



# Supporting

## Parents as Partners in Education

E-NEWSLETTER FROM DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (DDSB) PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (PIC)

### Message from the PIC Co-Chairs

On behalf of the PIC, we would like to welcome back all the parents/caregivers after the winter holidays and we hope you had a Happy New Year. The PIC has jumped into 2023 full-swing with the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant information session held on January 18 and School Community Council (SCC) finance training session on January 25, 2023. Both virtual sessions were well-attended, and from the attendees, 10 schools were each awarded \$200 towards their SCC initiatives this year.

PRO Grant applications have been submitted and we are excited to see what the initiatives will look like this year. At the application information session, we could sense the enthusiasm to provide in-person programming for parents/caregivers and hope for increased attendance in comparison to last year.

If you have any questions or suggestions, drop us a line at [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca). We hope to transition into spring with programming throughout the school communities, so keep an eye out for communication from your local SCC.

**Huma Choudhary & Jim Van Allen,**  
PIC Co-Chairs

### Welcome Camille Williams-Taylor, New DDSB Director Of Education

PIC member, Waseem Ali, recently had the opportunity to sit down with our new Director of Education, Camille Williams-Taylor, to discuss topics that have been on the minds of our parent engagement community. Watch the full interview on the [DDSB YouTube channel](#).

### PIC Community Survey

The Parent Involvement survey was released early December 2022 and was re-circulated in the new year. The intent of this survey was to provide space for DDSB families to have their voices heard throughout their local community. The survey focused on how the PIC and local SCCs can be more attentive and involved in providing support and resources needed to encourage diverse experiences and address concerns of students and families. Discussions included mental health and well-being, SCC communication, culture and diversity, as well as direct involvement in local SCCs.

The survey closed February 3 with strong participation from families across the region. The PIC would like to express its appreciation to everyone who took time to complete the survey. Your voices provide valuable information for planning, discussing, and implementing programs and activities in the region that continue to support positive learning and participation from our communities.

**Connect with Us**



**DDSB Engagement**



**@ParentsDDSB**



**engagement@ddsb.ca**

# CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITIES

In January, DDSB schools celebrated Lunar New Year and Tamil Heritage Month. We would like to extend the warmest of wishes to our communities and families who have celebrated this past month. We hope that your celebrations were joyful and memorable as you spent time with family and friends. See right for the ways schools recognized and celebrated with their peers, friends, and local communities.



From left to right: Fallingbrook PS, Whitby, preparing for the Dragon Festival, Fallingbrook style!; Sunset Heights PS, Oshawa, Grade 6 students celebrate Thai Pongal; Pringle Creek PS, Whitby, Pringle Creek PS staff identify their lunar zodiac sign and characteristics.

## Pathways to Success: Student Volunteering

Volunteer work is an effective way to acquire crucial skills while in secondary school. Depending on the nature of the volunteer position, it may teach skills such as leadership, communication, organization, and project management. Through community service, students can apply in-class education to real-world scenarios to help prepare them for employment and transition to responsible adulthood.

Post-secondary institutions with a holistic admission process prefer applicants who have completed volunteer work as it shows passion, dedication, and social responsibility. Such students are also likely to be active participants in campus life. Despite the benefits of volunteerism, grades and test scores remain the primary consideration for admission.

For more information about student volunteering, visit [ddsb.ca](https://ddsb.ca).

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY FACTS:

- All students working towards an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) must complete 40 hours of Community Involvement.
- Students can start accumulating their hours in the summer before entering Grade 9.
- Community involvement activities must be completed outside scheduled class time, not part of a credit course, unpaid, and completed by end of Grade 12.
- Complete the [Community Involvement Activity Record](#) form with accurate information and signatures. Completed records are to be submitted to the school.
- Find a list of eligible activities on the second page of the Community Involvement Activity Record.

## RESOURCE LINKS FOR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN DURHAM REGION:

- [City of Pickering Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [City of Oshawa Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [Clarington Volunteers](#)
- [Municipality of Clarington Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [Town of Ajax Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [Town of Whitby Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [United Way Durham Region Volunteer Centre](#)
- [Volunteer Durham Database](#)



# MARCH IS RAMADAN

## Ramadan and its significance to Muslims

Ramadan is a holy month of fasting, introspection, and prayer for Muslims, followers of Islam. It is celebrated as the month in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received the initial revelations of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. The Quran states:

**“The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Quran, guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it.”**

Fasting is one of the 5 pillars of Islam; Muslims fast from dawn to sunset each day, refraining from eating, drinking, smoking, and unkind or impure thoughts and words and immoral behaviour.

