



SUPPORTING PARENTS as Partners in Education

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

Welcome and good day from the Co-chairs.

Before we make a formal welcome, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself, as the newest Co-chair. My name is Peter Ackie and this is my first appointment as the Co-chair of this wonderful committee, and I am honored to work alongside Huma Choudhary. I will do my very best in ensuring that our parents are continuously engaged, our schools are effectively supported and that our children are actively involved in their schools. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me and I thank you for your support.




As for our committee; we have had several meetings now, and all of our 5 sub-committees are hard at work. The whole idea of all of our work is that we will continue to use our resources and initiatives to ensure that our parents are engaged and that we all work harmoniously to support our neighbouring communities.

Just one quick point about our PRO Grant applications. All of the applications have now been submitted, with the school councils already notified about their grant and monies received. We look forward to seeing what these applications formulate and the resulting impact on their schools with their initiatives in place.

If you have any questions or concerns, or even suggestions for us, please send us a message to engagement@ddsb.ca. We look forward to hearing from you all, and we wish you a wonderful holiday season.



STAY CONNECTED

-  [DDSB Engagement](https://www.ddsb.ca/engagement)
-  engagement@ddsb.ca
-  [@ParentsDDSB](https://twitter.com/ParentsDDSB)

DDSB Parent Involvement Sub-Committee

Introductions

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants Sub-Committee

The Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grants program provides funding to school boards to work with school councils to lead projects with a focus on the identification and removal of barriers that may prevent parents and families from participating and engaging in their child's education. This sub-committee will review applications for funding from schools across the district and provide the necessary funding for schools to complete approved projects.

Lead: Carolynne Waters
(carolynne.waters@ddsb.ca)

Parent Engagement Speaker Series Sub-Committee

This sub-committee organizes forums two to three times during the school year which allows for parents/guardians/caregivers to learn about and explore various topics relating to their children and the educational sphere. Experts are invited to address a variety of subject areas based on the concerns or needs of the respective communities. Sessions can be held in person, virtually, or in a hybrid fashion to allow for accessibility and inclusion.

Co-Leads: Arshi Ali (draliarshi@yahoo.com) and Barry Bedford (bbedford@rogers.com)



Parent Engagement Communication Sub-Committee

The PIC Communication team is committed to sharing relevant and supportive resources that set families up for success. This year the sub-committee will continue the distribution of our Newsletter, which will be shared throughout the year around breaks and holidays. In addition, the sub-committee plans to build our social media presence, and improve our web presence on school sites.

Lead: Mitzi Hussett (mitzi.hussett@ddsb.ca)

Engaging Our Diverse Communities Sub-Committee

The goal of this sub-committee is 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.

Lead: Peter Ackie (bibletim217@gmail.com)

School Community Council (SCC) Sub-Committee

The SCC sub-committee's focus for the 2023/24 year is to provide resources and information to the local SCCs, to support them in communicating and engaging with each of their communities. In February, we will be hosting a Regional SCC Event, which will help in bringing together all of our SCC Chairs and Administrators for an evening of learning and information sharing. In addition, an SCC Hub is being developed as a further tool for information and resources to support local SCCs.

Lead:
Gurleen Saggu (gurleensaggu@gmail.com)

Message from the DDSB Indigenous Education Department

The DDSB Indigenous Education Department has been working diligently to support educators and students in understanding district commitments to upholding Indigenous rights in education. Elementary [English](#), [French](#) and [Secondary](#) Orange Shirt Day resources, and Treaties Recognition Week resources ([English](#) and [French](#) and Secondary Treaties Week Resource 2023-2024) were shared widely with educators to support all areas of the curriculum.

In October, three elementary schools, in partnership with Elementary Indigenous Coaches, participated in Spirit Bear's Pumpkin Carving Contest. Student and educator joy was clear and abundant. ([Spirit Bear | First Nations Child & Family Caring Society](#)). Congratulations to the students and staff at Fallingbrook Public School who were the winners of Spirit Bear's carving contest.

Indigenous student groups continue to meet (voluntarily) in many secondary and elementary schools, and are supported by teacher advisors in partnership with DDSB Elementary and Secondary Indigenous Education Engagement Coaches. These spaces include events and initiatives that are Indigenous student driven, and student-led, where advisors and department members liaise with Indigenous community partners to activate student requests. Campus visits and post-secondary pathways support (such as help with applications) are ongoing. Indigenous students and families looking to connect for pathways and/or tutoring support are encouraged to reach out to the Indigenous Education department via Indigenous.education@ddsb.ca.

Outdoor learning activities continue to be a priority, as many educators, students, and classes have participated in land-based activities at schools, Duffin's Creek, Durham Forest, and Nonquon Outdoor Education centres. Grade 11 NBE classes continue to be regular visitors to these sites, where they connect what they are learning about Indigenous literatures with multiple experiences with land literacies.



We are excited to share that in January, we will be partnering with OFAH to provide students with opportunities to interact with a salmon revitalization program at Duffin's Creek Outdoor Education Centre.



