

Return to School Update for Families

August 6, 2020

Subject Line: Update from the DDSB

Dear Parents and Guardians

In the week since the Government of Ontario announced their plan for the September return to school, DDSB staff have been working to confirm and finalize plans in order to be ready to welcome students in schools this September. From what the school day will look like, to health and safety protocols and how we are setting up a Virtual School for those choosing to learn from home, we want to make sure that your child(ren) are able to learn in a way that prioritizes their health and well-being, safety, and individual human rights.

Yesterday, DDSB staff met with the Ministry of Education to share our return to school planning. The meeting was helpful in confirming our approach in terms of what the school day will look like with health and safety measures in place, and gave us an opportunity to share the concerns of families with the Ministry. We are now able to share with you the draft school schedules we presented to the Ministry and pending any further information from them, this is what we anticipate will be our plan.

We would like to thank all the families who contacted us with questions about the return to school. Due to the volume of questions received, it is taking us some time to respond to all of you. We apologize for this delay in response times. Since our last communication to you, we have launched the [Return to School Website](#) and are continuing to update our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to provide families with important information as quickly as possible. We encourage you to visit the website, the FAQ and the DDSB's social media channels, to receive timely updates on the return to school this September.

On behalf of everyone at the DDSB, we would once again like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through a very complex and challenging set of circumstances. Our priority is to ensure that we provide your child(ren) with high quality learning opportunities in the safest way possible during this unusual time.

With thanks,

Norah Marsh
Acting Director of Education

Draft Return to School Guide – Health and Safety

To support DDSB staff in safely welcoming back students for September, we have developed a *Return to School Guide*. The *Guide* is currently in its first edition and will continue to undergo revisions as we receive further direction from the Ministry of Education. We have shared the *Guide* with the Durham Region Health Department and it contains their feedback. The *Guide* helps provide a clearer picture of the different measures that we will be taking for a safe return to school. You can access it here: [<INSERT LINK HERE>](#)

It is important to know that classes and school will not look the same. Aside from the information in the *Return to School Guide*, we are working with the provincial association for each subject area (i.e. gym,

music, art, etc.) and public health on the safest possible practices. We will be providing updated information on subject-specific areas in the coming weeks.

Elementary Schools

Elementary students will attend school five days per week, with students grouped together in a cohort for the full day, including recess and lunch. Students will still receive 300 minutes of face-to-face educator instruction. Enhanced health and safety protocols will be in place (i.e. enhanced cleaning, handwashing breaks, students eating lunch in their classroom, etc.) and the full range of the elementary curriculum will be provided. The school day will be very similar to what families and students are used to, with the exception of potential changes around bell times and staggered times for entry, exit and recess. While class sizes will remain the same, we will make every effort within available resources to ease any potential pressures on class sizes in order to create physical distancing of students where possible. Students in grades JK to 3 will be encouraged to wear masks and students in grades 4 to 8 will be required to wear a mask.

Here is a sample timetable for elementary schools (please note that some schools may have 40-minute periods):

300 mins of instruction daily	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Safe Arrival	Supervision - Students go straight into designated classroom				
Period 1 – 30 mins					
Period 2 – 30 mins					
Period 3 – 30 mins					
Recess - 15 min	Staggered Outdoor Time				
Period 4 – 30 mins					
Period 5 – 30 mins					
Lunch - 60 min - for students	Staggered Time for Students (30 min inside for half the school and 30 min outside for half the school)				
Period 6 – 30 mins					
Period 7 – 30 mins					
Period 8 – 30 mins					
Recess – 15 mins	Staggered Outdoor Time				
Period 9 – 30 mins					
Period 10 – 30 mins					
Student Dismissal	Supervision				

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools in Durham will open with a hybrid model that combines in-person and remote learning. Students will be placed in cohorts of approximately 15 students, will attend every other day and on alternate Fridays. This will be delivered in a “quadrimester” format which involves a four-semester school year for each quadrimester. This limits the number of contacts students have in a day and provides the opportunity to earn two credits at a time. Each quadrimester is approximately 45 days of instruction (9.5 weeks). Students will be required to wear masks while in school and the same enhanced health and safety protocols will be implemented.

Each day, students will have the opportunity to attend a Study Hall staffed by a teacher to provide additional assistance with independent work.

The DDSB will be reviewing programming for students with a high level of special education needs who may require daily attendance and instruction at the secondary level.

Here is a draft sample schedule of what the hybrid quadrimester schedule will look like.

