

CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

A Parent/Guardian Guide to Teacher-Led Learning in the
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

APRIL 14, 2020



Disciples of Christ, nurturing mind, body and soul to the fullness of life.

Changing the world through Catholic Education.

“Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be afraid, for I am your God.”

Isaiah 41:10

Dear Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board Parents/Guardians:

As we celebrate the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus during Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum, we are ever mindful of our call to be a people of hope. During this time of global pandemic, we are navigating through a storm, but we must remember to “be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9) The Lord God brings serenity to all our storms.

Our province is facing a public health emergency with the COVID-19 outbreak and new measures continue to be introduced in an effort to put the health and well-being of Ontarians first. Ontario’s education system is now focused on how to support continuity of student learning through teacher-led distance education in this unprecedented time.

As you are aware, Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce signed a new order extending school closure across the province to May 1. The order would allow schools to open for staff on Friday, May 1 and for students on Monday, May 4. The closure order provides a planning horizon for the coming weeks for all educators, education leaders and partners, and most importantly, for students and families.

The Ministry of Education (Ministry) has indicated that this decision will be re-evaluated based on public health advice as the end of closure period approaches. The closure may be extended, if necessary, to protect the health and safety of students, families and staff.

The government expects that every student will continue to learn while in-school classes are suspended. Given the range of circumstances of students, their families, and our staff, the continuity of learning will require a range of delivery options that are reasonable and practical. Teaching and learning in this evolving context will not look the same as the customary in-class experience.

Our shared goal is to ensure the successful completion of the school year for all students, and to support students to advance to the next school year, earn credits and to graduate.

This guide is intended to provide you with information regarding assessment and evaluation and curriculum delivery.

Your family’s safety and well-being are critical. Please be assured that we will endeavor to support students and families to the best of our ability. This is our sacred trust. We would ask that you please direct any questions you may have to your child’s teacher or the school principal.

The Ministry released a framework, or parameters, regarding the suggested hours of work per student per week. Please note that this is provided as a minimum guideline, as are the suggested areas of curriculum focus. Please also note that in DPCDSB, Literacy instruction would include the integration of the Religious Education and Family Life curriculum.

FIGURE 1: GUIDELINE FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING – TIMES AND AREAS OF CURRICULAR FOCUS

Grade Range	
K-Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 hours of work per student per week • Focus: Literacy and math (<i>Literacy also includes Religion and Family Life</i>)
Grades 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 hours of work per student per week • Focus: Literacy and math + science and social studies (<i>Literacy also includes Religion and Family Life</i>)
Grades 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 hours of work per student per week Focus: Core math, literacy, science and social studies (<i>Literacy also includes Religion and Family Life</i>)
Grades 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours of work per course per week for semestered students; 1.5 hours of work per course per week for non-semestered students • Focus: Achieving credits/completion/graduation

Hours refer to the approximate amount of time that students would spend on the work assigned by teachers. Teacher work would include preparing assigned work and providing feedback or assessment. Teacher engagement with students is expected but would vary depending on circumstances and could include a range of ways that teachers would connect with their students.

Teacher teams, including specialist teachers, may be used to develop assigned work for students, including subjects such as art, music, French as a Second Language and Physical Activity, and to contribute to board identified resources for learning at home. In DPCDSB, this includes Planning Time Teachers, Teacher Librarians, and Itinerant or non-school based teaching staff. DECEs and ERWs will be working to support teaching and learning as well.

Students with special education needs should receive appropriate accommodations where necessary and be provided with assigned work by teachers, as well as feedback or assessment. Modifications to reflect a student’s IPRC and IEP are encouraged and expected. In DPCDSB this includes Classroom Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Student Success Teachers, Alternative Education Teachers, Guidance Teachers, etc.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

The Ministry recognizes that this period of disruption can be challenging for students, especially from the standpoint of mental health and well-being. While parents and adults across the province are experiencing considerable concern about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also remember that for our students, this period of uncertainty can cause great anxiety.

