

Trustee Update

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Hi Everyone,

I hope this newsletter finds you and your families safe and well. This is indeed a marathon and not a sprint so I am very grateful for all that you are continuing to do for our city and our country right now to stop the spread of Covid-19. There is nothing more important than your health and the health of our communities. I am thinking of you and sending you strength, patience and courage. We will get through this. And we will do it together, even if physically apart. If you are blessed to be at home with others, I hope you are getting all the hugs you need too.

We are weeks into this new journey of remote learning, and I have been so touched by the care of our teachers and staff and, in my own home, the importance of connection and relationships that my daughters have with their friends and teachers. Our mental health and well-being is so important and the re-introduction of our home-school connection has really highlighted how our school community is one of the most important sets of relationships in our lives and a key part of our overall wellness. If you'd like to share your experience or have any ideas or reflections, please do get in touch.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about anything please let me know and I will work together with your teachers, Principals, and Superintendents to help.

All my very best to you and yours.

In community,

Stephanie

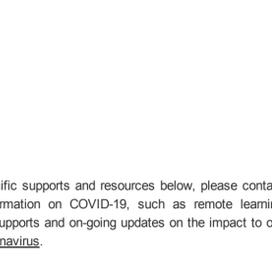


Grieving with Nova Scotia

The events over the past few days in Nova Scotia are devastating and we send deepest condolences to all the families of victims.

Sadly, when tragic events happen we know that some students may experience a wide range of reactions and emotions. TDSB Professional Support Services staff have prepared the following tips that may be helpful for parents whose children are experiencing difficulties: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Professional-Support-Services/Speaking-with-Students-About-Tragic-Events>.

Community Supports and Resources



The Toronto District School Board is committed to the safety and well-being of our students and families, especially during the current health crisis of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus). To ensure access to information on essential services and supports, we have developed a list of external community-based resources that we hope can offer assistance during this period. Please click here <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Supporting-You/Health-Active-Living/Coronavirus/Community-Supports-and-Resources>.

- Multi-lingual COVID-19 Resources
- Income Support
- Food Access
- Housing
- Legal Supports
- Job Security
- Free Tax Clinics
- Refugee from Family Violence
- Family/Caregiver Parenting Supports

If you have questions related to the specific supports and resources below, please contact the organization directly. For more information on COVID-19, such as remote learning resources, mental health and well-being supports and on-going updates on the impact to our schools, please visit www.tdsb.on.ca/coronavirus.

Remote Learning Differences are Expected...

The latest information is posted on the TDSB website here - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/remote-learning>

- [Video Message from the Director to Parents](#)
- [Video Message from the Director for Students](#)
- [Message from the Director of Education - April 3, 2020](#)
- [Message from the Director of Education - April 14, 2020](#)

As the Director made clear in his latest letter to parents – teachers will use a variety of methods following the Ministry of Education direction.

These are difficult times and I understand some parents want more online teaching. We have had to flip the switch on learning in a matter of days - for something that would typically have taken months to organize and prepare for. While the technology may have been commonplace over recent years, not all teachers used an online platform - let alone in the fashion that everyone has been forced to use it during the closure period.

Please know all staff are teaching to the direction they've received from the Ministry. I think it's also important to keep in mind that families, including those of teachers, have a wide variety of challenges right now. While one family may have time to sit down with their children to work on school assignments and learning for a certain period of time each day, another may still be working or have other demands leaving little to no time of learning. I think everyone is trying their best to balance that range of situations. It was with that in mind that the Ministry and the TDSB continues to provide additional resources for families who would like additional content during the week. They can be found here:

- Ministry of Education Learn at Home: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home>
- TDSB Student Learning Resources: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Remote-Learning/Learning-Resources>

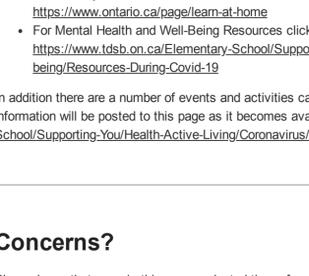
In the end, we can't replace the classroom experience with remote learning or the amount of time students would typically have spent on learning...it's not perfect for any family right now, but it's the best we can do given these unprecedented circumstances. Please remember - this is not online learning. This is not e-learning. This is emergency remote learning under the extraordinary circumstances of a worldwide pandemic. Health and well-being come first... for everyone.