## Ramadan in 2023

Ramadan may begin at sunset on Wednesday, March 22, and end on the evening of Thursday, April 20. These dates are subject to moon sightings and may be one day before or after the estimated dates. Ramadan is the ninth month of the 12-month Islamic calendar, which is a lunar calendar based on the phases of the moon. As a result, Ramadan does not start on the same date each year and moves back 11 days every Gregorian year.

## The Meaning of Ramadan

Ramadan is a time of self-restraint and self-reflection, with fasting seen as a way to cleanse the soul and show empathy for those who are less fortunate. Fasting is an exercise in self-control and Ramadan is a time for people to work on being more patient, tolerant, and mindful of the people around them. It is a moment to reflect and work on being better people.

During Ramadan, Muslims attend mosques more frequently, read the entire Quran, and pray special congregational night prayers. It is common for mosques to host large Iftars, especially for the poor and needy. Muslims use this time to socialize with colleagues and friends (Muslim or non-Muslim)

by inviting them to Iftar parties. Different cultures have different traditions during Ramadan, whether it is special food they must cook or eating Iftar with extended family. Islamic tenets such as generosity have inspired most of these traditions, including sharing food and inviting guests to partake in Iftar.

Many Muslims also donate money to charities during the month, and a lot of Islamic charities organize food packs for people locally and in poorer countries or refugee camps. Donating to charity, also known as Zakat, is particularly important during the holy month.

## The Rules of Ramadan

Muslims who have reached puberty and are in good health fast during Ramadan. However, the sick, elderly, travelers, pregnant women, and nursing mothers are exempt, although they are required to make up for the missed fast days later (if they can) or alternatively help feed the poor. The first pre-dawn meal of the day during Ramadan is called "suhoor," and the fast is broken with a meal known as "iftar."

## Eid al-Fitr

The conclusion of Ramadan is marked with a celebration known as Eid al-Fitr, or the Feast of Fast-Breaking. It is the first day after Ramadan ends and in many cultures lasts for three days. On the day of Eid al-Fitr, Muslims wake up early and dress in their finest clothes to attend the Eid prayers. After prayers, they wish each other a happy Eid or 'Eid Mubarak' in Arabic before spending the rest of the day with their extended families, enjoying food and sharing gifts with children and loved ones. There are many Eid traditions centered around family, food, generosity, and festivities.





## PIC SCC Training Sessions

The PIC provided three training sessions for SCCs across the District to support the vital work of SCCs. The first session, *Running Effective SCC Meetings*, was held on November 24. Facilitated by Dawn White, Principal at G.L. Roberts CVI, this session offered attendees the basics of serving on school councils. Effective school councils prioritize and support student learning, promote meaningful parental and community involvement, and actively seek input from their school community. Other topics discussed included communication as a key to ensuring strong partnerships and strategies for resolving conflicts.

The second session, *How to Attract and Engage Members of Your SSC*, was held on November 24. This session featured presenter Kristen McKinnon who included suggestions on creating dynamic meetings and breaking down barriers to attending and being a part of a school council. Some of the tips were offering food, childcare, scheduling different meeting times, and alternate formats for meetings (virtual, in-person, hybrid, breakfast meetings, walk and talk, after school, and evening meetings).

The third session, *Finance 101 for SCC Chairs and Treasurers*, was held on January 25. This session was facilitated by Melissa Durward, Senior Manager of Finance, DDSB, and Sid Lashley, Internal Auditor, DDSB. The presenters gave insight into activities, equipment, and resources that school councils can utilize for fundraising and subsidy. The presentation also gave an overview of school budgets, block budgets, and school-generated funds.

The presentations were informative and engaging. Approximately 120 people attended the sessions. A fourth training session focusing on SCCs Bylaws will be held on April 24. All are encouraged to attend. For more information about SCC, please view the DDSB School Community Council Handbook.



## WINTER STEM ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

Often, we forget that the winter environment can provide inspiration and opportunities for learning at home, even during a polar vortex. The links below feature articles outlining different STEM activities that can be completed at home with your child(ren) if you are not up for venturing outdoors. Most items required for each activity can be found within your home and both activities include detailed instructions so that any busy caregiver can quickly settle down and have a memorable learning experience with their little one.

[Kitchen Counter Chronicles: 15 Winter STEM Activities for Kids, Hands-on Science](#)

[Frugal Fun for Boys and Girls: Winter STEM Activities for Kids](#)

