



Virtual Schools



TDSB Virtual Secondary School Family Newsletter

As we all continue to navigate this challenging time, we hope everyone enjoyed the Family Day long weekend and had an opportunity to relax and enjoy some time together.

Quadmester 3 is now well underway and will end on April 22. Quadmester 4 will begin on April 23 and end on June 28.

Students and staff in the Virtual Secondary School continue to do well and with each passing month we hear of new and creative learning opportunities and activities happening in classrooms.

For more information and updates, please visit www.tdsb.on.ca/virtualschool and follow along on Twitter @tdsbvs.

Coping Through COVID

On February 11, parents and caregivers joined TDSB mental health professionals to learn about and discuss coping strategies to support mental health and well-being through the pandemic. For those who missed this live event, [watch a recording on the webcast here](#).

Join us for Virtual Drop-Ins!

Connect directly with staff from TDSB Professional Support Services. Ask questions and get answers for how to support your child or teen's mental health and well being.

- [Tuesdays, 10 to 11 a.m.](#)
- [Thursdays 7 to 8 p.m.](#)

Newcomer Supports for Students and Parents/Caregivers

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), also known as SEPT, offers settlement services to newly arrived families and secondary school students in schools' satellite and reception centres. Settlement Workers deliver individual/family services or group programs that help participants to understand and to successfully transition into the education system and to accelerate the settlement process.

For settlement supports, please visit:

www.tdsb.on.ca/New-to-Canada/Settlement-Workers.

Change to March Break Dates

On the advice of public health officials, the Ministry of Education has delayed March Break to help reduce community transmission of COVID-19. The break is now scheduled for **April 12 – 16, 2021**.

Self-Service Password Reset

On Wednesday February 17, IT launched a new Self-Service Password Reset tool, which allows Virtual School staff and students to reset their own TDSB password quickly and easily.

Within 3 days of beginning this initiative, over 96% of staff and students have successfully registered for the self-service password reset tool.

The good news is, nearly all VSS staff and students will now be able to reset their own password at the point of login, whether its Brightspace, Zoom, myINFO etc. No intervention from staff/IT is required.



TDSB Celebrates African Heritage Month

During the month of February, the Toronto District School Board is proud to recognize and celebrate African Heritage Month. It is an occasion to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of peoples of African descent to Canada and the world. The chosen theme for 2020-2021 is ***Kujichagulia: Self Determination***. [Learn more.](#)

TDSB Celebrates Chinese Heritage Month

Toronto District School Board is proud to recognize Chinese Heritage Month (CHM) during the month of February. This year is the ***Year of the Ox: Loyal, Honest, Responsible, Hard-Working and Logical***. Lunar New Year is also known as the spring festival and begins with the first moon of the lunar calendar and ends on the first full moon of the lunar calendar 15 days later. [Learn more.](#)

Special Education Update

Families who are interested in a MID or DD ISP class placement at Virtual Secondary School (VSS), should first contact their homeschool. A member of the homeschool's administration will reach out to one of the Principals of Virtual Secondary School's Special Education Department. All requests will be considered but may be limited based on class size limitations and grade level.

Home schools should continue to hold IST/SST meetings for their students in VSS in order to address attendance issues, the need for PSSP, and the development of ILPS and IEPS.

Join the next Special Education Advisory Committee meeting on March 1, 2021 at 7 p.m. [Learn more.](#)

Virtual Library Resources

Did you know that students can access TDSB provided eBooks, encyclopedias, videos and other information when learning from home?

The TDSB Virtual Library has carefully selected digital resources, to support student learning, that can be accessed online anytime, anywhere.

The Virtual Library is designed to help students find:

- **Curriculum relevant online resources/tools** to help with projects, homework, and to encourage reading and viewing in a variety of formats for **K to 12 learners** - eBooks, database articles, streamed media, and online tools (see Read Watch Learn and Find)
- **Subject links to help** with research, math practice, games, homework (see Find)
- Resources for starting an **inquiry** or **research project** (see Inquiry and Find)
- Reading suggestions and **student book reviews** (see Read and Just Read It)

Find the Virtual Library at www.tdsb.on.ca/library or through your school's webpage or your student's Brightspace classroom.

For more information about how to use the Virtual Library with students at home, look for the Parent button on the left toolbar.

Please ask your child's teacher for a Virtual Library Password Information page to access many of the Virtual Library resources from home.



Virtual Co-op Program

This quad we have over 300 students participating in a 2-credit Co-op program, with a wide variety of interests and placement requests. Teachers have been successful in placing students virtually, and they are working with dentists, digital marketers, elementary classroom teachers, interior designers, software testers, event planners, architects and long-term care homes, just to name a few.