Device Distribution and Paper Packages

Please note that device distribution to students who need a device to access remote learning is underway. We have had over 90,000 families completed the survey...translates into 29,000 families requesting devices. 52,000 devices have been requested in total (for separate children).

Our TDSB IT Department has been working tirelessly to collect, sanitize, package and ship devices to approximately 29,000 students across the system. As you can imagine this process takes time as we prioritize the health and safety of everyone involved. Devices for students with Special Education Amount (SEA) equipment have been processed and students and families who completed the technology-needs survey to assist with their remote learning will receive their Chromebook. Following SEA devices we are prioritizing grade 12 students. We are not asking parents to come in and pick up the devices. We will ensure all families that require support, will get a device.

In addition, as last week, 5748 students were identified by teachers to receive printed learning and well-being resources for a variety of reasons. The distribution of packages began Wednesday. All these families will receive the full package, for all grade levels. The package will include about 1 month worth of learning. Distribution is being done internally and externally using a courier service, if required.



Virtual Earth Week

Please note EcoSchools have gathered a set of mindful activities to celebrate **Virtual Earth Week (April 20-27)**. The practice of mindfulness in challenging times, allows us to find some calm amidst the chaos, experience the present moment and give gratitude for all the elements of the natural world that support our daily lives.

Thanks to Compassion Games Earth Week for inspiring these actions: https://myemail.constantcontact.com/EcoSchools-Virtual-Earth-Week-2020.html?siid=1102339695326&aid=00_JgHWVysxQ

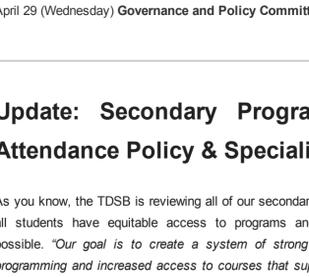
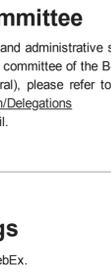
Earth Day - April 22

A group of highly qualified TDSB outdoor educators have put together various lessons for students, families and teachers. <https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/toeslearnfromhome/>

TDSB EcoSchools suggests that on the 50th anniversary of #EarthDay we fill the digital landscape – click on the campaign to join <https://www.earthday.org/campaign/digital-earth-day/>

And for environmental activities you can do at home, please follow <https://earthday.ca/april-22/campaign/earthdayathome/>.

If there is one thing positive that can come out of Covid19 is the irrefutable evidence human actions have on the planet - clear skies in L.A.; clear canals in Venice; wildlife thriving... our actions make a difference. We can do better and youth are leading the way.



Ramadan Mubarak

Ramadan is one of the most important festivals in the Islamic calendar.

Ramadan 2020 will begin on the evening of Thursday, April 23 and ends on the evening of Saturday, May 23. Ramadan Kareem to all observing. As you fast and offer prayers, may you find your peace and happiness. Have a peaceful and happy Ramadan.

Stay Informed

We are continually providing information updates to parents and students on a number of platforms such as the website (<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/TDSB>), Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/torontods/>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/toronto.dsb?ref=ts>).

- For School Closed Qs and As click <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Supporting-You/Health-Active-Living/Coronavirus>
- For Student Learning Resources click <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Supporting-You/Health-Active-Living/Coronavirus/Learning-Resources>
- For Ministry of Education Learn at Home click <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home>
- For Mental Health and Well-Being Resources click <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Supporting-You/Mental-Health-Well-being/Resources-During-Covid-19>

In addition there are a number of events and activities cancelled or postponed. The most up-to-date information will be posted to this page as it becomes available - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/Supporting-You/Health-Active-Living/Coronavirus/Event-Cancellations>.

Concerns?

Please know that even in this unprecedented time of remote learning, you still have a right to raise your concerns and talk them through with the appropriate staff.

If a parent/caregiver has a school-related problem or issue affecting a child/children, families or the community, which you believe requires the attention of the school staff or the Board, please contact your child's teacher first. Your child's classroom teacher is the first point of contact, followed by the school's principal, the school superintendent and finally your Trustee - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Contact-Us/Steps-to-Address-Questions-Concerns>.

Budget 2020-21

The Ministry of Education announces revisions to education funding and the amounts that school boards will receive in the spring of each year. Funding for education is determined through a set of provincial benchmark costs for the major components of education operations, as well as the number of students. By law, school boards are required to balance their budgets by June 30.

