

# FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



WINTER 2025



## ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

We want to ensure that the diverse experiences and voices of the DDSB community are reflected in the local schools and the community programs that are sourced throughout the region. If you have ideas for programming and resources you would like to access in our community HUBS, please reach out!

DDSB Staff Co-Leads: Sara Forbes  
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[lanya.lewis@ddsb.ca](mailto:lanya.lewis@ddsb.ca)

The PIC Communication team is committed to sharing relevant and supportive resources that set families up for success. If you have ideas for how we can better communicate with you, please reach out to us today.

DDSB Staff Co-Leads: Nadia Nembhard-Hunt  
[nadia.nembhard-hunt@ddsb.ca](mailto:nadia.nembhard-hunt@ddsb.ca) and  
Frank Samuels [frank.samuels@ddsb.ca](mailto:frank.samuels@ddsb.ca)

## Greetings from the PIC committee!



My name is **Gurleen Saggu**, and I'm honoured to support and represent the voice of DDSB parents.



My name is **Peter Ackie**, and I value collaboration between parents and schools and believe our kids benefit most when we all work together.

We are excited to serve as your co-chairs for the 2024-2025 school year.

So far this year, PIC has hosted Regional SCC meetings to connect schools and share ideas. We hosted two widely-attended virtual Speaker Series Sessions which equipped parents and caregivers with helpful information. PRO-grant events are also underway, providing funding for parent engagement activities—ensure your school applies!

We're committed to bringing you valuable events and information. Feel free to reach out with any questions or suggestions. Let's work together to strengthen our parent community for our children's success.

Sincerely,  
Gurleen & Peter

 [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca)

## Greetings from the DDSB Indigenous Education Department!

Our curriculum team has been hard at work creating resources and professional learning opportunities for students and educators that support our district priorities to uphold and promote distinct Indigenous rights.

Teachers have engaged in learning about the significance of Orange Shirt Day, understanding Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation, and Treaties Education. Grade 11 English educators participated in an NBE Book Festival where they were able to interact with several Indigenous authors from diverse nations.

The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) has been engaged in a learning session that includes practical instructional strategies and curated Indigenous authored resources to support student-centred learning environments.

Indigenous youth and families have attended a variety of engagement opportunities to date. Tom Cowie spent the day discussing Williams Treaties, Roger Daybutch and Dean Sayers visited to give a talk on the Robinson Huron Treaty litigation process, Beanie John came to hoop dance with families, and Roger Daybutch returned for a Winter Solstice gathering with families in December. We are committed to supporting Indigenous Education in the district and will continue to offer community connections for Indigenous students and families throughout the year.

Please [REACH OUT TO OUR TEAM](#) anytime, we are here to help.

Indigenous youth have had the opportunities to tour Durham College, Ontario Tech University, University of Toronto, and York University (where they attended a football game). The Aboriginal Post Secondary Information Program (APSIP) also made three stops in Durham to support Indigenous youth in all regions of the district.

The district has hosted Indigenous guest speakers in our Speaker Series, including Chief Kelly LaRocca from Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, and Dr. Chadwick Cowie, from Hiawatha First Nation. All employees are invited to attend these after-school learning sessions that will continue to be offered throughout the year.



The Salmon Revitalization Program is up and running again in partnership with OFAH. Schools participating in this four-day program to understand the impacts of colonization on Atlantic Salmon and the salmon life cycle. Salmon will once again be released by students in the Spring. Families will again have the opportunity to participate in salmon release in May.



