

2021-22 School Year FAQ

UPDATE on May 5, 2021:

The DDSB will be providing elementary families with a one-week window in mid-August to confirm their choice between in-person and virtual learning. More information will be communicated to families closer to mid-August on this process. We believe that this revised approach will provide an opportunity for all elementary families to make a final decision before the start of the 2021-22 school year at a time when the COVID-19 situation will be much clearer.

School Year Planning

Q. Isn't it too early to start planning for the 2021-22 school year? Why do elementary families have to decide on a learning preference by May 4, 2021?

A. The staffing of schools for 74,000 students is a complex process which requires us to begin planning well in advance. In accordance with collective agreements, hiring needs and our internal processes, we are asking elementary families to make a decision on learning options for the upcoming school year to ensure that we can appropriately staff schools. We recognize that this may pose a challenge to some families, however, if we do not start this process now, there is the possibility that some classes may not be staffed in September.

DDSB@Home Elementary will be run as a separate elementary school and therefore, early registration is necessary. At this time, it is not anticipated that students will have the option to transfer to/from virtual learning.

Although it is anticipated that the COVID-19 situation will improve by September, there may be a need to temporarily shift classes who are learning in person to remote learning if it is deemed necessary for health and safety reasons. Like this year, that would be done at the direction of the Durham Region Health Department or the Ministry of Education.

Q. What will learning look like in September 2021? Will the pandemic be over?

While the COVID-19 landscape is changing rapidly in Ontario, we anticipate that a majority of the adult population will receive at least one vaccination dose over the next few months. Given this timeline, it is anticipated that schools will be more stable as staff will not likely require leaves for COVID-19 related illness. However, we recognize that there is uncertainty in terms of timing for children to be vaccinated, and that this continues to be a developing situation. For that reason, we are moving forward with a virtual option for elementary schooling for those families who feel it is the best choice for their circumstances next year.

Enrollment

Q. Can my child(ren) learn through DDSB@Home?

A. Yes, the DDSB will continue to offer virtual online learning through DDSB@Home for students in Kindergarten to Grade 8, as well as secondary students who selected this option during the 2021-2022 secondary registration process.

Q. How can I choose between in-person and DDSB@Home?

A. On April 21, 2021, elementary families were requested to visit the [Parent Portal](#) to choose what type of learning they want their child(ren) to engage in for the 2021-22 school year:

- Virtual learning at home through DDSB@Home; or
- In-person learning at their home school.

Once you sign into the Parent Portal, you will need to click the “Learning Preference” tab located on the left-hand navigation bar to inform us.

We ask that families please consider both options entirely before making their choice, as we will only be offering the option to change your response until **Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 11:59pm. This decision is for the entire year as once schools are staffed, it is unlikely that changes can be made as we will not be re-staffing and re-organizing schools throughout the year.**

Secondary families (including those currently in Grade 8/entering Grade 9 in September 2021) were provided the option to choose during the 2021-2022 secondary registration process starting in January and were provided another opportunity to modify their learning preference in April.

Q. How can I change my child(ren)'s choice of learning?

A. Elementary families may login and modify their response through the [Parent Portal](#) at any time prior to **Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 11:59 PM**. Your response through the Parent Portal will be considered your final registration choice for the 2021-2022 school year.

Q. Why is switching between in-person/virtual learning not an option during the 2021-22 school year?

A. At this time, it is expected that students will remain in their chosen school (and mode of learning) for the entire school year. Unless required due to extraordinary circumstances, there will be no option for students to transition to/from DDSB@Home.

Switching to virtual learning while offering an in-person option requires temporarily transferring teachers currently assigned and teaching a class. This is a very disruptive process for students, impacting learning and classroom organization.

Health and Safety

Q. Will students and educators be vaccinated before the start of school?

Based on current information from the Government of Ontario, all adults who wish to be vaccinated will be able to have their first vaccination by this summer, with their second one taking place up to 4 months after the first. It is possible that vaccines may also be available to students 16 years of age and older, but we have not received official communication regarding student immunization.

Q. Will students be required to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine, once one is available, to attend in-person classes?

We have not received any information from the Ministry of Education regarding vaccination requirements at this time.