At this point it is our understanding that the Grants for Students Needs (GSNs) have been 300%. The TDSB's annual operating budget is approximately \$3.4 billion and we are committed to using these resources as responsibly and effectively as possible. However, until we understand the funding, we cannot confirm our budget. What we do know, however, is the funding provided by the government does not fully meet the needs of students in Toronto. Read about the TDSB's key funding priorities and concerns here - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Business-Services/Budgets-and-Financial-Statements/2020-21-Budget>.

Delegation Process - Addressing a Committee

Delegation requests will still be accepted during the closure of all schools and administrative sites at the Toronto District School Board; however, oral delegations to address a committee of the Board will be presented by phone. To submit a delegation request (written or oral), please refer to the information here <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/Delegations> and email delegates@tdsb.on.ca. Further details will be provided to you via email.

Upcoming Committee & Board Meetings

Please note that these are public electronic meetings conducted through WebEx.

April 22 (Wednesday) **Regular Meeting** (Electronic Meeting) 4:30 p.m.

April 29 (Wednesday) **Governance and Policy Committee** (Electronic Meeting) 4:30 p.m.

Update: Secondary Program Review, Optional Attendance Policy & Specialized Schools Policy

As you know, the TDSB is reviewing all of our secondary schools at once with the vision to ensure all students have equitable access to programs and opportunities – as close to home as possible. *“Our goal is to create a system of strong neighbourhood schools that provide rich programming and increased access to courses that support all pathways.”* The 4th update on the Secondary Program Review was presented to the Committee of the Whole on April 7. To read the report, click <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/Agenda-Minutes/Type/A?Folder=Agenda%2F20200407&Filename=200407+Secondary+Review+4+3851.pdf>.

Please note that because of the system closures, Board staff is recommending the Final Report recommendations that were to come to the Board in June for approval, will now come in the Fall. Instead, an interim report will be presented to Trustees in June. The report will include a series of maps that identify the primary issues and challenges within each grouping to be addressed through the Secondary Program Review. A final report will be presented to Trustees after this report and corresponding maps have been shared with the public.

Should you have questions, please e-mail secondaryreview@tdsb.on.ca.

The 90 day consultation period for the revised draft [Optional Attendance policy](#) concluded on 3 February 2020, including the online survey. A summary of the key findings from the consultation process is included in [Appendix B of the Report](#) presented to the next Committee of the Whole. The Draft Policy on revisions to the Optional Attendance Policy is coming to the April 29 Governance and Policy Committee Meeting.

As part of our Secondary Program Review, we are also making updates to current policies and procedures, including the addition of a new policy – the Specialized Schools and Programs policy – which will allow us to be clearer when it comes to admission procedures, practices and timelines, which differ from those in regular schools. Together, this new policy and review will help more students have access to these programs. Although the consultation for this policy has begun online, staff will recommend the Specialized Schools Policy also pushed to the fall to ensure meaningful consultation. For more information, click here <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review/Specialized-Schools-and-Programs-Policy>.

TDSB e-Summer School

TDSB e-Summer School is a FREE high school online! Toronto district school board offers dozens of online courses available in the July and August sessions. The e-Summer School program is open ONLY to Ontario students aged 14-20.

The Toronto District School Board reserves the right to cancel classes. Students will be contacted in advance of the e-Summer session if the course they have selected is cancelled. For more information, click <https://schoolweb.tdsb.on.ca/elearning/e-Summer-School>.

Food for Kids Program: Phase Four Rollout

Earlier this week, the TDSB launched the Phase 4 rollout of the Food for Kids program in partnership with the Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS). This program, which provides \$50 grocery store food cards to students (one per student) during the COVID-19 pandemic, has now been rolled out to 124 schools across the TDSB.

For more information about the program, please visit the Food for Kids website and read the Frequently Asked Questions - <https://tfss.ca/food-for-kids-covid-19-response/>

Since the launch of the program, approximately 6,200 \$50 grocery store food cards have been issued to TDSB families, totalling \$310,000. Our program continues to ensure every day to more families register for the program. As you know, our goal is to provide grocery food cards to students in the top 150 schools on the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) if funding permits.

Can you help? Donations are welcome at <https://tfss.ca/>. Please select "COVID-19 Response Fund" from the drop down box when making a donation.

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