

# DDSB Return to School FAQ – As of September 28, 2021

***\*Please note: These FAQs may continue to change as information/updates are received from the Ministry of Education and Durham Region Health Department.***

## Learning Models

**\*\*UPDATED\*\*** Q. How do I select a learning preference for my child?

A. Families were provided with two opportunities to change their child's learning preference (if desired) for the 2021-22 school year. The window to select between in-person or virtual learning through DDSB@Home closed on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 11:59pm. Please know that we will do everything within our purview to ensure that your child(ren) are supported in the learning environment you have selected for them. **We encourage you to reach out to the school office and staff at your school to discuss any necessary learning supports or accommodations.**

### Elementary Selections

We recognize that the situation for children aged 11 and under is still evolving given there is not yet a vaccination roll-out plan. For that reason, should circumstances change over the year regarding access to a vaccination, we would provide families **one opportunity** to change their learning preference.

### Secondary Selections

We are not able to offer the option to change your response after Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 11:59pm. The staffing process for a system as large as ours is complicated and takes time to organize. Therefore, it is unlikely that changes to learning preferences can be accommodated throughout the year due to the complexity of course selections at secondary.

**Q. What do the learning models look like for elementary and secondary students learning in-person?**

A. Elementary students who have opted for in-person learning will attend school five days per week. Students will receive 300 minutes of face-to-face educator instruction, and the full range of the elementary curriculum will be provided. Enhanced health and safety protocols will be in place (i.e. enhanced cleaning, handwashing breaks, students eating lunch in their classroom, etc.)

Families should check with their [school](#) for information about staggering of bell times, entry, exit and recess.

Our goal is to ensure physical distancing in classrooms as much as possible. Students in Grades 1-12 are required to wear non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school and all students are required to wear one while on school buses. We strongly encourage Kindergarten students to wear a mask.

Full-day in-person learning five days per week will be in place for secondary students who selected in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. For the first half of the school year, secondary schools will be operating on a quadmester schedule with students taking two courses at a time for approximately 45 school days per quadmester. The Ministry has indicated that their goal is for schools to be able to return to a semestered system for the second half of the school year. Students are required to wear masks while in school and enhanced health and safety protocols will be implemented. All secondary students are in school from 10am to 4pm daily during the 2021-22 school year. This includes those in special education classes and those learning at [DDSB@Home](#).

**Q. What is the reasoning behind the 10am to 4pm schedule for secondary students?**

A. There has been a well-documented shortage of school bus drivers across the province over the last number of years. Though Durham Region had been less impacted than other areas of the province, the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the issue, and as a result, the 10am to 4pm schedule was the only way that Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) could ensure all eligible students can receive transportation services. We understand that this may be a shift for some families and acknowledge concerns raised. This is not a permanent decision and will be revisited as part of planning for the 2022/23 school year. DSTS will be gathering feedback through both our school board and the Catholic board to explore what other options may exist and the impacts of this change. It is our hope that through additional efforts, the school bus driver shortage can be reduced. Any permanent changes to bell times would also include stakeholder consultation and a thorough understanding of the implication on both elementary and secondary families.

**Q. What will happen if schools are required to close again?**

A. If the Ministry of Education directs that schools close, your child(ren)'s learning will continue virtually in the same class that they are in until students can return back to in-person learning.

**Q. I do not receive e-mails currently. How can I receive updates about my child(ren)'s education?**

A. In order to receive direct updates about your child(ren)'s education, you must have a valid e-mail registered with us. Please contact your child(ren)'s school to make this request. We will need to verify your identity for legal/privacy reasons.

**Q. If I have trouble accessing the Parent Portal, my child's OEN, Chromebook issues etc. during the school year, who should I contact for assistance?**

A. School staff are able to help you with the Parent Portal, Google Classroom and Chromebooks and provide information about: passwords, login information, access codes, equipment, obtaining a Chromebook, power cords, phone number and email updates, name change, absences, address change, OEN's, report cards, etc. Please reach out to the school secretary for assistance with any of the above issues. Contact information for schools may be found on our website at:

<https://schooldirectory.ddsb.ca/>.

