

During Tuesday's (Nov. 10) committee of the whole meeting, director of education Wesley Hahn announced the board will be closing schools in the event of inclement weather with students at affected schools transitioning to online learning.

Hahn said, in previous years, schools would see a varying number of students attending and, in order to keep learning moving forward, would often combine classes. This isn't an option right now due to the pandemic as it would mean "mixing cohorts" and potentially undoing all the hard work being done to keep students, staff and their families safe.

Closing schools simply makes the most sense.

"We think that's the right step," said Hahn. "We've been totally supported by public health on this."

The decision will also help mitigate any time lost for secondary school students who are currently enrolled in the board's 'octoblock' where students take one course, all day, every day, for 22 days. One missed day roughly equals a week's worth of learning.

While the schools will be closed to students, staff will still be able to access buildings - as long as it's safe to do so - for teaching technology and resources. A custodian will also be on duty to continue to maintain cleaning and sanitizing as usual.

It's an option many school boards are considering given the fact, when the pandemic hit in March and schools closed, students pivoted to online learning platforms so those connections have already been established.

As well, thousands of area students continued to use virtual schooling when the new school year started or have recently moved over to that option in recent weeks.

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Closures, noted Hahn, will be determined region-by-region with information shared with families via the website and usual forms of communication.

Further details on the plan will be released later in the year.