

BREA CORBET
TRUSTEE - MISSISSAUGA, WARDS 9 AND 10



“By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 13:35

The virtue of **LOVE** in April helps us grow in love for God and love for one another. At Easter, we are reminded of Jesus’ love in action. Love guides the practice of our Catholic faith and is embedded throughout our Catholic education. May you leave footprints of love, wherever you go.

First and foremost, please know that you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. I pray that you are healthy and safe during this period of uncertainty and evolving health emergency. Indeed, we are in unprecedented times.

When the Minister of Education took the historical step of issuing a school closure order on March 12, we were commencing March break. It was unknown at that time that the closure period could possibly extend beyond two weeks. We are ever mindful of the numerous responsibilities of our parents/guardians and educators, attending to work, family and health. We are also aware that students are not currently able to pick up the resources they may need at their schools. We understand that not all families have access to technology, or even access to adequate Wi-Fi, which poses additional challenges to engaging in online educational opportunities. We are aware that families are experiencing financial constraints and changes to employment, which is contributing to increased anxiety for many. We assure you that your child’s Special Education needs and Mental Health remain priorities for us. We also recognize that the lack of opportunities to experience our Catholic faith and share in the context of physical community at our local churches is having an impact on our families.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) has been working intensely to prepare all staff and educators with the tools needed to move towards a Continuous Learning/Distance Learning education environment. We want to ensure this is as smooth a transition as possible, as we venture into a new reality of education.

As we begin to phase in teacher-directed Continuous Learning with students, we recognize that the situation is complex and multifaceted. We are doing our best to address each issue systematically and as efficiently as possible. It is important that our families receive timely information throughout the closure period and that communication with families and educators, as partners in education, will be necessary to navigate through this extraordinary time.

Communication with parents/guardians during this time may present a challenge, as not all families have access to technology to receive electronic communication. Board staff intends to ease the challenges associated with communication with parents/guardians by surveying them via electronic and traditional means next week. By centrally taking on this responsibility, we hope to provide families with the opportunity to inform us regarding:

- parents’/guardians’ ability to support their child’s engagement in continuous learning;
- their child’s access to technology;
- other means of providing continuous learning for their child;
- the best way for parents/guardians to connect with their child’s teacher and for their teacher/school to connect with them.

In addition, DPCDSB staff have been working on the following:

- Creating a general school email mailbox for each school to streamline parent-teacher contact.
- Implementing the *Continuous Learning* needs assessment survey as related to technology needs.
- Communicating to all educators regarding instructional expectations and supports that will be provided. Teachers will be continuing with teacher-led learning or starting it immediately, if the capacity is there and resources have already been developed.
- Developing online learning resources for students with diverse learning needs including a *Continuous Learning Plan* to include the direct support of (Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, SLPs, Psych).
- Preparing online learning modules and other professional development presentations that can be used by teachers to learn more about online learning platforms.
- Connecting with publishers for accessible and free online textbooks for student and educator use.

More details pertaining to this information will be communicated to parents/guardians when the Continuous Learning Phase plan is released. Please be assured that everyone is working hard to adapt to the new reality as quickly as possible, so we can continue to provide the children in our school communities with quality education. We are very proud to have dedicated staff that are looking forward to reconnecting with students and families.

Technology Resources – We continue to review and address concerns regarding access to technology. DPCDSB is preparing a protocol for redeploying technology devices to families in need. We have reached out to our Public Health authorities regarding safe processes for sharing electronic devices with students. We are also awaiting direction from the Ministry of Education regarding additional funding to boards for hardware acquisition.

Accessing School Buildings – We understand there may be some anxiety around accessing school buildings to retrieve student materials, resources, etc. Please be assured that we are strictly adhering to the protocols outlined by our public health authorities regarding access to schools.

School Lunch Orders – We understand the difficult financial situations that parents/families are facing at this time. We are working quickly to resolve all lunch order reimbursements for lunch order payments. The Finance Department and Financial Systems Support Team are working directly with our school secretaries to process these. Communication has been sent to cancel all open items that would be asking for payments and/or reminding parents of payments to be made.

Once all cancellations are in place, secretaries will be able to issue refunds from the Online Payment System. This can be done quickly and efficiently. Please note that only those families who paid online can be refunded online. For families who have made cash/cheque payments through the school, refunds are delayed as the school secretaries need to issue manual cheque refunds. This is an issue as staff are not allowed to return to school as yet. We are working on a solution to be able to make those refunds.

Mississauga Parks – As per the direction from our public health authorities, all park facilities and DPCDSB properties are closed to the public until further notice to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes: playing fields and kindergarten play areas on DPCDSB property, park playground equipment, outdoor fitness equipment, sports courts (basketball courts, tennis courts), leash-free dog parks/zones, large picnic shelters and skateboard parks etc. For more information, please visit the [DPCDSB Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) webpage](#).

Also, please reference the following community letters from the Board of Trustees and the DPCDSB Director of Education, as well as the letter issued by the Minister of Education to Ontario families.

- [Letter from the Board of Trustees](#) - March 24, 2020
- [Letter from the Director of Education](#) - March 25, 2020
- [Letter from the Minister of Education](#) - March 22, 2020

Thank you for your attention to these matters. As always, I am available to respond to your questions and concerns. I also invite you to follow my social media platforms. 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.

May God continue to bless you and your families and keep you safe.

Yours in learning, growing and leading with Christ,

Brea Corbet

Trustee - Mississauga, Wards 9 and 10

Chair – Administration and Finance Committee

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

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