Students are learning about the working world in a virtual environment, while improving their technology and research skills. They are also creating valuable professional connections in their field of interest and are discovering more about themselves each day!

Computer Science Update

The Computer Science department began Quadmester 3 with over 20 classes and many students and teachers preparing for the world-famous Waterloo Canadian Computing Competition, which gives students a chance to hone in on problem-solving and algorithm design skills that will be useful in their careers and lives.

We are proud that on February 17, just under 100 students wrote the contest and preparation was integrated into many Computer Science classes and in the Computer Club. Beyond the competition, students have been learning how to solve problems in real world programming languages such as Java, Python and Javascript as well as some game design and APP development. We look forward to continuing to help students find innovative solutions to realistic problems in the second half of the school year!

VSS Black Student Alliance (BSA)

The VSS Black Student Alliance began in fall 2020 through the initiative of VSS students who connected with teachers because they wanted a Black History Month assembly. The harnessing of student voice and advocacy has enabled the creation of a BSA where teacher advisors have worked with students to create a BSA community using Google classroom, which currently has over 100 student members.

The BSA has grown into a vibrant organization of learners (including VSS students, teachers and administrators). One of our BSA students, Tiyana Alvarado-Rennie, shared her experiences during a TDSB-wide zoom meeting and presentation: *African Heritage Month BSA Forum: How to start a Virtual Black Student Alliance*. The VSS BSA has also launched a website that encourages students to share information, student-produced videos, events, and podcasts: <https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/vss-black-student-alliance/home>.

Tiyana has also created a student forum at: <https://sites.google.com/student.tdsb.on.ca/virtual-schoolblackhistorymonth/home>.

BSA students have acquired leadership skills in the VSS environment on committees such as the Events Team, Announcement Team and Assembly Team. The efforts of the BSA throughout the school year will include ongoing meetings and discussions, guest speakers, presentations, and other initiatives that challenge anti-Black racism and help further the TDSB's commitment to equity, inclusion, and Black excellence and student success, student voice and advocacy. The BSA will also continue to champion and explore the many intersectionalities of Black identities.



The BSA is also an ally to underrepresented voices. Most recently we have partnered with the VSS GSA in the lunchtime event, “Black Queer and Trans History” with LeRoi Newbold and Twysed Miyake-Mugler, which discussed the connections between Black Queer and Trans history, culture, and dance.

The VSS BSA will continue to work to empower Black students and create safer more inclusive spaces that will build student leadership, voice and advocacy amongst Black students in the virtual school environment.

VSS Gender and Sexuality Alliance

The Virtual Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance (VSS GSA) continues to offer opportunities for students. We ended 2020 with a Winter Warm-Up gathering and started 2021 with a Welcome Back meeting. We have since also held a Sex Ed Q&A session with a guest from Planned Parenthood Toronto.

We have 11 active groups within the GSA who are doing incredible work and continue to meet weekly. The Arts Group is working on a number of projects including posters, logos, and t-shirts for the club. In the Disability Student Group, students find a supportive environment to unpack ableism. The Faith/Religion Group are exploring the need for safe and caring spaces to discuss religion, and the intersections of their religious practices with diverse gender and sexuality identities.

The Fem Group is a group for all fem students to share their interests and experiences. The Questioning Group is a space where students don't have to label themselves. In the Students of Colour Group, students choose weekly discussion topics and are able to build community and share resources. The Trans/Non-binary/Genderqueer Group are discussing the changes they would like to see in virtual school.

The Wellness Group helps students build skills for navigating the stress of virtual school, COVID-19, and queer and transphobia. The Gaming Group is working on an Alternate Reality Game (ARG), which includes musical components. Finally, the Activism Group put together a presentation for Black History Month on Black Queer and Trans History with special guests LeRoi Newbold and Twysted Miyake-Mugler.

The VSS GSA has big plans for the remainder of the year including a workshop on what it means to be two-spirit and a virtual Pride Week in June! Learn more at our website or follow us on social media at <https://sites.google.com/tdsb.on.ca/vssgsa>, @VSS_GSA (Twitter) and @vss.gsa (Instagram).

Toronto Community Housing: Investing in Our Diversity Scholarship Program

Are you graduating this year? Need money for postsecondary school? Between the cost of tuition, books, food, and transportation, it can be tough for many students to find the money to cover the cost of postsecondary school.

Apply today for the Investing in Our Diversity Scholarship (IIOD) and you could win up to \$4,000 to cover tuition fees and school-related expenses for full-time postsecondary education or training.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.torontohousing.ca/iiods>.