

Elementary Virtual Letter

August 18, 2020

Subject Line: Update to Elementary Families Registered for Virtual Learning

This message is being sent to families who have elementary (JK to Grade 8) child(ren) registered for virtual learning through the DDSB@Home virtual school.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the DDSB@Home virtual school. We have 10,749 elementary students registered for DDSB@Home. Due to the high enrollment, we will be hiring additional school administrators this week to break the school into smaller groupings. We know that your child being in the same virtual school as their regular classmates is important to you and we will try to keep schools together as much as possible as we shift into a virtual learning environment. You will be hearing more from the DDSB@Home principal next week with more information so that everyone knows what to expect when we welcome your child to their virtual classroom on Tuesday, September 8.

Principals and vice principals have returned to work early and are already working collaboratively to prepare for a return to learning. They are currently working on timetabling and staffing DDSB@Home. This is a complex process that usually takes a few months and they are working to have it completed by the end of August.

They will also be working on ensuring that DDSB@Home offers programming similar to a physical school and they will be prepared to coordinate with your home school to be supportive of the best interests of your child(ren). Students attending DDSB@Home will be given opportunities to maintain a connection with their home school through events such as virtual assemblies, special events and other activities, when possible. Families will continue to receive relevant e-mails from their home school to help maintain this important connection.

Throughout the return to school, educators will be focusing on mental health and well-being to support students learning virtually, understanding that they are adjusting to a different format with different classmates. We know that virtual learning is not as ideal as in-person learning but we are prepared to offer a robust and innovative program and are excited to welcome your child(ren) back.

DDSB@Home Learning Requirements

We received a memo from the Ministry of Education on Friday that outlined the Ministry's expectations with respect the setup of virtual schools such as DDSB@Home. We are outlining some of these requirements in this e-mail and will be providing additional information to families in the coming weeks.

Minimum Requirements for Engaging Students

Students will receive 300 minutes of learning opportunities, with a combination of both RealTime (synchronous/live) and FlexTime (asynchronous/independent/not live) learning activities. Programming will be based on the full Ontario curriculum and include opportunities for guided instruction, large- and small-group learning, synchronous check-ins, and asynchronous independent work. Teachers will be available to students at all times during the teachers' assigned teaching timetables, as they would be if they were face-to-face in a classroom setting.

Minimum Requirements for RealTime Learning

The table below outlines the minimum amount of time per day that students, depending on their grade level, must be provided with synchronous learning as part of their scheduled or timetabled learning.

Grade Level of Students	Daily Minimum RealTime Learning Requirement
Kindergarten	180 minutes
Grades 1 to 8	225 minutes

The RealTime learning time requirements outlined in the table above may be divided into shorter periods throughout the school day. For example, a child in Kindergarten may participate in an opening exercise for 10 minutes with their whole class, as well as a combination of whole-group and small-group sessions throughout the school day, and a 10-minute closing exercise with their class at the end of the school day. Educators will use their professional judgement to provide some flexibility to students on an individual basis when students are unable to participate in RealTime learning.

Draft Sample Schedule of Elementary Virtual Learning

Here is a draft sample schedule of what a virtual learning day may look like.

<https://www.ddsb.ca/en/whats-happening/resources/Images/ReOpening/Elementary-Timetable-Models-Remote-Learning.jpg>

Students with Special Education Needs

Students with special education needs will continue to be supported. Educators will continue to provide accommodations, modified expectations, and alternative programming to students with special education needs, as detailed in their IEPs. If it is not possible to meet a student's needs through RealTime learning, educators and families will work together to find solutions.

We will be working to provide continued access to assistive technology, including Special Equipment Amount (SEA) equipment, where possible, to support students with special education needs as they participate in remote learning. In situations where access to assistive technology is not feasible, educators are expected to work with students and parents to determine workable solutions on an individual basis.

Technology Supports

For students who may require a device or internet access to participate in virtual learning, we will be sharing more information in the coming weeks about the process to request technology supports.

We have two elementary schools with a modified calendar that started on August 4 in a fully remote environment and they have responded positively to the virtual learning environment, providing important lessons learned that we will be applying across the system.

Changing from DDSB@Home to In-Person Learning at a Physical School

If you believe you made an error during the registration process or had intended for your child(ren) to learn in-person in a physical school environment, **you must contact that school directly** to make this change. This process may take up to a week depending on the volume of requests. While we will do our best to try and accommodate changes before the start of the school year, requests will be examined on a case-by-case basis pending class size availability in your home school. Once the school year starts, we

will continue to respond to requests, but may have to waitlist students until the end of term 1 in January as changes in enrollment will impact staffing and class sizes.

Next Steps

Your principal will be in touch with you next week with more information about the start of the school year after they have had an opportunity to timetable and assess classroom needs. Additional school office staff will be starting early on August 24 and the DDSB@Home office will be open at that time to help assist families with the return to school. We will be providing you with more information next week including the e-mail address and phone number for the DDSB@Home virtual school office.

Thank you in advance for your understanding as the DDSB works to completely change our processes and how we deliver learning to accommodate the needs of all students. As always, you can find out more by visiting our [Return to School website](#) and [FAQs](#) that we are updating regularly.

With thanks,

Norah Marsh
Acting Director of Education