150 min of in-class and 150 min online instruction	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Bus Arrival – 15mins	Supervision - Students go straight to designated classroom				
Block 1 – 75mins	Course 1 – Cohort A	Course 1 – Cohort B	Course 2 – Cohort A	Course 2 – Cohort B	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
Block 2 – 75 mins	Course 1 – Cohort A	Course 1 – Cohort B	Course 2 – Cohort A	Course 2 – Cohort B	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
Bus Dismissal	Student Dismissal - Hallways/Buses Supervision/Deep Clean between Cohorts begins				
Lunch – 60 mins	60 Minutes of Lunch for Educators/ Travel Time and Lunch for Students*				
Block 3 – 75 mins 75 mins of online instruction	Course 2 - Online instruction for all students	Course 2 - Online instruction for all students	Course 1 - Online instruction for all students	Course 1 - Online instruction for all students	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
Block 4 – 75 mins 75 mins of Study Hall	Course 2 - Study Hall Subject Specific Academic Support	Course 2 - Study Hall Subject Specific Academic Support	Course 1 - Study Hall Subject Specific Academic Support	Course 1 - Study Hall Subject Specific Academic Support	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
	*Please note in areas where bus times are longer, this period of time will be adjusted for students.				

Remote Learning

Families can choose whether their child(ren) will learn in-person at school or remotely from home in a Virtual School. To help you with that decision, we are now able to provide additional information to families on what remote learning from home will look like.

- The DDSB will be creating a separate “Virtual School” with a Principal and Vice Principals to manage this effort.
- The day will be structured much like a regular class with periods.
- It is expected that students enrolled in the Virtual School attend class and participate in the same way that they would in an in-person school.

Elementary Remote Learning

For elementary families who choose to have their child(ren) learn remotely from home, learning will be provided by DDSB educators with programming based on the full Ontario curriculum. Educators will provide students with approximately 300 minutes of daily learning opportunities through RealTime (live as a large or small teacher-led group) learning and some FlexTime (independent) learning where they undertake activities that are provided by the teacher. A daily schedule will be followed that is age-appropriate. Students will be expected to attend daily and progress will be assessed on a regular basis as it would be in-person.

Secondary Remote Learning

Secondary students learning remotely from home will follow a schedule similar to in-person learning, but with daily attendance. Student instruction will follow the same “quadmester” format as secondary students learning in-person, but without the need for students to be grouped into cohorts. Students will be assessed regularly as they would be in-person with a focus on both demonstrating an understanding of concepts and the collection of student work.

Each day students will have the opportunity to attend a Study Hall staffed by a teacher to provide additional assistance with independent work.

Here is a draft schedule of what a virtual school day will look like for a secondary student:

300 Minutes of Online Instruction	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Block 1 – 75 mins	Course 1	Course 2	Course 1	Course 2	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
Block 2 – 75 mins	Course 1	Course 2	Course 1	Course 2	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
Lunch – 60 mins	Lunch for Educators and Students				
Block 3 – 75 mins	Course 2	Course 1	Course 2	Course 1	Alternate Cohorts and Courses

Block 4 – 75 mins 75 mins of Study Hall	Course 2 - Study Hall Subject Specific/ Academic Support	Course 1 - Study Hall Subject Specific/ Academic Support	Course 2 - Study Hall Subject Specific/ Academic Support	Course 1 - Study Hall Subject Specific/ Academic Support	Alternate Cohorts and Courses
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Choosing Between Remote and In-Person Learning

As mentioned in an earlier communication, families will have until Wednesday August 12 to choose whether their child(ren) will be learning remotely from home or in-person at a school. We will be sending a follow-up e-mail to all families later today with instructions on how to make your selection. Families will now be able to modify their selection by using the same student specific link prior to the August 12 deadline.

With the need to establish a Virtual School to effectively deliver remote learning across the district for thousands of students, families may not be able to immediately transfer between remote and in-person learning as changes in enrollment will impact staffing and class sizes. As a result, moving between remote and in-person learning may take place at the end of an instructional period (i.e. each term at the elementary level and each quadmester at the secondary level). Individual requests to move between remote and in-person learning will be examined on a case-by-case basis pending class size availability.

We understand that it may not be an easy decision for some families to make. We encourage you to explore the DDSB's [return to school webpage](#), read the *Draft Return to School Guide* [<HYPERLINK>](#) and visit the [FAQ](#) that we have developed before making your decision.

Bus Transportation Survey

Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) is the student transportation provider for both the DDSB and the Durham Catholic District School Board. Families who are eligible for student transportation are in the process of receiving a voice message from DSTS asking you to complete a survey to help them prepare for the upcoming school year.

The survey informs your school, your bus driver and DSTS if your child will/or will not be taking the school bus to school. This is necessary information to ensure that they have proper student counts on all bus routes. In order to be assigned to a school bus route, you must complete the survey no later than Tuesday, August 11th. If you have further questions about bus transportation, please contact DSTS by visiting their [contact us page](#).

Please fill out the survey at: <https://www.dsts.on.ca/covid-19>