# Durham District School Board Launches “30 Credits My Way” to Empower Student Pathways



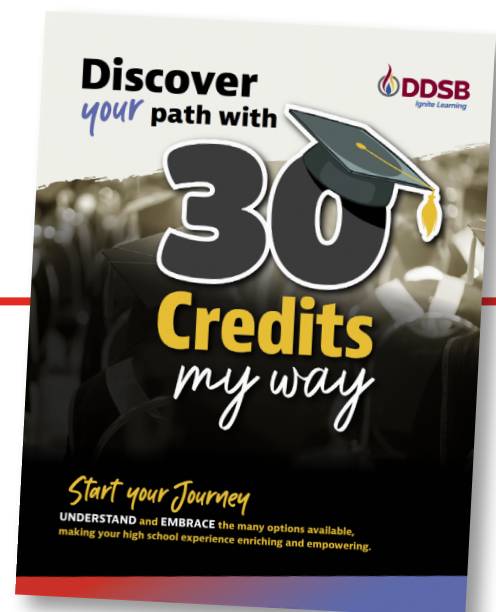
The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is excited to introduce 30 Credits My Way, an innovative approach designed to put students and families in the driver's seat of their high school journey. This initiative aims to empower students to navigate their educational pathways with confidence by offering flexible and personalized options to suit diverse learning styles and career aspirations.

Durham District School Board invites Families to information nights for **Grade 8 Students Transitioning to High School** in September 2025

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is committed to ensuring a smooth transition for Grade 8 students moving into high school and setting the foundation for their academic and personal success. To support this transition, DDSB is hosting a series of virtual and in-person events to provide valuable insights for students and their families.

**Take Charge of Your High School Journey**

**Are you a parent of a student currently in Grade 9? Join us February 4 for a Zoom webinar. Register now!**





## The Early Years Department

We excitedly anticipate welcoming approximately 4500 new young learners and their families into our DDSB school communities for the 2025/2026 school year! Kindergarten registration is a major milestone in the life of our students and we look forward to embarking on this new learning journey together.

To help support children and families as they prepare for the September transition, the Early Years Department, in collaboration with community partners, will once again be implementing our Great Beginnings Webinar Series for incoming families. These Spring sessions will provide families with new learning opportunities centred on topics that are relevant to Kindergarten-aged children. Please watch for additional information to be shared in the coming months!



**Great Beginnings**

START AT THE DDSB

**KINDERGARTEN  
REGISTRATION**

**Register for  
Kindergarten**

Join us for a memorable celebration of culture, creativity, and community at our:

### **Black History Month Celebration!**

Hosted by Durham Black Educators Network (DBEN) in partnership with OSSTF District 13!

This special evening includes:

- Family-friendly activities
- Dinner and dessert
- An inspiring keynote speaker
- Student performances and visual art gallery
- Vendors alley and silent auction

**DBEN**  
DurhamBlackEducatorsNetwork



## **BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION**

Everyone is welcome to join us for an evening celebrating Black Excellence in the DDSB community, featuring food, student talent, community vendors, and a silent auction.

