

STEFANO PASCUCCI
TRUSTEE – MISSISSAUGA, WARD 4
December 2021



*“For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”
(Proverbs 2:6)*

Our DPCDSB Mission: Disciples of Christ, nurturing mind, body and soul to the fullness of life.
Our DPCDSB Vision: Changing the world through Catholic education.

December is a time for looking forward and opening our hearts to the birth of Jesus. It is also appropriate that the virtue of this month is *hope*, and the beginning of the season of Advent. Through the eyes of our children at Christmas, we are lit up by the miracle of the baby Jesus.

Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) – The Board of Trustees’ *Multi-Year Strategic Plan* (MYSP) reflects the vision of the Board of Trustees, including its overall purpose, values, priorities and strategic directions. It also informs our school communities of what our Board of Trustees intends to achieve and how we plan to achieve them. The 2021- 2022 school year represents the mid-point of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB)’s *2019-2023 Multi-Year Strategic Plan*.

2022-2023 Education Funding – During the consultation process for the 2022-2023 Ontario Education Funding Guide, the DPCDSB Board of Trustees were asked to provide input to the Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees Association (OCSTA) on five identified focus areas including:

- Mental health supports.
- Reducing administrative burden and red tape.
- Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG).
- Urban and priority secondary schools.
- New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).

In addition, DPCDSB provided feedback to OCSTA on the following items:

- As with the Indigenous Education funding, DPCDSB is requesting that protected funding for dismantling anti-Black racism be considered as part of the Grants for Students Needs (GSN).
- Schools were required to redirect school budget funds to invest in software and online educational learning programs to ensure uninterrupted learning for students during remote learning periods. Without future funding to reinvest or an annual provision for this expense, electronic equipment will become obsolete.

COVID-19 Vaccination for Children – On November 19, Health Canada approved the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5 to 11 years-old. The Ministry of Education provided information to school boards to support COVID-19 vaccination readiness planning. On November 23, booking availability opened through the provincial online system, for this age group. Peel Public Health (PPH) intends to expand the availability of vaccines to enable these age groups to get vaccinated.

Rapid Antigen Testing – Our Board continues to work collaboratively with our public health units on all health and safety measures, to promote the wellness of our students, families, and staff. In regions of the province where

Extraordinary lives start with a great Catholic education.

there is a heightened risk of COVID-19 spread, local public health units can offer targeted, voluntary rapid antigen testing to unvaccinated, asymptomatic students in select schools in their communities. This screening is intended to provide an additional layer of protection in schools in areas of the province where risk of transmission is higher.

Peel Public Health (PPH) has indicated it has begun to receive rapid antigen test kits from the provincial government and they are ready to start allocating test kits to DPCDSB schools as they deem appropriate. PPH will ensure that information is provided to the school community about the use of the test kits and what to do should a test come back positive. Participation is completely voluntary and is not required for students to attend school. Also, there is no requirement for students or families to disclose their vaccination status to the school or to the DPCDSB to participate. A letter from PPH was sent to all DPCDSB parents and guardians with additional information. Please check your email account that is associated with SchoolMessenger.

Secondary Term 2 – The DPCDSB Board of Trustees have advocated on behalf of our students and parents/guardians, on the need to return to a more normal semester mode of learning. On November 18, the Ministry of Education and the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health announced that secondary schools will be permitted to resume a regular timetabling model of four courses per day, starting in February 2022. With the support of Peel Public Health, DPCDSB secondary school will return to the traditional semester model of four courses per day as of February 3, 2022. Schools will be providing students with updated timetables in January 2022, to reflect the return to a full semester model. The final assessment for all courses will continue to be a Culminating Performance Task (CPT) until the end of the 2021-2022 school year.

Enrolment Projections – All school boards across the province experienced enrolment declines during the 2020-2021 school year, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021-2022, it was evident that Greater Toronto Area (GTA) school boards are continuing to experience this decline in enrolment. DPCDSB has advocated to the Ministry of Education that our board will require stabilization funding, like that provided in the 2020-2021 year by the Ministry. The DPCDSB Planning Department has prepared an analysis including enrolment projections. As has been noted at our Board of Trustees - Administration and Finance Committee meeting in October 2021, past projections would not have anticipated the recent circumstances that have resulted in families leaving Peel Region. This includes the sharp appreciation of real estate in the Region of Peel, the impacts of COVID-19 and flexible work arrangements. However, this enrolment decline could have serious implications for DPCDSB for years to come, as families move away from the GTA to more affordable regional areas.

Student Transportation – Student Transportation of Peel Region (STOPR) transportation consortia continues to work diligently with all school bus operators, school boards and local public health authorities for the 2021-2022 school year to ensure safe and secure service is provided to all our students. STOPR is currently following the capacity restrictions for student transportation vehicles recommended by Peel Public Health (PPH). However, as a result of the additional runs and routes this school year, due to capacity restrictions that had been in effect during the pandemic, STOPR has faced more day-to-day challenges in covering unexpected driver absences.

Currently, our school buses for student transportation have been running on minimal ridership capacity, as per the direction from PPH. Due to concerns regarding bus delays in addition to operational issues, PPH is supportive of STOPR's request to resume full capacity on secondary school runs. STOPR, through collaboration with Peel Public Health, will be working to increase the loading of our secondary buses to full capacity. To that end, secondary bus routes will be condensed, and bus stops will be streamlined, based on operational need.

PPH continues to recommend a cautious approach around resuming courtesy transportation and would like to first assess the loading process for secondary school buses running at full capacity. Courtesy seating for secondary students will be reviewed in the second semester, once student learning modes and ridership decisions are finalized and an accurate assessment of COVID-19 activity, at that time can be determined.

Therefore, at this time, it is important to note there is no guarantee that the suspension of courtesy ridership will be lifted for the 2021-2022 school year.

School buses for elementary students will continue to operate at reduced capacity. Further review of full capacity busing for this age group may be modified based on any future changes to Ministry of Education direction and vaccination coverage within the 5–11 year-old age group. More information is available on www.stopr.ca

Educational Resource Worker (ERW) Update – Currently, DPCDSB employs 609 full time ERWs and 213 supply ERWs. As a result of the Investment in Student Supports (ISS) funding from the Ministry, we will be adding an additional 10 permanent ERWs and 32 casual ERWs which we are actively recruiting. This is great news for supporting student achievement and success.

Fundraising in Schools – Having a cautious approach to re-opening schools this year has effectively provided a controlled environment for implementing health and safety protocols. As the year has progressed, many schools and Catholic School Councils have expressed interest in moving forward with fundraising activities (i.e., selling chocolates, poinsettias and other individually wrapped items). Introducing fundraising events at schools has been discussed with our Peel Public Health authorities. As a result, school fundraising events will be allowed. All health and safety protocols and physical distancing measures must be adhered to. More information regarding the use of outside volunteers will be provided when available. In addition to volunteers, discussions about food day programs (i.e., pizza days) are continuing with public health and further updates will be provided.

It is a season of hope, of joyful expectation and of peaceful preparation. All Dufferin-Peel schools will be on Christmas break from December 20-31, 2021.

My family and I would like to wish all students, families, and staff a very Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

- John 1:14

May God Bless you all and keep you safe during this Christmas Season.

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