**Q. How can I subscribe to receive news from my child's home school?**

A. Here are the steps required for families to receive news such as school newsletters directly from your home school:

1 – On any school's homepage click **MORE NEWS** in the School News Section.

2 – Click the **SUBSCRIBE** button.

3 – Check off all the boxes for what you would like to subscribe to on the school website. If you just want the School News (Newsletters), just check **School News**.

Once completed, the school website will send an email to all subscribers when News items have been posted. For further assistance, please reach out to staff at your home school.

**Q. Where can I find the 2021-22 School Year Calendars?**

A. You can view the 2021-22 school year calendars

here: <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/whats-happening/school-year-calendars.aspx#Approved--2021-2022-School-Year-Calendars>.

**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. For children who are learning in-person and are unable to attend school, we will provide school work for them to complete. This follows our regular practice when

children are ill. In cases where an entire class is required to isolate at home, we would then pivot to online learning for the entire class for the required amount of time.

## **DDSB@Home Elementary and Secondary Virtual Schools**

Please visit the [Elementary@Home](#) and [Secondary@Home](#) websites for additional information, updates and FAQs.

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

A. If your family selected virtual learning for the 2021-22 school year, the DDSB will continue to offer virtual online learning through DDSB@Home for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12.

### **\*\*NEW\*\* Q. If my child(ren) are new to DDSB (new to Durham Region or starting JK) how can I choose virtual learning for them in the registration process?**

A. Elementary students who are entering Junior Kindergarten or are new to DDSB can select [DDSB@Home Elementary](#) from the drop down menu on the [New Student Registration form](#). Secondary students who are new to DDSB and currently in the registration process that would like to learn through [DDSB@Home Secondary](#), should contact the staff at their designated in-person home school to begin the registration process for online learning.

### **Q. What platform will be used to deliver online learning in DDSB@Home 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, 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 those of older students.

### **Q. My child(ren) 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 programs will follow the same process for reporting an absence as students learning in-person. Parents/Guardians, please see the [Report an Absence](#) page of our website for instructions.

## **Enhanced Health and Safety Procedures**

### **Q. How will students and staff maintain clean hands throughout the school day?**

- Hand hygiene supplies will be available and easily accessible in schools and hand sanitizer will be placed at the entrance to each school
- Soap and paper towels will be provided in every classroom with a handwashing sink. Classrooms without a handwashing sink will be provided with alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- A schedule to regularly clean hands will be incorporated into daily routines (e.g. upon entering the school, before lunch and recess breaks, after using bathroom, returning from playing outside and after sneezing/coughing)

Students will be educated on proper cough and sneeze etiquette and also to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.

**Q. How will student washroom use be staffed/organized/cleaned to promote health and safety?**

A. Washrooms will be cleaned on a regular basis throughout the day. Washroom breaks will be staggered and scheduled according to classes to provide washroom access. Washrooms for students would be designated according to the location of classrooms.

**Q. Will children be able to go home for lunch?**

A. Children with the permission of their parents/guardians can go home for lunch.

**Q. Where will lunch be held, how will it be staffed, how many students will eat together, and what procedures are in place to promote health and safety during lunch times?**

A. Secondary cafeterias will be open for use and students will be free to leave school during the lunch hour.

Lunches at the elementary level will be supervised by lunchroom supervisors and teaching staff. To the greatest extent possible, elementary students will eat their lunch in their classroom. Students will clean their hands before and after eating. Empty food containers are to be taken back home and not left at school. Students are encouraged to bring their own lunch from home and food sharing will not be permitted.

**Q. Can students eat outdoors so that they do not need to be in a classroom with other unmasked students?**

A. Secondary students are encouraged to eat lunch outside when possible and will be asked to eat lunch within a consistent cohort in a designated lunch zone. The purpose

of identifying zones and asking students to eat in a consistent zone as much as possible is to limit contact and support contact tracing when required. Students at the elementary level are required to eat lunch with their designated cohort. All students are able to go home for lunch with the permission of their parents/guardians. The sharing of water bottles and any other lunch items is not permitted.

