff with high absenteeism
- Senior staff will work with schools experiencing unusual absenteeism and consult with Northern Health to obtain additional community information and context
- District will update the ability to backfill positions in consultation with school principal (TOC's, Emergency replacements, and CUPE replacements)
- Consult with principal on the ability to support students based on current student and staffing information.
    - The plan should address the options for:
        a) continuation of instruction, if possible;
        b) supervision of students without regular instruction occurring
        c) assessing need to support EWC and special needs students
- In order to support the school/s and prevent the need to engage in a functional closure, the District may re-deploy staff in these situations.

- Principals should have the contact names and phone numbers of the children who are the top priority for essential service to invite them to attend school if possible. This list should be shared with at least three other staff members as backup planning

- Superintendent determines whether partial or full functional closure is required and estimated duration

Emergent Situations

Specific functional closure determinations may not be possible until staff and students arrive at school. Schools will remind staff that all absences need to be conveyed to principals (or designate) as early as possible to allow for contingency planning.

Timeline of a Functional Closure

The Superintendent will determine the need to move to a Functional Closure. Depending on circumstances and staffing levels, decisions to implement a functional closure may or may not occur immediately. The first contingency planning would be considered, such as redeployment of employees and other exempt staff. Further, all staff members who call in sick should let the administrator know that the absence is illness-related.

Day 0– Mid-Day Closure
If shortages occur at the beginning or during a school day:
- Principal will contact senior staff
- Principal anticipates the need to contact parents to pick up children (like a power outage)
- District staff would coordinate busing
- Senior staff would coordinate extra support to facilitate the reunification process
- Principal and staff coordinate, where possible, remote learning work to go home
- Senior staff would coordinate with Indigenous contacts, unions, and other
- Principal plan for student supervision if parents/guardians not contacted

Day 1 -Functional Closure Planning and Prep
- Principal will liaison with senior staff
- Principal and school staff organize remote learning for parent/guardians
  - Arrangements for pick or delivery
- Principal determines requirements for children of essential health care workers, special needs and vulnerable students
  - is staffing sufficient to support a small number at school?

Day 2- Onward– Learning at home
- Principal consult with senior staff
- Healthy staff (as per Daily Health Check)
  - on-site or working at home depending on needs
- Assess and plan for essential worker students and special needs learner support at school (if possible)

Return to School Planning - Day Prior

- o Senior staff and Principal confirm staffing availability (including replacement staff)
- o Principal communications with District dept's and Senior Staff
- o Principal communicates with school staff to plan for return
- o Principal/District messaging from school/District to parents/guardians and community

Staff and Student (or their Parent/Guardian) Responsibilities

- Completing a daily health check, regularly monitoring for illness symptoms, and staying home when sick.
- Completing any reporting requirements from public health if they test positive for COVID-19 (regardless of test type), including providing all school-related information requested.
- Specifying that the absence is illness-related when notifying their school of an absence.
  - o As supported by public health, students and staff do not need to disclose if their absence is specific to COVID-19; however, those who test positive for COVID-19 should be diligent in ensuring their school is aware their absence is illness-related.
- Continuing to follow public health guidance and recommendations.