DPCDSB staff who provide mental health and well-being supports to students will continue providing this service. As students face increasing mental health challenges during this pandemic, it is vitally important that mental health professionals continue fulfilling their critical role. DPCDSB staff are currently developing parameters which meet professional and ethical guidelines to ensure that these supports continue.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- For elementary students, teachers will use formative assessment approaches to gather evidence of how students are progressing in their learning. It is expected that teachers will provide feedback to their students on their progress.
- Secondary students will be assigned learning tasks, projects and culminating activities that will be marked by their teachers for purposes of summative assessment and evaluation. Teachers will communicate results of these marked assignments to students. Results will be used by teachers to inform students' final course marks.
- DPCDSB teachers will issue final report cards, including the Kindergarten Communication of Learning, for all students. The requirement to issue mid-year report cards for non-graduating secondary students is suspended for this school year.

FINAL REPORT CARDS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Final report cards will be issued for all elementary students.

Teachers will use assessment for learning (formative assessment) to gather evidence of how students are progressing in their learning and provide feedback to their students to support their continuous and ongoing learning.

In determining final grades and marks for the final report card, teachers will consider the following:

- Teachers will use the evaluation information gathered before March 13th. ***Achievement for the report card will reflect assessment and evaluation completed from September to March 13. Assessments completed from now until June can be used to improve marks. Students will not receive a lower achievement than on or at March 13. Ongoing assessment during the Continuity of Learning phase may increase a student's achievement if there is sufficient evidence to support the increase.***
- Reporting on Learning Skills and Work Habits should also reflect information gathered prior to March 13th.
- The Kindergarten Communication of Learning will be based on teachers' observations of key learning and growth in learning prior to March 13th.

FINAL REPORT CARDS FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

Final report cards will be issued for all secondary students.

In preparing for the final report card, teachers will:

- Assign learning tasks, projects and culminating activities for both formative and summative purposes.
- Communicate results of these marked assignments to students. Results will be used by teachers to inform students' final course marks.
- In keeping with the understanding that marks should represent the most accurate reflection of student work, based on what is reasonable and in the best interest of students during this time, and in recognition of performance prior to March 13th, teachers can adjust the weighting of assigned tasks in their determination of a final mark as needed.
- ***Achievement for June reporting purposes will reflect assessment and evaluation completed from the beginning of Semester Two to March 13 and after April 6. Demonstrated improvement of learning will be taken into account when assigning a final mark. Results from work completed during the Continuation of Learning, including after April 6, will inform final marks.***
- Report on Learning Skills and Work Habits that reflects information gathered prior to March 13th.

GRADUATING STUDENTS – SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- A priority will be placed on students scheduled to graduate this year and any student on track to graduate will be supported to graduate.
- Teachers of graduating students will be expected to provide mid-term marks for graduating students on work completed up to March 13th and from April 6th to April 23rd. Between April 23rd to May 1, marks will be submitted to OUAC and OCAS, in order to meet admission requirements for post-secondary education.
- ***Achievement for the purposes of reporting mid-term marks to Universities and Colleges will reflect assessment and evaluation completed from the beginning of Semester Two to March 13. Assessment and evaluation from the period of April 6 up until April 17 can be used to inform mid-term marks to improve them. However, the mid-term marks submitted to OUAC and OCAS for Grade 12 students will not be lower than they would have been as of March 13.***
- Final report cards with marks will also be issued.
- Discussions are being held with colleges and universities about the adaptations required to support the admission process for students applying for post-secondary education, and further information will be provided.
- The graduation requirement to complete 40 hours of community involvement activities is suspended for this school year. Community involvement hours that have been completed should be reported on the report cards of graduating students. Graduating students should be encouraged to complete their hours wherever possible, where the health and safety of the student can be assured.

MID-YEAR MARKS – SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As a result of further discussion and collaboration with Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), marks for graduating students can be submitted by boards **between April 23rd and May 1st**. The ministry is continuing to collaborate with the college sector and will provide an update regarding marks to the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) this week (week of April 6th).

