



Minister of Education, Culture, Youth & Sport

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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MECYS) would hereby like to provide the general public with an update regarding the resumption of on campus instruction for Examination and Special Education Students.

Background

On October 6th 2020, the Ministry of ECYS provided advice to all Public, Subsidized and Private Schools regarding the manner in which students should return to school campuses. The letter highlighted the fact that due to the current number of Covid-19 cases in St. Maarten and due to the fact that St. Maarten is still experiencing community transmission, schools are advised to have students return in a phased manner. The letter further advised that Exam and Special Education students return to school campuses as per **October 19th, 2020** and Vulnerable Students return as per **October 26th, 2020**. Following this, all students including Primary and Secondary are expected to return to school campuses as per **November 16th, 2020 using Approach 3 of St. Maarten's Education Continuity Plan**.

Current Situation

All schools are expected to begin the delivery of education using a blended approach or to maintain their Distance Learning approach beginning today October 19, 2020 as hundreds of Primary and Secondary Examination and Special Education students return to the classroom for in person instruction. This begins the phased resumption of in person instruction as the Education Sector works closely with the support of the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labour (VSA) and the Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications (TEATT) to bring students back to school in a safe manner .

Education providers and Examination students of six primary schools and one secondary school return to their campuses today, with additional schools slated to begin during the course of the week, and yet others in a phased manner over the next weeks. In most cases not all Examination Students are returning at once. Rather, schools are using various approaches to ensure Social Distancing protocols are met. In cases where students are not returning to the classroom, schools continue to deliver education via their Online platforms.

All schools that are resuming operations have developed, submitted and implemented Safety Plans that have been approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. These schools have also



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undergone and passed facility inspections conducted by the Inspectorates of the Ministry of ECYS and VSA. During the inspections, all schools were required to demonstrate that all required safety and health protocols for educational institutions and the work place have been implemented.

“As in person instruction resumes, all school boards and the authorities of the Division of Public Education are commended for diligently working to ensure that in person instruction is facilitated in a way that safeguards the health and wellbeing of students and education providers. Gratitude is expressed to school Bus operators who have developed Safety Plans that have been reviewed and approved by the Ministry of TEATT and have successfully passed their inspections. These operators that will be along the island’s roadways once again as per today, picking students up daily as per 6:30 a.m. within the various districts, and collecting students at the end of the school day from their various schools are encouraged to maintain the health protocols and to encourage all passengers to do the same.”

“Students returning to in class instruction over the course of the next few weeks are encouraged to practice social distancing, frequently sanitize their hands, wear their masks and follow the new guidelines which are intended to keep them and their loved ones safe. Lastly, as a community we must remember that we are all in this together. We must all continue to practice all health protocols so that together we can continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within our community and by extension our schools, so that we can maintain the safest possible environment for our students as they return.”

The Ministry of ECYS would like to remind the general public that all precautionary measures are being taken prior to reopening school campuses, it is of utmost importance that all safety plans and facility inspections are approved. Where these have not yet been concluded, this is expected to be realized over the next few weeks. These precautionary measures are in place in an effort to safeguard the health and safety of students, teachers and staff. As we work together to keep our community safe, we appreciate your understanding and cooperation.