

**JUNE 2024**



# **SUPPORTING PARENTS as Partners in Education**

**E-newsletter from Durham District School Board (DDSB) Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)**

## **Message from the Co-chairs**

As the school year ends, we would like to share what has been happening behind the scenes to enhance parent engagement and student success. We are excited to announce the DDSB has launched a new page that will function as a Parent's Guide to the Ontario School System. It will provide general information for families such as safe and accepting schools, healthy schools, special education, pathways to learning and Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM). When you have a moment, please take the time to check this out via the board website.




Next, the PIC Engaging Our Diverse Communities Committee is working towards developing a parent-facing resource that will guide SCCs to ensure all students and families can engage in their school run events or activities. This is a work in progress, but we are hopeful to have the document available in the 2024-2025 school year.

Finally, with the end of the school year there will be vacancies to be filled on the PIC and we are hoping you will take the time to apply for a position. This committee provides the opportunity for representatives of the various school communities to interact and learn from each other. You also provide much needed feedback when it comes to the various initiatives spearheaded by the board and can take back information regarding resources that your SCC and schools can tap into throughout the year. We hope to see many more new faces come September and are excited to continue to provide engagement opportunities to our parents. If there is a topic that you believe should be highlighted in a future edition, please reach out to us at [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca).

Wishing you all a safe and relaxing summer break.



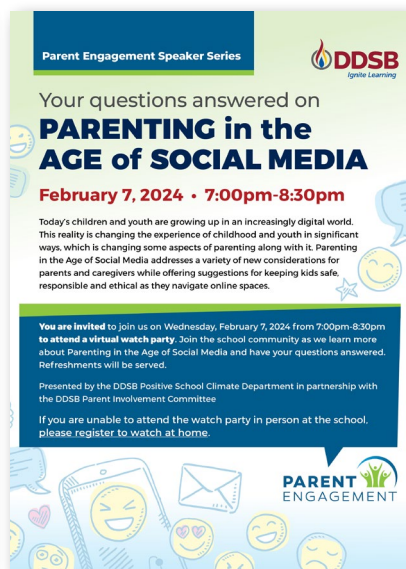
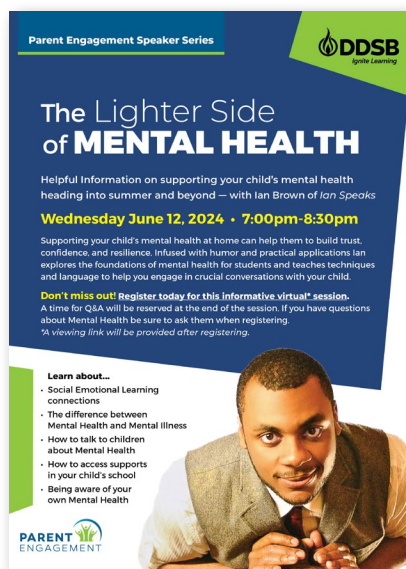
## **STAY CONNECTED**

-  [DDSB Engagement](#)
-  [engagement@ddsb.ca](mailto:engagement@ddsb.ca)
-  [@ParentsDDSB](#)

## Speaker Series

In February, we hosted *Parenting in the Age of Social Media* with our partners from the Positive School Climates Department in partnership with the DDSB PIC. The focus of this event was to address new considerations for parent(s)/guardian(s) while offering suggestions for keeping kids safe, responsible, and ethical as they navigate online spaces.

In June, we had guest speaker Ian Brown talk about *The Lighter Side of Mental Health*, providing helpful information on supporting each child's mental health heading into summer and beyond. To view these presentations, click [here](#).



## Regional SCC

In February, the PIC hosted the first in-person Regional SCC meeting since 2019. Administrators, SCC Chairs and designates were invited to attend an evening including a panel of guest speakers, breakout sessions on topics relevant to SCCs, and the opportunity to network with each other at the end of the evening. The event was a great success, with almost every school represented, and positive feedback all around.

## Communications

Parent Engagement produced three e-newsletters this year, featuring information, resources and strategies for parent(s)/guardian(s). These were shared with communities via social media, the DDSB website, and school distribution.

## Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants

For the 2023-24 year, the PRO Grant committee approved 43 applications for both elementary and secondary schools. Common topics included social inclusion, enhancing parent involvement with children's learning through curriculum, and mental health.

Feedback from across schools was that events were well attended and facilitated positive discussions and collaboration with families.