In determining mid-year marks for the admissions process, teachers should consider the following:

- Teachers may use evidence that reflects work completed prior to the school closure period, as well as provide opportunity for students to submit a missed and/or additional assignment to demonstrate their learning.
- Teachers can adjust the weighting of assigned tasks in their determination of a mark, if needed. Marks should represent the most accurate reflection of student work, based on what is reasonable and in the best interest of students during this time.
- In alignment with Growing Success, teachers will use their knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, and methods of instruction and assessment to support their students in the current context.

The requirement to issue mid-year (March/April) report cards for all secondary students, including graduating students, is suspended for this school year.

The Ministry of Education is continuing to work with the post-secondary sector, including OUAC and OCAS to support the admissions process and transition to post-secondary.

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP AND CAREER STUDIES HALF-CREDIT COURSES – SECONDARY STUDENTS

For students enrolled in Civics and Citizenship and Career Studies half-credit courses in the second semester, their final mark for the half-credit course underway at the time of school closures will be based on work completed as of March 13th. Where appropriate, teachers may adjust this mark in the best interest of students to be a more accurate reflection of their learning. Students are not required to complete any further culminating assignment for this course.

During the week of April 6th, students will receive information regarding when Term 2 will begin to complete the other half-credit course.

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION – SECONDARY STUDENTS

Cooperative Education is a highly immersive form of experiential learning and plays a key role in programs such as Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). For students who are enrolled in Cooperative Education courses which involve a classroom component and a community placement component, their in-person community placements will need to be suspended. These students can work with their co-op teachers to modify their co-op Learning Plans so that they may work through the curriculum expectations. Where feasible, these learners will be provided with opportunities to connect virtually with industry partners on career exploration activities, and experiential learning opportunities.

Graduating students in the SHSM program who are unable to complete their SHSM requirements due to extenuating circumstances, including the impacts from COVID-19, will be supported in satisfying graduation requirements.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

During this period of school closure, we know that parents are facing anxiety about their child's learning and academic progression. The Ministry recognizes the incredible support and initiative that parents have undertaken over the last weeks to continue their child's learning journey, such as, supporting the use of the Learn at Home website. Recognizing the primary role that parents play in their child's education, it is the expectation that teachers, support workers, and board staff remain in regular contact with parents during this period, as needed. As we proceed into unprecedented territory, the importance of open lines of communication between parents and education staff is critical. Information regarding Catholic Schools Council meetings will be communicated through the school principal.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

We know that this period of school closure is challenging for Ontario's students, including students with special education and diverse learning needs. The DPCDSB is committed to the provision of continuation of supports from the appropriate personnel (i.e., Special Education school staff, ERWs, Child and Youth Workers, Social Workers, Speech Language Pathologists, Psychologists, etc.)

THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

We recognize that this is not "learning as usual" during these challenging times. Student access to devices for learning and to internet service is not consistent throughout the Board. To that end, parents/guardians are asked to ensure that there is a balance between leisure, health and wellness, and family time throughout the school day. Given family responsibilities and other demands that are impacting the reality of the school day at home, it would not be appropriate for families to attempt to replicate the school day experience for children, particularly younger children, at this time. Moreover, many of our secondary students have employment and/or other family responsibilities that will necessitate flexibility in timelines and deadlines for assignments.

Teachers will be providing continuity of learning through distance learning, and this may involve platforms or technologies that will require some getting used to. All we can ask is that students and families do their best. Please continue to reach out to your child's teacher or principal if you require support. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to communicate with the school (i.e., Principal, teacher, etc.) by calling the school and leaving a voice message or by emailing the school's general mailbox. Recognizing the amount of potential messages received, Staff will endeavor to respond to your message as quickly as possible within the school day. Your patience and understanding are greatly appreciated.

In his homily on March 27th, Pope Francis declared: "How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons." (Homily of Pope Francis March 27, 2020)

We wish you all of God's many blessings as we begin this journey towards Continuity of Learning together that begins the week of our journey to Easter.