Q. If I choose in-person learning for my child(ren), what will the safety measures in schools look like?

A. For students who will be attending school for in-person learning, the DDSB is continuing to follow direction from the Ministry of Education and the Durham Region Health Department. Please see below for a condensed list of the safety measures currently in DDSB schools. This may be subject to change depending on the COVID-19 situation at that time.

- **Masks:** All students in Grades 1-12 are required to wear masks while they are on school property. Students in Kindergarten will be strongly encouraged by the DDSB to wear masks.
- **Hand Washing:** Every classroom will have a sink and soap to wash hands or hand sanitizer will be available to students. A hand washing schedule will also be incorporated into every classroom.
- **Classrooms** will be set up to maximize the space between student desks. This year the DDSB maintained a minimum of 1 metre between students.
- **Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection:** Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day throughout the school building. Schools will undergo extra cleaning and disinfection at the end of each school day.

- **Ventilation and Air Quality:** Multiple strategies have been implemented including an increase of the minimum ventilation rate on HVAC systems, a full air exchange during unoccupied times, investments in upgraded filters and individual ventilation systems with HEPA-level filtration where enhanced ventilation is required. There is also continued recommissioning of pneumatic controls and existing HVAC systems to maintain optimal performance along with daily monitoring of building automation systems for HVAC related issues. Additional upgrades of systems continue to take place with funding through the DDSB Capital Plan and new Provincial/Federal Funding.

Q. If my child(ren) is learning in-person, do they have to complete a daily self-assessment before entering the school?

A. Yes, we anticipate that every morning parents/guardians will be required to screen their children before they board the school bus, come to school or childcare. DDSB staff and bus drivers will also be performing a self-screening before coming to work. This is subject to change pending Ministry direction.

It is critical that **everyone** conducts a [self-assessment daily](#) to check if they have any of these symptoms and they must stay home if they do. The DDSB also strongly recommends that families review the [Changes to the Mandatory COVID-19 Self-Screening](#).

Q. What will happen if there is a case of COVID-19 in a classroom or if schools are required to close?

A. Similar to this year, students will move to remote learning in these situations, if it is deemed necessary for health reasons.

Q. How will families and staff be notified if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at a school?

A. Schools and the DDSB are committed to informing families and school staff if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school. We will be doing this in a message to families and to staff and posting information on the following webpage: <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/our-schools/covid-advisory.aspx>. Please note, a positive case at a school does not mean the individual was exposed to COVID-19 at the school. They may have been exposed somewhere else in the community.

Q. If I decide that I need to remove my child temporarily for safety concerns, or they exhibit any symptoms and shouldn't be sent back until all symptoms are gone, what happens?

A. Our focus for child(ren) who are learning in-person and may not be able to attend is that we will provide them work as we do now when children are ill. In cases where an entire class is required to isolate at home, we would then move to remote learning for the entire class for the required amount of time.

Program Structure, Curriculum and Attendance

Q. Will Gifted, French Immersion and Modified programs be offered through DDSB@Home?

A. Subject to program demand, French Immersion, Gifted Program and Modified Calendar will be offered to DDSB@Home students. Should sufficient enrollment not be available, students would need to attend regular programming in the virtual school. Communication to those families will occur after the registration process so that they are aware if the program is viable.

Q. Will the DDSB@Home program have special education supports such as Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTS) and Educational Assistants?

A. Depending on program demand, special education supports such as SERTs and Educational Assistants will be provided in the DDSB@Home Program.

Q. What will the learning format in DDSB@Home look like? RealTime (Synchronous) or FlexTime (Asynchronous), or both?

A. The DDSB@Home Elementary and Secondary programs will be a RealTime (Synchronous), full day, every day experience. For an in-depth description of the differences between RealTime and FlexTime learning visit:

<https://www.ddsb.ca/en/programs-and-learning/digital-learning.aspx>.

Q. Will there be a mix of online and in-person (hybrid) learning for students?

At elementary, there will not be a mix of online and in-person learning.

At secondary, we have been asked by the Ministry of Education to start the school year using the same schedules and format that we currently have in place. For example: For in-person learning, we utilize a quadmester system with two courses in each quadmester (approx 45 days of classes), where students attend in-person from 10am to 12:30pm every day and virtually after the lunch break until 4pm.