Volunteer of Distinction 2022-2023

On October 24th, the Parent Involvement Committee 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 evening acknowledges and celebrates a volunteer from each school 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 afterwards 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 so hard within our school communities every day.



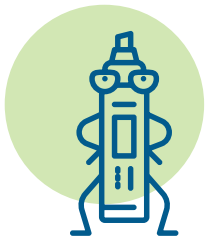
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE COMMUNITY DURING WINTER BREAK

If you are looking for activities or programming for your children and you would like to keep the costs minimal check out Durham Region's website, specifically the page entitled "[Low Cost and Subsidized Recreation Programs](#)" Here you will find a list of the cities within Durham region and respective links to their events calendars, trail websites, and recreation and parks guide.

The Durham Region website also has a page dedicated to its [numerous libraries](#) in each of the major cities/towns. When you visit the library website you can access information about their programs and events which are catered to a wide variety of ages and interests.

The winter holidays also provide the opportunity to explore the outdoors and the following resource lists 100 plus activities you and your little ones can enjoy together: runwildmychild.com/outdoor-winter-activities-for-kids/.

A note of caution: please remember to dress appropriately as you venture outdoors as temperatures and conditions can fluctuate. It's always better to wear layers as they can be removed as need be while you are active and having fun. Also, remember to stay hydrated and pack your water bottles with you as you do not want to cut a project short due to thirst.



Tips to Support Your Kids Through Exams

With exams scheduled to start shortly after the return to school in January, helping your teenager navigate the lead-up to exams can both benefit their studying and reduce the stress during the exam period. Here's some tips on ways to support your teenager:

Engage in conversation.

Encourage your student to talk about how they're feeling and to share any worries or concerns. Normalize the experience of stress and ask how you might support them.

Support healthy habits;

sleep, exercise and diet. While the lead into exam time is usually full of last-minute (and late-night) cramming, staying up late to cram for one exam may leave your student feeling exhausted and on edge for the next few days. Maintaining a regular sleep routine, supporting your student to make healthy food choices and scheduling movement into their daily routines are important and can support your student to be rested and alert for their exams.

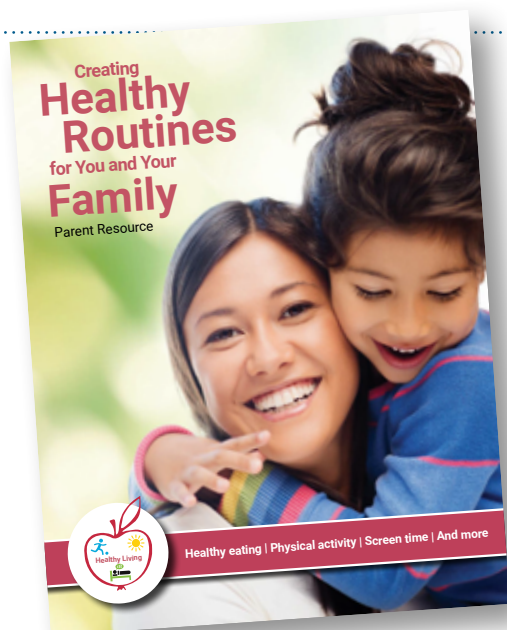
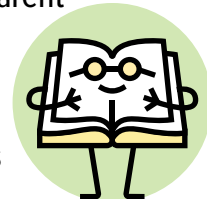
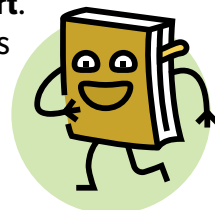
Encourage establishing a

routine based on your student's studying style. Creating some structure can be very beneficial to students. Talk to your student about what works best for them and work together to organize and set a schedule based on their studying style. Consider how you can support things like reducing distractions, ensuring breaks, and creating a study space unique to your student. Consider time management methods such as the pomodoro technique (25 minutes of focused work followed by 5 minute break) and build in movement, music, stretching- whatever the student identifies as helpful to them.



Reach out for support.

If your student's stress feels overwhelming to them, be open to discussions around what they're going through and partner with them around their interest in accessing resources so they don't feel overwhelmed. If your student is open to support, consider connecting with your school guidance counsellor to determine what resources are available. At anytime, if your student needs additional support the young person, or their parent can reach out to a member of our mental health team through this link.



