

Dear Parents, Guardians and Families,

As a new week begins, I wanted to provide you with an update on behalf of the team at the DDSB. We realize that the commitment to physical distancing and other precautions to ensure community safety can be challenging to adhere to within families. Thank you for your efforts in making that happen. In response to this challenge, the DDSB's Mental Health and Wellness Department has created weekly resources to help support your family's self-care and wellness. They include tips for you to help your children during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope you and your family will find them helpful. The first week resources can be accessed at this link: <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/family-and-community-support/your-well-being-matters.aspx>

I want to thank those parents who have contributed to the *Thoughtexchange* process thus far. There are many thoughts you might have about priorities during this time and we welcome your input about how best to meet the needs of your children and families. For those parents who have not yet completed the survey, please take a few minutes if you can to share your thoughts with us at this link <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/#683364387/>. The *Thoughtexchange* closes on Tuesday March 31 at 11:59pm.

While we have not yet received direction from the Ministry with respect to how long schools will be closed, we anticipate that they will be closed beyond April 5th. Once we have more information we will let you know as soon as possible.

On a logistical note with most DDSB employees now working from home, it has required a complete shift in how we operate. Upon the closure, we have established five system working tables to create an infrastructure that would enable us to adapt and respond to this challenge. Our dedicated staff have since been able to ensure the continuity of our business operations and work to help protect the health and safety of our school communities. You might also notice that all DDSB playgrounds are now closed and have signage asking community members to please stay off them. This is essential to help stop the spread of the virus and we thank you in advance for your cooperation.

During the upcoming week, families are also encouraged to use the Ministry's *Learn at Home* resources. These resources include new content and materials that have been uploaded this past weekend. The link for your use is <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home>. Also available for you are the DDSB *Optional Continuous Learning at Home* materials, available at <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/programs-and-learning/optional-continuous-student-learning-at-home.aspx#>.

As we look ahead and in anticipation that the school closure period will extend beyond April 5th, the DDSB is working to develop a robust distance learning plan for all students that includes a teacher-led instruction component. This plan will include multiple supports for students who require individualized entry points in terms of their academic strengths and technical skills. We are also endeavouring to support the learning needs of students with exceptionalities and will provide alternative programming options for them. This plan is a complex undertaking and reflects a great deal of collaboration and input between the DDSB, our labour partners and the Ministry of Education. We look forward to providing more details with you later this week in anticipation of a potential April 6th launch.

These are truly unusual times and we are striving to put together plans that will meet multiple needs. On behalf of our entire team, we thank you for your patience and ongoing support as we prepare for a variety of eventualities. We are committed to ensuring our students have excellent opportunities to continue their learning journeys and will be updating you again once we hear more details from the Ministry of Education in terms of the parameters, which will help inform our planning.

With warm regards,

Norah Marsh
Acting Director of Education