Q. Will students currently in virtual who wish to remain in virtual learning be with the same online classmates?

A. Not necessarily. Class organization will be managed like it is in a regular school which means that classmates and teachers may change.

Q. Can we switch teachers in a virtual learning classroom?

A. As with all schools, classroom assignment is the responsibility of the school principal who has the authority to determine student placement. It is unlikely that students will be able to switch teachers.

Q. Will DDSB@Home students be connected to a “home” school as they were in the 2020-2021 school year?

A. Parents/guardians will have the ability to sign up to receive communications through their home school, recognizing that not all school specific communications may be able to be shared with all.

Q. What platform will be used to deliver online learning and what is required of parents to support students from home during their courses?

A. Online learning will be delivered through existing platforms including Google Classroom, Google Meet and D2L Brightspace. Parents or guardians will be required to support their child(ren) learning from home as needed. Parents should expect to provide more support for kindergarten or primary-aged children as their independent skills are not usually as developed as that of older students.

Q. Will Kindergarten be offered through DDSB@Home? If so, what will the course structure and daily content look like?

A. Yes, it is anticipated that Kindergarten will be offered to DDSB@Home students. The online kindergarten program will be structured with RealTime and FlexTime opportunities that are age-appropriate and place a focus on the four frames: demonstrating math and literacy behaviours, belonging and contributing, self-regulation and well-being, and problem-solving and innovating. Students will have daily RealTime interaction with the Kindergarten Educator Team to support their learning and development and may be divided into shorter periods throughout the school day.

We will be organizing Welcome to Kindergarten sessions for all of our newest and youngest learners.

Q. For online courses, will all classes be recorded and made available for review by parents and students later? For parents working during the day or assisting multiple children with at-home learning, simultaneously assisting live classes may be difficult.

A. These classes are live, virtual and interactive with various students and will not be provided in a recorded format due to privacy concerns.

Q. Will secondary students be required to fulfill community service/volunteering hours? If so, how will this be done safely?

In March 2021, [the Ministry of Education announced](#) that community hours required for students graduating during the 2020-2021 school year was reduced to a minimum of 20 hours and introduced flexibility in how students could meet the requirements. We will share information on the community involvement requirements for 2021-2022 graduating students when it becomes available from the Ministry.

Q. Will there be EQAO assessments in the 2021-22 school year?

A. Last year, the Ontario Minister of Education announced that there will be no Grade 3 or 6 EQAO assessments in the 2020–2021 school year. At this time, we have not received information regarding EQAO requirements for the 2021-2022 school year. We will share more information when it becomes available. Please visit <https://www.eqao.com/> for additional information and updates.

Q. Will in-person students participate in music, physical education classes and organized sports teams?

A. Subject teachers will work with departments to implement adjustments to meet health and safety requirements. Delivery of curriculum may look very different in some areas. Physical education and music will be part of the school experience. Due to the health and safety restrictions at this time organized sports teams and sporting events are not permitted. Large gatherings and assemblies will not occur until provincial direction is given.

Q. My child(ren) will attend DDSB@Home, do I need to still report their absence on the days they are not present in the virtual school?

A. Yes. Students in the DDSB@Home schools will follow the same process for reporting an absence as students learning in-person. Parents/Guardians, please see the [Report an Absence page](#) of the DDSB website for instructions.

Technology

Q. Will the DDSB supply Chromebooks and other technology to students enrolled in DDSB@Home?

A. The DDSB cannot guarantee that all students in DDSB@Home Elementary will be provided a learning device. Students will require a stable internet connection and a laptop with audio and video capabilities.

Q. Do I need to use a DDSB Chromebook to access virtual learning?

A. No, any web enabled device can be used to access the learning that educators are providing to your child(ren). A DDSB Chromebook is not a requirement.

Transportation

Q. My child(ren) take the bus to school. How will busing work with the enhanced safety protocols?

A. The DDSB is working with Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) to ensure the cleaning and disinfection of school buses meets expectations outlined by the Durham Region Health Department and Ministry of Health. For more information, please read the DSTS [COVID-19 information page](#) and [FAQ](#).

If you have additional questions please contact DSTS:

- Email concerns@dsts.on.ca
- Phone 905-666-6979 or 1-866-908-6578