**Q. Will class sizes be the same as last year?**

A. Class sizes vary and are in line with Ministry guidelines. We will make every effort to keep class sizes as close as possible to the funded average. Students will be spaced apart as much as possible.

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. How are schools addressing/improving the air quality within the building and portables?**

A. A big part of health and safety in schools is air quality. Between 2015 and 2020, more than 180 projects have been completed to upgrade the air quality in DDSB schools and buildings.

We have invested in upgraded filters for all of our ventilation systems. These upgraded filters are highly effective at removing a broad range of particles, including bacteria and even some viruses.

Ventilation checks have been completed in every school. We have purchased 1,870 portable HEPA air filtration units, which are being installed as quickly as possible. These units will enhance ventilation and will be installed in various schools across the district. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has supplied an additional 311 units. All of these individual units have HEPA-level filtration and filter the air within spaces that are not fully mechanically ventilated. All Kindergarten classrooms, regardless of ventilation type, have been given improved HEPA-level filtration systems. Duct cleaning is also being completed at schools to boost the efficiency of existing ventilation systems.

For school-specific information, view our [Ventilation Measures Report](#).

**Q. What measures are being put in place to support safety in common areas?**

A. The DDSB has developed strategies that support general safety in common areas. Here are several examples:

- Directional arrows, posters, and other signage will be present throughout the schools to provide guidance for appropriate distances in a variety of situations such as hallway lineups

- Entry into the school will be staggered to avoid congestion in hallways and corridors
- Pick-up and drop-off of students will happen outside the school, unless other arrangements have been made based on need
- Weather permitting, schools will use outdoor space whenever possible for various activities such as breaks and regular classroom activities

**Q. What is the DDSB doing to clean schools?**

A. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection practices by DDSB custodial staff have been established, reviewed, and approved by the Durham Region Health Department. The following highlights indicate some of our protocols:

- 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
- Soft surfaces that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected have been removed from classrooms (e.g. plush/absorbent items, upholstered furnishings)

**Q. For students with allergies, will alcohol-free sanitizers and cleansers be used?**

A. For classrooms without a handwashing sink, students who are allergic to alcohol-based hand sanitizers will be provided accommodations to use handwashing sinks outside of their classroom.

**Q. Will my child need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend school in-person?**

A. It is your choice whether or not you or your family receives the COVID-19 vaccine. Public health professionals recommend the use of the vaccine and we encourage those who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination to get vaccinated. All of our collective efforts will help bring about an end to the COVID-19 pandemic and a return to more familiar school routines – vaccines are an important part of this effort.

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. Will you mandate vaccinations for staff working with students?**

A. We continue to follow direction from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. At this time, the Ministries have not made vaccination against COVID-19 mandatory for educators and school staff. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry announced plans to introduce an immunization disclosure policy for all publicly-funded school board employees, and staff in private schools and licensed child care settings for the 2021-22 school year.

School board employees, student transportation drivers, frequent visitors and other professionals, who are not immunized, are required to complete regular COVID-19 testing as directed in provincial guidance. The DDSB is required to post aggregated, depersonalized attestation statistical information on our website and continue doing so every month. You can view this information on the [DDSB COVID-19 Advisory page](#).

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. Will rapid antigen testing be available to staff and/or students?**

A. Unvaccinated staff members are required to undergo two (2) rapid antigen tests per week as part of the DDSB's [immunization disclosure policy](#), which is required to be in place for all publicly-funded school boards.

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Education announced a new school testing pilot program to support those who have been identified as needing testing under provincial COVID-19 guidance. The Ministry has designated four DDSB secondary schools to participate: Ajax High School, J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate, Pickering High School and Port Perry High School.