## Volunteer of Distinction

On October 24, the PIC was joined by our Trustees, Director of Education, Superintendents, Administrators and staff for the first in-person Volunteer of Distinction recognition evening since 2019. The event acknowledges and celebrates volunteers from schools across the board as nominated by their Principal and SCC for their commitment and work within the school. Volunteers were recognized in a ceremony, followed by a reception where they had the opportunity to meet with all attendees.

Volunteers who give their time and talent are an essential component in ensuring the success of our students. We recognize and thank our Volunteers of Distinction for the 2022/23 year and all volunteers who work hard within our school communities each day.

# Student Success/Transition Coaches: Grade 9 Information

## Getting Ready for High School (GR4HS) Program

We are excited to announce the GR4HS program for students entering Grade 9 in September. This program provides an introduction to the Grade 9 English and mathematics curriculum, study skills, time management, and steps to success. It also helps students become familiar with their new school, easing the transition from elementary to secondary education.

### Program Details:

**Dates:** August 19 to 21, 2024

**Location:** All DDSB secondary schools

**Online/Asynchronous:** Available for DDSB@Home students only

**Time:** 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
(with two 15 minute nutrition breaks)

### Important Information:

**IT Policy:** Students must be in Canada to access course materials and classes due to DDSB IT policies. Access from outside Canada is not available.

**DDSB@Home students:** Must provide their own electronic equipment and a stable internet connection.

**Bussing:** Limited bussing available for students attending Brock H.S., Port Perry H.S., and Uxbridge S.S.

### Registration:

**Deadline:** August 9, 2024, 12:00 noon

**Process:** DDSB students can register through their myBlueprint account.

## Durham Continuing Education (DCE)

DCE offers a range of programs for students aged 4 to adult, including new credits, credit upgrades, language skills enhancement, and new language acquisition. For more information, visit the [DCE website](#).

## Timetables and Bussing

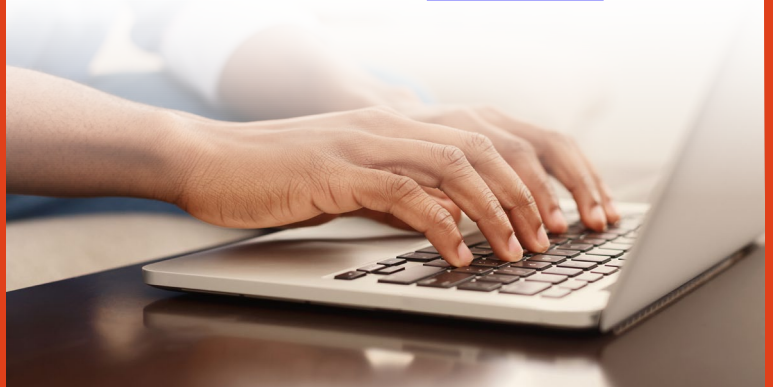
**Timetables:** Will be available by Grade 9 Day. For modified school calendar schools, timetables will be distributed Thursday, August 22, 2024. For regular school year schools, timetables will be distributed Tuesday, September 3, 2024.

**Bus Information:** Visit the [Durham Student Transportation Services website](#) for eligibility.

## PIC VACANCIES

The DDSB's PIC is calling for applications for two volunteers Parent/Guardian Representatives from these areas—Ajax, Whitby, Pickering, the North schools, (Brock, Uxbridge, Scugog) and one volunteer from Oshawa. Expressions of interest for the role of Community Representative from all areas will also be accepted. Successful applications will commit to a two year term.

For more information, visit the [DDSB website](#).





# MESSAGE FROM THE DDSB INDIGENOUS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The DDSB Indigenous Education Department is pleased to welcome four new members to the team: Dawn White, System Lead Indigenous and Outdoor Education, Deb Kravis, Elementary Indigenous Education Coach, Veronica Savage, K-12 Specialized Education Instructional Facilitator, and Aanje Mullen, Secondary Indigenous Student Success Teacher. We look forward to experiencing all the valuable contributions these department members bring to the team.

We are looking forward to June and the recognition of Indigenous Histories Month. Dr. Pam Palmater provided in-servicing to central staff in May as part of the kick off to the many opportunities that schools and classrooms have to celebrate Indigenous histories and contributions.