**Date:** Thursday, February 20, 2025

**Time:** 6:00pm-9:00pm

**Location:** Ajax High School, 105 Bayly St E, Ajax

**DETAILS AND  
TICKET COSTS  
HERE**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:  
MARGARET LAZARUS**

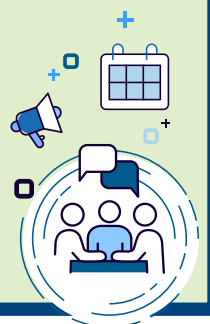


**SUPERINTENDENT  
OF EQUITABLE  
EDUCATION**

## **Get Involved!**

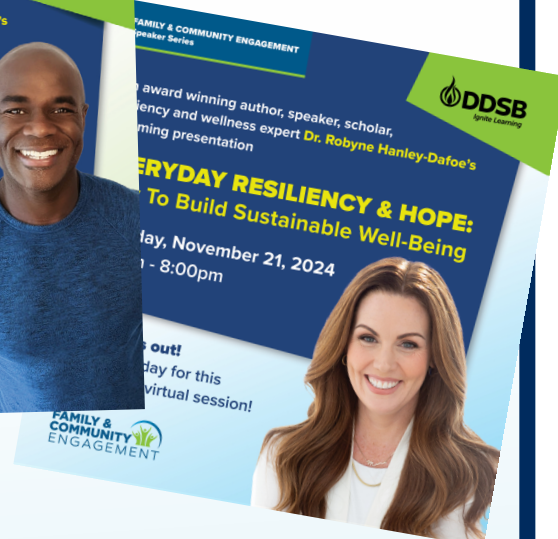
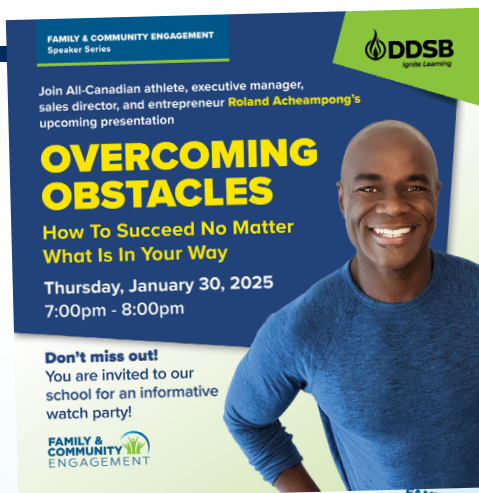
We want our parents and caregivers involved in our school communities. Contact your school to join your SCC or reach out to our DDSB Staff lead [Christie.Low@ddsb.ca](mailto:Christie.Low@ddsb.ca) for more information.

PRO Grants provide funding to schools to host engagement initiatives for parents and families. Contact your school principal or DDSB staff lead [Kimberly.Hutt@ddsb.ca](mailto:Kimberly.Hutt@ddsb.ca) with ideas on how you'd like to be engaged.





## What people are saying about the Family and Community Engagement Speaker Series...



“ I feel really grateful that DDSB is organizing this type of events, the information was very interesting, I feel that I just got more parenting tools in my toolbox to solve issues I didn't know where to get help with, **VERY HELPFUL, THANK YOU!** ”

“ Watch Party option was absolutely terrific to connect with other parents and share similar situations. ”

Our 'Speaker Series' was created to respond to parent's requests for more information on topics of interest to support their child(ren). These virtual sessions are accessible to anyone in the DDSB. Some schools host 'watch parties' with food and prizes so parents and families can enjoy them together.

Our first installment featured Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, speaking on resilience and well-being. Our second session featured Roland Acheampong, who shared tips on Overcoming Obstacles.

Contact DDSB staff lead [charmyn.lawton@ddsb.ca](mailto:charmyn.lawton@ddsb.ca) for more information, or with ideas on what topics to feature next!

## Ignite Durham Learning Foundation

We are a charitable organization that serves to remove financial barriers to create equitable opportunities that empower Durham District School Board students to achieve academic and personal success. We support school supplies, clothing & shoes, food and much more!

**Please support our efforts with a donation today!**

**Visit [idlf.ca](http://idlf.ca)**



### The Multilingual Language Learner (MLL)

department provides support to newcomer students “whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario’s schools, and who may require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English”

- A new MLL department newsletter will be launched this month to provide the system with updates and teachers with resources to support our MLL learners.
- Look out for information on March Break programming being offered to secondary newcomer students through SWIS programming.
- Professional development is ongoing for elementary and secondary teachers on using translation tools in the classroom.
- The MLL tutoring programming for elementary students started January 13th with participation from almost all elementary schools!

## Curriculum news...

- On Dec 4th 102 students attended a Girls in STEM event at York U Markham Campus. The girls and their teachers explored engineering, and coding to build solutions to a global issue inquiry. It was a fantastic day of learning!



- Look out for information on the upcoming DDSB Heritage Fair which will be taking place at the DDSB Education Center on April 29th.



- Information on DIAC (Durham Immersive Arts Camp), which will take place in September 2025 will be out shortly on school websites as well as through Board Communications. Stay tuned!

## Just for Fun!

Sometimes when our tweens and teens are talking, we may think they are speaking in another language! Just maybe they are...here is the 2025 [Slang you need to know](#). Test your SLANG knowledge with this [quiz](#)!\*

\*DDSB does not endorse or support the above links in any way

OMG!

YOLO!

SLAY!

CRINGE!