Through this pilot, students and staff who are vaccinated and asymptomatic will receive a take-home self-collection kit when they have been identified as a high-risk contact as part of an identified cohort or outbreak. The pilot phase launched the week of September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and will run until October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Students, staff and families will continue to have the option to seek testing through their local assessment centre/specimen collection centre or the option to isolate.

**Q. Will there be regular asymptomatic testing available for students?**

A. The Ministry of Education organized asymptomatic testing program will not be resuming for the 2021-22 school year. COVID-19 testing can be done at a COVID-19 Assessment Centres. To find out where there is a COVID-19 testing centre near you, please visit: <https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/covid-19-testing.aspx>. In addition, you can find out more about Ontario's COVID-19 testing strategy by visiting: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-test-and-testing-location-information>.

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. Will I know if my child's teacher is vaccinated?**

A. Although the Ministry has required school boards to implement a [COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy](#) for all education workers, we do not have the legislated right to share information specific to individuals.

**Q. Where can I book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment for myself or my children?**



A. Anyone ages 12 and up can book a vaccine appointment by visiting <https://www.durhamvaccinebooking.ca/> or call 1-888-444-5113. As of August 18<sup>th</sup>, individuals turning 12 in 2021 (2009 birth year) are also eligible to receive the vaccine. To book an appointment at the Oshawa (Ontario Tech Campus Ice Centre) vaccination clinic, visit <https://covidvaccine.lh.ca>. Individuals must be 12 years of age at the time of the vaccine appointment in order to receive the vaccine. Identification which includes date of birth is required when attending the vaccination clinic.

**Q. Will there be school based COVID-19 vaccination clinics available at DDSB schools?**

A. Yes. In partnership with Durham Region Health Department (DRHD), schools will be communicating with families ahead of any scheduled vaccination clinics open to eligible students, families and staff. Visit the [DRHD website](#) for upcoming clinic dates.

**Q. Will the COVID-19 vaccine be available for children under 12-years of age?**

A. Currently, only children born in the year 2009 and earlier are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. A clinical trial is underway to explore the safety and efficacy of vaccines for those who fall below that age requirement. Once the trials are complete, Health Canada will then determine if the vaccine should be approved for that age group.

**Q. Will students be required to wear a mask in school?**

A. Yes, the Ministry of Education has made wearing a mask mandatory for students in Grades 1 to 12. We strongly encourage students in Kindergarten to wear a mask. All students on bus transportation are required to wear a mask to board the bus. Exemptions may be provided in situations where there is a medical need. Masks may be temporarily removed indoors for the following activities:

- To engage in low-contact physical activity
- To consume food or drink

Students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but distancing will be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible.

**Q. Do vaccinated staff and students still need to wear a mask at school?**

A. Yes. The Ministry of Education and Durham Region Health Department continue to advise that all students in Grades 1 to 12 and are required to wear non-medical or cloth masks/face coverings (with appropriate medical exemptions) indoors on school property and on school buses. Staff are required to wear board-provided masks.

**Q. What are the Board's plans to enforce the wearing of masks?**

A. Our expectation is that all staff ensure the safety of students within the school. Mask wearing would be treated as would any other situations where students are putting the safety of others at risk.

**Q. Will masks be provided to students?**

A. Yes. Where students do not have their own masks, non-medical masks will be made available. We encourage students to bring reusable masks from home to wear at school.

**Q. What forms of masking are acceptable for students?**

A. A non-medical mask (such as a cloth mask) or a medical mask (such as a surgical mask) are acceptable to wear. Face shields can be used in addition to wearing a mask.

**Q. Are parents able to personally drop off students at school?**

A. Parents are able to drop off children but will not be able to enter the school building in the interest and safety of all. Drop off times may differ from those in the past depending on school bells times.

**Q. What if I need to drop something off for my child during the school day or talk to my child's teacher? How do I do those things with the new safety provisions?**

A. Visits to the school and child care centres will be by appointment only. Wherever possible, telephone meetings with parents/guardians will be held. If you need to get in touch with someone at the school, please call or email your child's school. Unscheduled visitors and family members of child(ren) may not be able to enter the location.

