

# FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

 [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca)**DECEMBER 2025**

As we head into the winter break, we're excited to share that the school year is off to a strong start! It's been a great few months filled with learning, connection, and community spirit.

In this December newsletter, you'll find updates on the upcoming Student Census, Tips for the New Year, Parenting in the Age of AI and more. If you have any topic ideas or want to hear more about anything in particular, share your ideas by contacting [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca)

**Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!**

## Tips for the holiday break

Winter break is a great time for students to recharge, but it can also be a valuable opportunity to stay productive. To make the most of the break, students should set a balanced schedule that includes both relaxation and goal-setting. Catching up on any missed assignments or reviewing challenging subjects can help ease the transition back to school. Reading for pleasure or exploring new interests like journaling, coding, or creative projects can keep the mind engaged. Staying connected with classmates or joining local events can also provide social interaction and motivation. Most importantly, getting enough rest, spending time with family, and practicing self-care ensures students return refreshed and ready to learn.



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**The holidays are a time to slow down, cherish the people who matter most, and enjoy the moments that make this season bright.**

# Welcome to our current PIC team!

**Gurleen Saggu**, PIC Co-Chair— [picchair1@scc.ddsbc.ca](mailto:picchair1@scc.ddsbc.ca)

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**Every voice matters, contact your school  
to learn how you can get involved.**

## Winter Activities:

Here's a reminder to check out your local community websites for winter activities happening in your area! From winter camps to family skates to additional resources – it's all here at your fingertips.

- [Brimacombe Winter Ski and Snowboard Camps](#)
- [Township of Brock](#)
- [City of Oshawa](#)
- [City of Pickering](#)
- [Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth](#)
- [Municipality of Clarington](#)
- [Family Skating Event](#)
- [Town of Ajax](#)
- [Whitby Festival of Lights](#)



# Preparing for the New Year: Tips for a Strong Start in January

A new year is a great opportunity to reset and refocus. No matter your family's routine or resources, small steps can make a big difference. Start by helping your child get organized—this could mean tidying up a backpack, setting up a study corner, or simply using a calendar (paper or digital) to track important dates.

**Encourage goal-setting** by talking with your child about what they hope to achieve – big or small. Help break those goals into manageable steps and celebrate progress along the way.

**Good study habits don't require expensive tools.** Encourage regular homework time, minimize distractions when possible, and promote simple strategies like reading out loud, drawing diagrams, or explaining ideas to a family member.

**Every family's routine looks different.** What matters most is consistency, encouragement, and support. Together, we can help all students start strong and feel confident this semester!



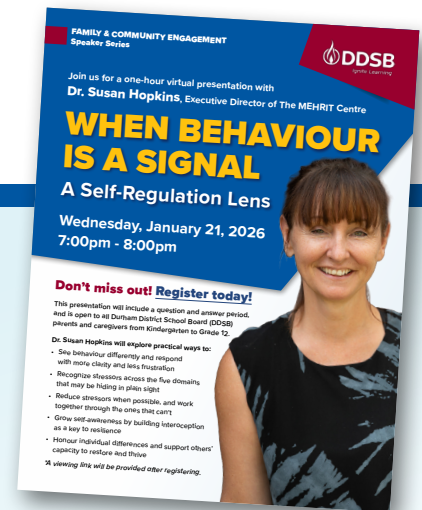
## Speaker Series!

Family and Community Engagement is excited to kick off the latest Speaker Series! Join us to hear from **Dr. Susan Hopkins** on January 21, 2026 at 7:00 pm:

### **When Behaviour is a Signal: A Self-Regulation Lens.**

This one-hour virtual session, including a Q&A, is open to all Kindergarten to Grade 12 parents and caregivers and will explore practical ways to:

- **See behaviour differently** and respond with more clarity and less frustration
- **Recognize stressors** across the five domains that may be hiding in plain sight
- **Reduce stressors** when possible, and work together through the ones that can't
- **Grow self-awareness** by building interoception as a key to resilience
- **Honour individual differences** and support others' capacity to restore and thrive





## Why Participating in Student Census Surveys is Important

The next Student Census survey is coming up in the new year. It's a chance for students to share valuable information that helps schools better understand their communities, identify barriers to success, and improve student engagement and well-being. By participating, students can help shape experiences and outcomes that allow everyone to thrive.

The survey includes questions about family backgrounds, languages spoken at home, and various aspects of student identities. By participating, you help schools address barriers, provide appropriate supports, and best allocate resources to benefit all students.

We understand that some parents may have questions about privacy or how the information will be used. Rest assured, the data collected is confidential and used only to improve education services and not identify personal/private information. Participation is optional, and we encourage all students and families to take part to help create a more inclusive, supportive school community.

### Tips for Completing the Survey:

1. The survey is brief and will only take a few minutes but find some time when you and your child can focus without distractions.
2. Answer questions honestly and fully. Accurate information helps your school provide the best support.
3. More information and launch of the survey is coming soon.  
Visit [ddsb.ca/en/about-ddsb/student-census.aspx](https://ddsb.ca/en/about-ddsb/student-census.aspx)





# Innovation and Modern Learning at the DDSB

The DDSB recently hosted its first CTRL+ALT+EDUCATE event, drawing hundreds of families eager to explore how technology, Generative AI (GenAI), and innovative practices are transforming classrooms. Caregivers and students engaged in hands-on activities that showcased how these tools can spark creativity, deepen learning, and prepare students for a rapidly evolving future.

With the board's approval of Google Gemini for student use, GenAI is positioned as a collaborative partner that will help enhance critical thinking and innovation rather than replace intellectual effort. However, we understand parenting in the age of AI requires new skills. Just as families once taught safe internet habits, today's caregivers must help their children navigate GenAI responsibly by questioning outputs, recognizing bias, and safeguarding privacy by avoiding personal data input.

This shared responsibility between educators and parents ensures students are empowered to use good judgement and to encourage curiosity and to understand that GenAI is not a shortcut but a tool. GenAI will continue to play a significant role in work and daily life and it's important to ensure the new technology will strengthen, rather than hinder our children's potential.

[Learn more and read the guidelines on the DDSB website.](#)



**Wishing all our students and families  
a safe, joyful holiday season and  
all the best for the New Year ahead!**

