

## **Post March Break Letter from Principal to Parents & Guardians**

Monday, March 23, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the administration and staff here at Durham Alternative Secondary School, I am reaching out to you. Normally, today would have been the return to school for staff and students following the March Break. However, these are indeed unusual and challenging times.

As a District we are working together to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 by following the recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Canada. We know that there are many among us who are vulnerable and our diligence in protecting them, while also finding creative ways to connect with them, is of upmost importance. We offer our special thanks to families who have members assisting with medical care or performing other critical functions. We appreciate all that you are doing.

### **COVID-19 Updates and Resources**

I would like to bring your attention to some resources that have been made available to keep you informed and updated. Ongoing updates are available on the board website and can be found [here](#). This link also contains a highly informative [Q&A document](#) which provides information on the impact of the school closures. We encourage everyone to make good use of these resources, as well as our social media channels such as [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **Additional Online Learning Resources Now Available**

The Ministry of Education has very recently launched their **Learn At Home education resources portal**, which can be accessed [online here](#). We encourage you to regularly explore the portal to familiarize yourself with the available content. There is a broad range of material and interactive learning tools covering Kindergarten to Grade 12 including lessons, videos and access to tutors. It is important to check back regularly, as additional course content remains in development and will be added on an ongoing basis. Please feel free to consult with your child's teacher if you have any questions.

Additionally, prior to the launch of the Ministry's Learn At Home portal, we had introduced our own custom-curated resources available on the DDSB website. You can access the link [here](#). Through our social media channels, we have been encouraging parents, guardians and students to utilize this content to further augment learning.

### **Suggestions for Maintaining Health & Safety**

We recognize that this may be a stressful time in your family. The following suggestions may be of assistance to you and your family:

- Maintain a sense of routine or structure to your day. This may be particularly important for children and young people. Establish a plan for what you will do each day.
- Social distancing requires us to stay six feet or just under two metres away from people to stop the spread of COVID-19. This does not mean reducing your social support systems, however. Stay connected. Talk to friends or family about your feelings and concerns. Take advantage of the many forms of communication that we have to maintain social contacts.
- Look after your physical health, maintain some form of physical activity, ensure you are eating a healthy balanced diet and maintain previously-established sleep habits and routines.

- Read information only from credible sources, such as Health Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada.html> or the Region of Durham <https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/novel-coronavirus-update.aspx>
- If you are finding the bombardment of news distressing or if it is increasing your worry or anxiety at this time, minimize how much contact you are having with the information that you find distressing.
- Identify those things that are within your control and direct your energy towards those efforts which you can manage.

It is also worth noting that The Ministry of Education/School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) has indicated that they are creating well-being resources that we will share with you during the upcoming weeks.

### **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) and EQAO Cancellation**

The Ministry of Education has informed school boards across the province that the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup> and all EQAO assessments for the 2019/2020 school year including Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9 Math will be cancelled as a result of concerns surrounding COVID-19. We appreciate the work that has been done by staff and families to prepare students for these assessments. The OSSLT literacy graduation requirement as set out in *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2016* will be waived for this academic year. Students who are not graduating this school year will have the opportunity to write the OSSLT in the upcoming 2020/2021 school year.

We look forward to returning to more regular routines. Our school has undergone a deep clean by our Facilities Services staff and is ready to welcome the return of our students and staff. Until then, we will do our best to provide resources and communications to keep you up-to-date. On behalf of our Durham Alternative staff, I thank you for your ongoing patience, consideration and co-operation.

Sincerely,

Monique Muller-Law  
Principal  
Durham Alternative Secondary School