The Salmon Revitalization Project, in partnership with Indigenous scholars and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), continued throughout the spring, with the culmination of this labour of love being the first salmon release day on May 10. The Elementary Indigenous Education Coaches have continued to provide in class learning related to the impacts of colonization of local waters. Elementary Coaches further support this learning by bringing classes to Duffin's Creek Environmental Centre where students can make connections between their school's local watersheds, Duffin's Creek watershed, and Treaty responsibilities.

The Elementary Indigenous Education Team, in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Department, hosted a Salmon Symposium PD on May 8 for DDSB Teachers who have a salmon incubator in their classroom. This PD aimed to help teachers learn about the impacts of colonization on the Atlantic Salmon and to make connections to the Bring Back the Atlantic Salmon Program. Further, teachers were guided with the use of timeline poster resources to make connections with the true histories and our collective Treaty responsibilities towards the water.

Outdoor learning opportunities continue to be enjoyed by Indigenous students participating in the

Akinomagaaye/Akinomoshin Program facilitated by Beedahbin Peltier and Tammy and Bernard Nelson. Indigenous Student Circles from two elementary schools meet biweekly to engage in land and language-based learning. All learning activities have connections to the Ontario Science curriculum.

Secondary engagement opportunities continue through a partnership with Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Durham Continuing Education, and DDSB Indigenous Education. Many adult students have been working to achieve credits as they work toward attaining their OSSD. Grade 7-10 Indigenous students interested in STEM attended a day of learning on May 21 in partnership with Ontario Tech University (OTU). Students will meet the OTU Indigenous Initiatives team and engage in a day of activities, including a tour of the wind tunnel and a cyber security information session.

Elementary and secondary Indigenous students were invited to participate in Indigenous Student Celebration Days on May 29 and June 14. Students had the opportunity to participate in workshops of their choosing as they enjoy connecting with their peers from across the district.

The Indigenous Education Department is hosting a two-week Indigenous Summer Camp for Indigenous students in grades 4-8 in July. Students will participate in land-based learning and language revitalization activities supported by Indigenous scholars and knowledge keepers. For more information about Indigenous Summer Camp, please contact Dawn White, at [dawn.white@ddsb.ca](mailto:dawn.white@ddsb.ca).

We wish everyone a healthy and enjoyable summer and look forward to reconnecting again in September.



## Update from the Outdoor Environmental Education Department

In May, the Outdoor Environmental Education Department celebrated another successful Watershed Festival at Duffins Creek. Grade 6/7 students were invited to participate in outdoor activities as they expanded their knowledge about biodiversity and the importance of protecting our watersheds. Some highlights from the day included releasing Atlantic salmon into Duffins Creek, working together to solve the leaky pipe challenge and listening to Phil from Ontario Parks as he shared a wealth of fascinating facts about flora and fauna. We also partnered with Durham Master Gardeners, Durham Region's Waste and Water Management Departments, Bring Back the Salmon and our Indigenous Education Department to educate students about environmental sustainability. Secondary students from J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate and Pickering H.S. demonstrated leadership skills as they engaged elementary students in a stream study and generated awareness about Monarch Butterfly conservation efforts.



Later in the week, we ran an adventure-packed Watershed Challenge for high school students. Teams of four showcased their endurance, cooperation and naturalist skills as they participated in archery,

orienteering, tree and bird identification, fire starting, team building and knot-tying events.

This spring, several groups of students had the exciting opportunity to meet with volunteers from the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre and release rescued baby snapping turtles back into the Nonquon River. Students learned about the many challenges facing Ontario's turtles and gained awareness about how they can act to help protect turtles and their wetland habitats. Students then had the chance to meet our resident blind snapping turtle and learn about the live reptiles that we take care of at our four Outdoor Environmental Centres.

In addition to providing outdoor day trip programming for students in grades 2 to 12, we have continued to collaborate with Elementary and Secondary teachers and provide professional development experiences. We also delivered an Outdoor Learning session to new DDSB teachers as part of the New Teacher Induction Program. The focus was on outdoor experiential learning in an urban school setting and making cross curricular connections.

We want to extend a warm welcome back to Rachel Willis who is returning as our Durham Forest Summer Camp Director this year. Rachel has a Bachelor's degree in Child and Youth Studies from Trent University and is currently studying at University of Toronto to complete her Masters in Child Study and Education.

We are gearing up for another summer full of fun, outdoor learning and adventure for 7-12 year olds. For more information and to register your child, please email [durhamforest@ddsb.ca](mailto:durhamforest@ddsb.ca) or visit [ddsb.ca](https://ddsb.ca).