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. Are volunteers allowed to help in the schools?**

A. We appreciate all of the work and support that our volunteers provide to our school communities. With the focus on health and safety during the pandemic, volunteers will *only be permitted under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Principal*. This discretion should be given only for essential tasks unable to be fulfilled by staff and the volunteer will be required to adhere to the DDSB immunization disclosure protocol. We encourage parents/community members to continue to volunteer and support our work through School Community Councils. The SCC meetings will continue to meet virtually. We look forward to inviting our volunteers back into our schools when the COVID-19 safety protocols are no longer required.

**Q. Will staff, students, and visitors be screened before entering a school? How will that work?**

A. Staff, students, and visitors must not come to school if they have symptoms/feel sick, or if they have come in close contact with someone with a suspected or positive case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, including within their household.

Student Screening: The Government of Ontario has developed an easy-to-use School Self-Assessment Tool to help you determine every morning if your child should be going to school. Please complete this self-assessment every morning. We remind families that child(ren) must stay at home if they are sick. Here's a link to the self-screening: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>.

Staff Screening: Staff will complete a self-assessment to ensure awareness of possible symptoms of COVID-19.

Signs will be posted at entrances to the school to remind students, staff, parents/guardians, and essential visitors with information on health and safety policies. Teachers and other staff members will be provided with information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children so that appropriate action can be taken if children develop symptoms during the day.

**\*\*UPDATED\*\* Q. Will students participate in extra-curricular activities?**

A. School clubs, activities, bands (without wind instruments) and extra-curriculars are permitted. Cohorts can interact outdoors with physical distancing encouraged, and indoor with masking and appropriate physical distancing. Schools are still required to follow the outlined protective strategies (e.g. masking, distancing, hand hygiene) as well as any specific academic program requirements when facilitating extra-curricular activities. An attendance list of participants must be maintained.

Following further direction from Durham Region Health Department, we are pleased to be able to return all outdoor, inter-school, fall sports at the secondary level, including rugby and football. While players may engage in these outdoor sports unmasked, when not on the field players and coaches must wear their masks. Please reach out to your child's teacher coach for more information as this may vary from school to school.

**Q. Will school assemblies take place in-person or virtually?**

A. At this time assemblies will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

**Q. Will my child be able to use their locker?**

A. Use of lockers/cubbies is permitted. When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masking and as much distancing as possible should be maintained between cohorts.

**Q. Will school photos be taking place?**

A. Any decision to allow school photos will take place later in the school year and we will provide more information at that time.

## **COVID-19 Symptoms and Contact Tracing**

**Q. How will schools conduct contact tracing?**

A. Daily records of attendance of all persons within the school building will be kept up to date and available to Durham Region Health Department to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

Schools will also keep detailed records of seating charts, contact information, and lists for each classroom's transportation and childcare. Students will remain in contact with only their classmates, teacher, and other educational support staff assigned to the classroom for as much of the school day as possible.

**Q. What happens if a student gets sick during the school day?**

A. Guidance from the Ministry of Education was provided to school boards in August 2021 in [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools](#).

A detailed protocol has been established in DDSB schools if students become ill during the school day (subject to change by the Ministry of Education).

- Students or staff who develop COVID-19 symptoms will immediately be separated from others. Each school will continue to have a dedicated space that will serve as a location to manage individuals that may become ill while attending school.
- Staff and parents will be directed to consult their health provider and should be provided with information about COVID-19 testing locations.
- Staff and/or students who test positive may not return to school until they are cleared by the Durham Region Public Health Department.
- DDSB schools will immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to the Durham Region Health Department and the Board.

- DDSB schools will participate in contact tracing through keeping records of classes, transported students, and visitors to schools.

**Q. What happens if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school?**

A. Updates will be communicated to families. If a COVID-19 positive case is identified in a school, the Durham Region Health Department will provide further instructions about who else in the school may need testing and/or monitoring/isolation. Staff/children who are being managed by the Durham Region Health Department (e.g. confirmed cases of COVID-19, household contacts of cases, etc.) must follow their instructions on when they can return to school.

