

Message from Secondary Principals to Families

May 19, 2020

Subject Line: Schools Closed until the end of June and the September Re-Opening of Schools

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Minister of Education announced earlier today that schools will continue to be closed until the end of the school year in June and will be re-opening in September. The province has indicated that they will announce more details about the September re-opening of schools in the coming month. While we are sad that we won't be able to welcome students back in person to Durham Alternative Secondary School until then, our school team and district is committed to supporting your child(ren) as best as possible.

The DDSB's Mental Health and Well-Being team has created a series of resources for parents and families during this time to promote a positive approach to mental health and well-being that you can explore at: <https://www.ddsb.ca/en/family-and-community-support/your-well-being-matters.aspx>

Thoughtexchange Feedback

The recently completed secondary student Thoughtexchange has provided us with valuable information about how students are learning and the variety of family experiences. Some of the key themes identified across the district include:

- Varied life circumstances are significantly impacting our students' opportunity to feel successful in Distance Learning. Common elements were poor quality of WIFI, family pressures, and lack of a quiet space to study.
- An appreciation of two-way communication with their teachers and hearing their teachers' voices explaining more complex concepts.
- Workload challenges with many students feeling that they are working much harder and longer than when in regular school.
- The need for time management strategies to structure their days and/or more flexibility of when assessment tasks were due.
- A general feeling of missing the informal and social opportunities that being in a class and school provide and feeling unmotivated to complete work.

This feedback received directly from students and families is helping us communicate and support the work of educators as we all look for ways to evolve and engage with your child(ren) through a variety of approaches and platforms. We are keen to continue to receive your feedback and work with you to support your child(ren) to make Distance Learning as successful as possible.

Picking Up Items Left at School

We recognize that students have left many belongings at school that families need to have returned. We are working with Durham Public Health to create a safe plan for retrieval. We will be sharing more information once we have the approval to proceed.

Report Cards

All students will be receiving a report card at the end of the school year.

Update on Graduations

Due to the extension of the school closure to the end of June and the uncertainty as to when large gatherings can take place, we have made the difficult decision to postpone grade 12 graduation ceremonies. However, we are committed to working with the school community to consider ways that we can celebrate the important achievements when it is safe for larger gatherings to take place. As mentioned earlier this month, this could include events in the late summer/fall and would be dependent on the advice of our public health officials and the province.

On behalf of everyone at Durham Alternative, we thank you for your continued engagement in our school community and want you to know that we are here to support you as much as possible. Please continue to connect with us as needed and please stay safe.

Sincerely,

Monique Muller-Law
Principal
Durham Alternative Secondary School