



## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**NOTICE**

Monday, July 27, 2020

### **Return to instruction – Academic Year 2020-2021**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is assuring the public that plans for returning students to instruction for the 2020/2021 academic year are progressing.

As a result of COVID-19, the environment in which schools are expected to function has been significantly altered. However, the Ministry remains steadfast in its objective of ensuring that all students are engaged in active learning. As such, the Ministry has taken time to rigorously examine the new realities that confront and to scrupulously determine the best path forward.

Previously announced are the proposed reopening dates of Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> August for teachers and Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2020 for students.

Several school principals have submitted their individual School Instructional Plans (SIP) for approval. Several schools, public and private, will be able to accommodate the full return of students to face to face instruction while observing the social distancing protocol of ideally six (6) feet but no less than three (3) feet. The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda through the Ministry of Works is working to provide additional learning spaces for several public schools to allow for the return of students to face to face instructions. With the additional spaces, most of the public primary schools and the smaller secondary schools will return to full day face to face instruction. However, even with additional spaces, other schools, largely based on population size and infrastructure will have to engage a shift/rotational approach with half or a little more than half of the student population being able to access face to face instructions on alternate days. These schools will provide a mixture of in-person and online instruction. This blended learning method is inevitable within these larger teaching and learning environments. Hence, the ongoing annual educators training programme offered online by the MoEST this year through the synchronous and asynchronous modalities focusses on the competencies to be built among all teachers to function efficiently in the virtual teaching and learning environment.

The Board of Education (BoE) continues to work with the Ministry of Education to put measures in place for a safe and successful reopening of schools. The schedule for textbook and e-book distribution/upgrade was circulated. Additionally, the BoE has been working to ensure an increase in the quantities of cleaning supplies for schools and to procure special equipment, such as thermometers, hand sanitizing dispensers, hand washing stations and additional water catchment facilities to allow for the strict adherence to the hygienic protocols.

Through consultation, the Ministry of Education has developed the following guide documents: *Framework for Reopening*, *Learning Recovery Plan*, *Health and Safety Protocols*, *COVID-19 Response Document*, *Overview of Learning Spaces Requirements of Public Schools* and will continue to consult widely.

During the current week, the MoEST will solidify plans for the reopening of schools through a series of consultations with education officials, principals, teachers, parents, the Antigua and Barbuda Union of teachers, the Antigua and Barbuda Transport Board, and other stakeholders.

The public will be further updated in a Press Conference set for early August.

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