We will be posting information on the school and DDSB website, along with notifying staff and parents/guardians if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school so that the school community can be aware.

**Q. How will families be notified if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in 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. Please visit the COVID Advisory webpage for information and updates <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/our-schools/covid-advisory.aspx>.

**Q. Will quarantine and testing requirements be different for children who are and are not vaccinated?**

A. The Ministry's [COVID-19 Guidance: School Case, Contact, and Outbreak Management](#) document details the following guidelines:

- Asymptomatic contacts of confirmed or probable cases are not required to isolate if they are fully immunized, or if they were previously positive within the past 90 days and have since been cleared, unless otherwise specified by the Durham Region Health Department.
- High-risk contacts of a case are to isolate for 10 days, unless they are fully immunized or if they were previously positive within the past 90 days and have since been cleared, unless otherwise specified by the Durham Region Health Department.
- For asymptomatic high-risk contacts who are not fully immunized or previously positive within the past 90 days and have since been cleared, testing is to be recommended on or after day 7 of their isolation period. If a test is collected before day 7, a repeat test on or after day 7 is recommended.

- For high-risk contacts who are fully immunized or were previously positive within the past 90 days, testing is to be recommended as soon as possible upon notification of exposure.

The Durham Region Health Department is responsible for the management of confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases and may provide additional guidance.

## **Program/Course Structure and Curriculum**

We will be offering many of the same classes, but due to COVID-19 we are modifying how some courses are delivered to protect the health and safety of students. Modifications may impact courses in areas such as the arts, cooperative education, health and physical education, science and technological education. You can learn more about the approach that educators will be taking by reviewing [Guiding Principles for All Subject Specific Areas](#).

### **\*\*NEW\*\* Q. Will field trips be taking place this year?**

A. At this time, the Durham Region Health Department has advised that we continue to pause all field trips. There are only two occasions when an exception may be made:

- If the trip is necessary for the completion of a course credit in secondary schools
- If the trip is required to support essential skills development for students with special education needs who are accessing learning through placement in a specialized program

### **Q. How will the curriculum, course workload, class size, one-on-one assistance, and applied demonstrations (eg. Science labs, music, etc.) in online learning be structured in comparison to in-person teaching?**

A. All aspects of the curriculum will be covered in both in-person and online learning. Demonstrations will take place virtually (where possible) or digitally.

### **Q. Will hands-on courses in areas like technological education (woodworking, auto body, metalworking, etc.) be provided in an online format?**

A. As many courses as possible will be offered to students based on collective student interest and qualifications of teachers. Similar to other provincial online course platforms, some specialty hands-on courses may not be available in the virtual classroom.

### **Q. Will sufficient electives be provided in both online and in-person cohorts for students to complete all current programs?**

A. As many courses as possible will be offered to students based on collective student interest and qualifications of teachers. Similar to other provincial online course platforms, some specialty hands-on and other specialty courses may not be available in the virtual classroom.

**Q. How will peer-to-peer tutoring work for in-person and online learning?**

A. Students learning in-person are encouraged to establish peer-to-peer tutoring within their cohort. Students learning through DDSB@Home will be able to engage with each other in their learning through online course platforms Google Classroom, Google Meet and D2L Brightspace.

**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 and interactive. Classes cannot be provided in a recorded format due to privacy concerns.

**Q. Will supplies be provided for online courses that may require materials such as art, music, etc.?**

A. Where possible, educators will focus on aspects of the curriculum that do not require course-specific materials. Course educators will communicate with families and students if any specific materials are required and child(ren) will be provided materials that are determined to be necessary for the program.

**Q. Will cooperative education/work education placements be taking place?**

A. Work experiences may resume as long as the risk of infection is mitigated by all participants. When on work placements, students will follow industry requirements for the field of study. In-person classes will follow standard cohorting guidelines.

