



*From Your Catholic School Trustee Sharon Hobin, BA, Bed.
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“Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.” Romans 12:10

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.

February 2021

This month, we are called to embrace the virtue of RESPECT. As we draw closer to Christ, may we see Him in the goodness of others and live out respect, one of the greatest expressions of love.

Pandemic-related Restrictions

In light of the current public health environment and based on the advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and our local Public Health Departments, the Ontario government declared a second provincial state of emergency and issued stay-at-home orders for 28 days, to address the COVID-19 crisis. Now, all elementary and secondary students in the Region of Peel - Public Health Unit (PHU) will continue to learn remotely online and will not return to in-person learning until February 16, 2021. Given that the pandemic continues to bring change and uncertainty, we understand this is a very difficult time for families.

Boards have been advised that additional health and safety measures have been introduced to support our students, families, and staff when schools reopen. The Ministry of Education has worked with local Health Units and the school boards to bring additional measures to our schools. These additional measures are updated screening requirements, masking requirements to include kindergarten and use of masks outside and rapid and PCR asymptomatic testing. We will continue to lobby our government to ensure safe environments for learning for all in our schools.

Black History Month

A major event in DPCDSB secondary schools this year is the Black Futures Speakers Series, where staff will be able to select a variety of pre-recorded sessions that they can use with their students. This year's Black Futures Symposium theme is “Nurturing Hope”, inspired by the 2021 Catholic Education Week theme. Through this theme, our aim is that DPCDSB students will have an opportunity to gather in Christ's presence in an atmosphere of trust and equality, to share and learn from the lived experiences of Black Canadians.

The speaker's series seeks to nurture an understanding of hope, to value and affirm the lived experiences of Black Canadians and to reject the sin of racism. It seeks to call all people, especially our students, to be united in a mission of compassion, and love for one another. The series commemorate the values of racial, social, and economic justice, and harmony encompassed by the mission of Christ and envisioned by our Holy Father Pope Francis.

Another key Black History Month event is a webinar for Grade 7 and 8 students featuring Fr. Tony Ricard. Fr. Tony is a Priest from the Archdiocese of New Orleans and is Campus Minister of St. Augustine High School in New Orleans. He is also a former Core Instructor of Church Doctrine for the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University. Fr. Tony's presentation is an interactive celebration focusing on the joyful journey of the Black Community. Using stories, spiritual songs and testimonies of faith, Fr. Tony Ricard and his students from St. Augustine High School in New Orleans will share with us the presence of God as seen through the History of Africans in the Americas.

DPCDSB Parent Engagement Events

Every minute of every day, someone in Canada needs blood. In partnership with Canadian Blood Services and Peel Public Health, DPCDSB is hosting a virtual Parent Engagement Event on **Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 7:00 pm**. A Zoom link will be provided to our school communities. Secondary students have the opportunity to gain knowledge linked to the science and health curriculums; leadership skills and volunteer service hours that make a significant difference for our communities. Together, we are raising awareness and saving lives for many Canadians. The need for blood donation continues this time of year.

All parents and guardians are welcome to another DPCDSB Parent Engagement Night with guest speaker Father Tony Ricard. Father will have spoken to many of our students last year and this year with this year's presentations being virtual. Father is an engaging speaker who brings his experience as a priest in New Orleans working at St. Augustine High School, an all boy's school. Father Tony will also bring with him some of his remarkable students. This Parent Engagement Evening is **Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm. More information to follow.**

Ventilation Upgrades

Further to the "Ventilation Optimization at DPCDSB" report presented at the November 3, 2020 Administration and Finance Committee Meeting, DPCDSB has utilized the ventilation funding provided by the Ministry of Education, to purchase 600 portable air scrubbers. We received approximately 160 units in December 2020 and the balance of units arrived in January 2021. Our Facilities Department staff deployed units as they arrived.

Mental Health Resources and Support

The Ontario government has dedicated \$10 million to additional mental health supports in schools. To address the mental health and well-being of our students, we are hiring an additional Mental Health Worker to our secondary school complement and began a pilot project in January to introduce Mental Health Workers in elementary schools. The role of these staff includes Tier 1 mental health and well-being strategies for selected school communities and Tier 2 targeted support for students with mental health needs.

In selected school communities, these new staff provide school and class-wide mental health programs, based on local needs, as well as professional learning for educators and support personnel on mental health awareness and intervention strategies, using resources including the "Roadmap to Mental Health and Well-Being in our Catholic Schools: Nurturing Hope", "Mentally Healthy Schools" and "Mental Health in the Online Learning Environment." Targeted supports for students with mental health needs are also offered, including direct student support for individuals or small groups, counseling, advice and information to families, system navigation and referrals to community agencies for additional services.

