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News Release

Education and Early Childhood Development

High school students to use their own electronic devices; program to assist low and middle-income families

22 July 2020

FREDERICTON (GNB) – High school students will now be expected to bring their own electronic devices for learning beginning in September as part of a shift toward a more personalized, collaborative and tech-based learning model.

“The learning environment is going to be different during the 2020-21 school year and as we continue to live through the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Dominic Cardy. “This model will help support blended learning and the continuity of learning of high school students in the immediate future, while also addressing long-standing issues.”

The department is investing \$7 million to improve equitable access to technology and \$5 million in infrastructure to support the new learning model. The infrastructure investment will support the need for increased connectivity and digital collaboration. This includes increased access points in schools and upgrades to school firewalls and bandwidth. These investments support the *Return to School plan*.

The model allows students to use the devices they already own while modernizing the way in which they learn and interact. It also allows teachers the freedom to use technology to innovate and enhance student learning.

A subsidy program will be available for students from low- and middle-income families who do not currently own a device. Families will be provided with up to \$600 per high school student to purchase a laptop through the program, depending on their eligibility.

Eligibility:

- Households with an annual income of up to \$40,000 will receive a voucher of \$600 per student.
- Households with an annual income between \$40,000 and \$55,000 will receive a maximum voucher amount of \$400 for their first student and \$600 for each additional student.
- Households with an annual income between \$55,000 and \$70,000 will receive a maximum voucher amount of \$200 for the first student, \$400 for the second student and \$600 for each additional student.
- Households with an annual income between \$70,000 and \$85,000 will receive a maximum voucher amount of \$200 for the second student, \$400 for the third student and \$600 for each additional student.

Eligible families will be able to apply through the Parent Portal online as of July 31. More details on this program will be communicated directly to families. Enquiries may be made by calling 1-833-901-1963.

“Our goal is to position every student for success by preparing them for long-term success in their education and in the workplace while also ensuring more equitable and consistent access to technology,” said Cardy.

Online teaching platforms have been identified to support learning for high school students and will accompany everyday instruction. Microsoft Teams will be the main platform used in the classroom, which students and teachers can access through their Office 365 account.

Some teachers may also opt to use Desire 2 Learn, also known as Brightspace, in the anglophone sector or Clic in the francophone sector. System requirements for these platforms are available online and families are encouraged to review these documents to confirm compatibility with their student's device.

"Providing students with options for a more personalized learning experience that meets their needs strengthens an important element of building a world-class education system," said Cardy.

Providing equitable access to information and communication technology is included in the *10-year Education Plan: Everyone at their best*. Supporting 'bring your own device' policies, establishing provincial rules for the acquisition and use of technology and addressing technological inequity are action items outlined in the *Succeeding at Home: A green paper on education in New Brunswick*, which supports the 10-year education plans.

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