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

A. Typically, secondary school students are required to provide 40 hours of community involvement activities as part of the requirements for earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). In 2021-22, the required number of hours for community involvement activities will be reduced from 40 to a minimum of 20 hours for graduating students. The community involvement graduation requirement of 40 hours will be restored in 2022-23.

**Q. Will secondary students still take the OSSLT?**

A. Students graduating in the 2021-22 school year are exempt from the completion of the literacy requirement and therefore will not have to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). The literacy graduation requirement will be restored for students graduating in the 2022-23 school year.

**Q. Will there be EQAO assessments this year?**

A. For the 2021-22 school year, regular EQAO assessments for grades 3 and 6 will resume in the new digital format for math, reading and writing. Students in Grade 9 math will write the Grade 9 math digital adaptive assessment and the results of the assessment may count towards up to 10% of the student's final mark. EQAO assessments are required to be done in-person at the school. Students learning remotely can choose to participate in the EQAO assessments in-person if applicable health and safety measures can be met.

## **Kindergarten/Elementary Students Specific**

**Q. What is being done in Kindergarten classrooms to protect students?**

A. The DDSB will be strongly encouraging students in Kindergarten to wear masks for the 2021-22 school year. To help support children entering a new environment, we are implementing a gradual entry plan for Kindergarten students over the first two weeks where educators will be introducing children to classroom routines and procedures, including health and safety protocols. Kindergarten classrooms will also have a portable HEPA air purification unit.

**Q. How will in-person Kindergarten be structured to ensure physical distancing between students?**

A. Learning opportunities throughout the day will be set up to encourage as much distancing between children as possible. Educators will continue to use the indoor and outdoor learning environments throughout the day to promote physical distancing between children.

**Q. Will play based learning be included, given that toys and other high touch objects won't be used?**

A. Yes, play-based learning will continue to be a fundamental aspect of the Kindergarten program. Educators will continue to use materials that promote play-based learning. Hand washing will also be encouraged when children transition between learning opportunities.



**Q. What will the online Kindergarten course structure and daily content look like?**

A. The online Kindergarten program will be structured with real-time and flex-time 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 real-time interaction with the Kindergarten Educator Team to support their learning and development, and activities and lessons may be divided into shorter periods throughout the school day.

## **Technology Needs**

**Q. My child requires a Chromebook for learning, how can I receive one?**

A. Parents of students enrolled in DDSB@Home in Grade K-6 that do not currently have a DDSB device assigned to them, can request a device by contacting their DDSB@Home campus. A request will be submitted to IT Services, who in turn will contact the parent/guardian via email to book an appointment for pick-up. Please note that a DDSB device is not required as any web-enabled device can be used to access DDSB@Home lessons and resources.

**Q. My child is having technical issues with their Chromebook. Who can I contact to fix the issues?**

A. Students learning in-person should report their device damage to their teacher. From there, schools will troubleshoot or submit an IT Incident as per the standard process.

DDSB@Home students and parents can access troubleshooting tips by visiting [DDSB@Home Elementary](#) or [DDSB@Home Secondary](#) websites. If the problem persists, students should report their device damage to their teacher. From there, schools will submit an IT Incident as per the standard process. The family will be contacted via email to book an appointment for a curbside swap at the Education Centre.

**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.

**Q. How can I change my child(ren)'s password?**

A. Students learning in-person should contact their teacher for password assistance.

Student passwords can be changed or recovered through the self-serve password tool. Instructions can be found on the [Digital Learning page](#) of the DDSB website. If the self-serve option is not working for you, please contact your teacher for password assistance.

**Q. For students with poor internet access, what assistance will be available to provide sufficient access to online materials and classes?**

A. Where possible, we are providing mobile hotspots to families who require them for their child(ren) to participate in learning through the DDSB@Home Program.

Parents/guardians of DDSB@Home students should contact their DDSB@Home campus who will create a request for a Student Internet Device (Mifi or Phone with hotspot) to be mailed to the home. A maximum of one hot spot will be provided per family.