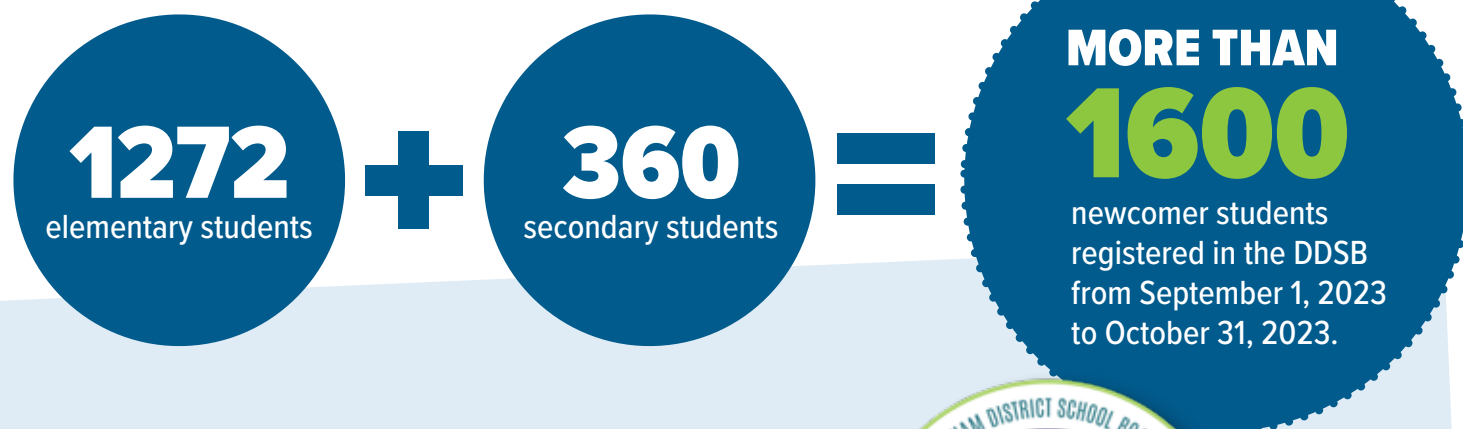
CREATE HEALTHY ROUTINES FOR YOUR FAMILY!

Download your copy of "[Creating Healthy Routines for You and Your Family](#)" Parent Resource.

Durham Health has you covered when it comes to finding ways to support your child's mental health.

Find out more at [Mental Health — Region of Durham](#)

Multilingual Language Learners



The MLL (Multilingual Language Learner) 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”

(1.2 English Language Learners: ESL and ELD Programs and Services-Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12).



Currently there are...

28 MLL Coaches and in-school teachers in elementary schools, and
16 MLL Teachers and Coaches in secondary schools, supporting students.

There are two MLL K-12 Facilitators...

Mariana Spena
mariana.spena@ddsb.ca
905-666-5500 x5375

Megan Taylor
megan.taylor@ddsb.ca
905-666-5500 x5335

UPCOMING DATE

Transition to High School Information Night for Parents Families of Newcomer and MLL students

Hybrid format both in-person at the DDSB Boardroom and online.

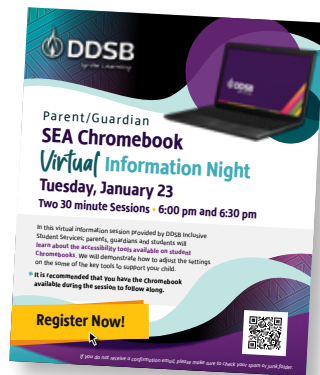
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 6:00-7:00 pm

Parent/Guardian SEA Chromebook Virtual Information Sessions

Tuesday, January 23, 2023

Two 30 minute sessions at 6:00 pm and 6:30 pm

These virtual sessions will provide DDSB parents/guardians an overview of some of the tools available to support their children's learning on DDSB SEA Chromebooks. Please share this [SEA Chromebook Virtual Information Night flier](#) with families of students who have SEA Chromebooks. The flier includes a link to a Google Form to register.



Inclusive Technology Supports Webpage



The [Inclusive Technology Supports](#) webpage for students, families and educators is now available on the DDSB Website. This page has been developed to support students, families, community partners and staff in understanding what is available in the DDSB, how to use various products, and the purpose behind each tool. Please share with educators and families.

TVO Mathify

Free math tutoring for all students from grades 4 to 12 is available from the TVO Mathify program sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Tutors are certified math teachers who are trained to teach the Ontario curriculum and are available 7 days a week from 9am to 9pm. [For more information on this program, please review our page on the DDSB website](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ▶ **December 4 and 18** - Welding Camp (full)
- ▶ **December 7** - APSIP Fair at Durham College (full)

Student Success Parent Information Nights

Thursday, January 18, 2024

**Grade 8 Student + Parent/Guardian
Transition to High School Information
Night** hosted by Student Success

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

**Grade 9* Student + Parent/Guardian
Transition to High School Information
Night** hosted by Student Success

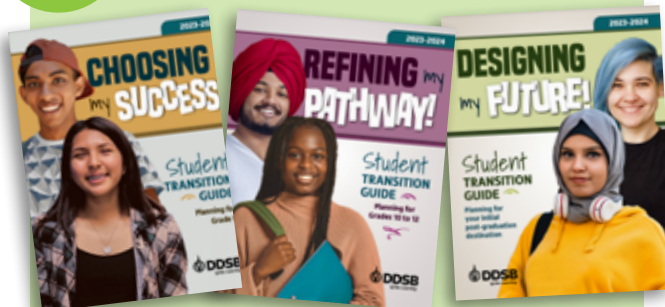
(*Going into grade 10)

Thursday, February 1, 2024

**Grade 8 Student + Parent/Guardian
Transition to High School Information
Night** with Inclusive Student Services



[Find information about Student
Success Career Guidance online!](#)



[You can also download our Choosing
My Success and Pathway Guides for
planning for high school!](#)