Technology

DPCDSB has ordered an additional 3200 devices to support online and hybrid learning for students and staff for the 2020-2021 school year. In order to continue to support remote learning, the Ministry of Education has been working with the Federal government to negotiate the second half of federal funding under the Safe Return to Class Fund. As of February 1, 2021, the Minister of Education announced the following funding province wide.

A total of 381 million dollars will be sent to school boards based on enrollment:

Health and Safety – 65 million (PPE etc.)
Ventilation – 50 million
Transportation – 5 million
Devices etc. – 80 million
Resources to support learning gaps (math and special education) – 62 million
Online (virtual) learning resources – 60 million
Expanded testing (Rapid and PCR) – 33 million
Mental health supports – 10 million
Equity initiatives – 6 million

DPCDSB staff will now examine our share of these funding announcements and determine the impact. The expectation would be that this funding would be spent in this budget year. More information to follow.

Support for technology: DPCDSB parents/guardians and students can contact our ICT Support Line for technology requests and issues. Call Monday - Friday 7:00 am – 5:00 pm: 1-833-644-1492.

Public Health Nurses (PHN)

The support of our PHNs has been instrumental in guiding our schools through the progressively higher number of cases affecting our school communities since the start of the school year. Provincial funding has enabled the hiring of up to 625 PHNs and has been directed to the Public Health Units across Ontario. In Peel Region, the hiring of 64 PHNs by Peel Public Health has supported schools in a number of different areas, including case and contact management, infection prevention and control, education and assessments, and outbreak management and response, both centrally and through in-person visits.

Special Education

The province has dedicated \$10 million to additional supports for students in special education. For DPCDSB, the funding is applied to a reading initiative to support emergent and transitional readers, with an aim to build foundational reading skills for students through personalized programming. The goal is to enhance programming within SERC classes and to offer a consistent reading program that ensures an equitable response that meets the needs of all learners across the system.

Student Transportation of Peel Region (STOPR)

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes to student transportation services for the 2020-2021 school year to ensure that school buses can continue to serve eligible students in a safe, reliable manner. The Ministry of Education provided additional funding to the DPCDSB to cover additional costs associated with enhanced cleaning of buses, as well as additional costs incurred to modify secondary school bus runs and ensure appropriate cohorting with physical distancing measures.

Based on the direction of the Ministry of Education and guidance from Peel Public Health, STOPR has been required to reduce the number of passengers on all vehicles to promote appropriate physical distancing. As part of the overall school re-opening planning for the 2020-2021 school year, Peel Public Health has strongly recommended that all courtesy seating be suspended during the pandemic to promote the health and safety of all eligible riders and drivers. As a result, STOPR has suspended courtesy seating for the 2020-2021 school year.

Graduations

Although still four months away, staff are arranging elementary and secondary graduation committees, with representation from the respective Principal/Vice Principal Associations to begin planning various scenarios for Grade 8 and Grade 12 graduations in June for the 2020-2021 school year. The mandate of the committees will be to develop system-wide direction to schools to ensure consistency of content, process, and delivery for all graduations. The Central Committee for Catholic School Councils (CCCSC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Student Senate will also be consulted for input. More information will be forthcoming.

Support for Learners

The provincial government has expanded financial support for families during the 2020-2021 school year, during this period of remote learning. The Support for Learners program now includes students age 13 and older through secondary school. Eligible families receive a one-time payment of \$200 for each child/youth up to Grade 12, and \$250 for each child/youth up to age 21 with special needs. Online applications close on February 8, 2021. Please visit the Support for Learner's website for more information and/or to apply for the funding.

Sacraments

Because of COVID and the public health directives the church has had to change the protocols for attendance at Mass as well as plans for the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation. Please check with your local church's web site as to the updates and plans. All churches are providing live streamed Masses on Sundays at various times. As well, Mass is offered each morning by Cardinal Collins at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica. If there is ever a time that we need to foster a relationship with God in our family, now is surely the time.

I invite you to follow me on my social media platforms. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. If you are a DPCDSB parent/guardian, please ensure that you have provided your child's school with your email address, in order to receive Community Information Bulletins and other important communications directly from the DPCDSB.

Wishing our students, families, and staff a happy and safe Family Day.

And, as always, thank you for choosing Catholic education for your child(ren).

May the good Lord always hold you in the palm of His hand.