## **Well-Being**

**Q. Where can I find information and help for mental health and well-being?**

A. Starting a new school year can be challenging for many students, especially with so many changes happening in school and in the outside world. The DDSB's Inclusive Student Services team has also developed a set of resources on our website that you can visit at [Family and Community COVID-19 Supports](#). You can also visit the Well-Being and Mental Health webpage for a list of services offered to students and families and to connect with our Mental Health team directly. Visit:

<https://www.ddsb.ca/en/family-and-community-support/your-well-being-matters.aspx>.

## **Special Education**

**Q. Will medically fragile, IEP, and special needs students be able to participate in in-person or online learning 5 days a week?**

A. All elementary students will have access to learning 5 days a week, whether in person or online. Secondary students who are reviewed into special education programs will have access to learning 5 days a week in their selected format of learning (in-person or online).

Special education class teams (students, teachers, educational assistants and other support staff) will remain together in support of student learning, no matter which learning option their family chooses. We understand the need for flexibility for students

with significant health vulnerabilities which are related to their educational accommodation needs.

School staff and Inclusive Student Services will collaborate with families to plan programming, accommodations and supports. For more information, please view the Inclusive Student Services Special Education and Mental Health Supports FAQ: <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/whats-happening/resources/Documents/Return-to-School/ISS-Supports-FAQs.pdf>.

**Q. If I choose virtual learning through DDSB@Home for my child with special needs who is currently in a small class placement, will I lose that spot when I decide it is safe to return?**

A. Students in special education programs for 2021-2022 will receive educational programming affiliated with their program placement whether in school or through remote learning.

However, if a student registers with an alternate provider, for example a private school, that is a transfer of enrolment, and the placement in the program would be offered to another family.

**Q. For students who are hearing or vision impaired, what measures are being taken to ensure they can fully participate in course activities?**

A. Accommodations may include, based on individual student needs, use of closed captioning, cleaning protocols for tactile materials and some provision of clear masks to educators to support non-verbal communication such as lip reading.

School staff and Inclusive Student Services (e.g., Hearing Resource Team and Vision Resource Team) will collaborate with families to plan programming, accommodations and supports.

**Q. Will the DDSB@Home Program have special education supports such as SERTs and Educational Assistants?**

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

## **Child Care**

**Q. Will before and after school care programs be provided? If so, how will students be separated so as not to cross between cohorts?**

A. All DDSB Licensed Child Care centres are operating at full capacity using group ratios as defined in the Child Care and Early Years Act. Extended Day Programs will continue to operate in shared space with increased cleaning in between cohorts. Child Care staff will supervise students in a designated location, which will be cleaned between cohorts. Where possible, we have moved before- and after- school child care in unloaded classrooms for exclusive use. Please check with your child care provider for more information.

**Q. Will considerations be made to group children who may require after school care, and or may require taking the bus home?**

A. It may not be possible to group students in this way. However, schools have considered this information as cohorts are organized by schools.

## **Transportation**

**Q. My child(ren) take the bus to school. How will busing work with the new 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. Buses will operate at full capacity and the use of masks are required on school buses. Students will be assigned seats and a record will be kept to assist with contact tracing. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort will be seated together where possible.

DSTS can be reached by e-mail at: [concerns@dsts.on.ca](mailto:concerns@dsts.on.ca).

**Q. Will high school students and elementary students be on the same school bus this year?**

A. Bus routes are determined by Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS). To find out if there may be a mix of secondary and elementary students on your child's bus, please reach out to DSTS by calling their automated information line: 1-866-908-6578 or their office line: 905-666-6395. View the DSTS website for more information and updates: <https://www.dsts.on.ca/>.

## **DDSB Offices and Community Use of Schools**

**Q. Will I be able to book school space through a Community Use of Schools Permit?**

A. At this time, DDSB is not issuing external community use of school permits as we focus our limited resources on keeping schools open for student learning. We will revisit this decision when public health guidance and operational requirements allow. For inquiries, please email [CommunityUseOfSchools@ddsb.ca](mailto:CommunityUseOfSchools@ddsb.ca).