

BREA CORBET
TRUSTEE - MISSISSAUGA, WARDS 9 AND 10



“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” – Micah 6:8

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 – This is a period in education unlike any other. In light of the current public health environment and based on the advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, 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. To this end, all elementary and secondary students in the Region of Peel - Public Health Unit (PHU) continue to learn remotely online and will not return to in-person learning until February 10, 2021. Given that the pandemic continues to bring change and uncertainty, we understand this is a very difficult time for families.

The return of in-person learning will be based on the advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and local public health units. Boards have been advised that additional health and safety measures will be introduced to support our students, families and staff when schools reopen. The Ministry of Education is working with the Ministry of Health to update school board guidance on these additional measures. We anticipate that updated procedures will follow regarding screening, masking requirements, asymptomatic testing, etc. Be assured that, as your elected trustees, we will continue to lobby our government to ensure safe environments for learning for all in our schools.

As per the Ministry of Education, effective January 25 for all elementary and secondary staff, and effective February 10 for all secondary students, all school boards are responsible for implementing confirmation of self-screening for staff and secondary students prior to, or upon arrival to, school. More information will be forthcoming.

Black History Month - In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine. The motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons.

In February 2008, Senator Donald Oliver, the first Black man appointed to the Senate, introduced the [Motion to Recognize Contributions of Black Canadians and February as Black History Month](#). It received unanimous approval and was adopted on March 4, 2008. The adoption of this motion completed Canada’s parliamentary position on 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 speaker series is designed to 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 Event – 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 26. 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. For more information: www.blood.ca.

COVID-19 Positive Case Reporting – In alignment with the Ministry of Education's expectations for COVID-19 community reporting, and supported by our public health authorities, during the extended restriction period, DPCDSB is suspending the issuance of "community letters" related to positive COVID-19 cases, where the case involves a student, staff or other person who was not in the school during their period of communicability. Community letters will be sent only in cases where the positive person was physically in the school. DPCDSB will continue to send, as applicable, the health department letters directing those who are considered close contacts of positive in-school cases to self-isolate and get tested. Additionally, while we are required to report all positive cases to the Ministry of Education, we are not required to post any cases on our COVID-19 Advisory website for the duration of the restriction period. This change in communication practice has been noted on the [DPCDSB COVID Advisory Reporting webpage](#).

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 include 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, counselling, advice and information to families, system navigation and referrals to community agencies for additional services.

The Region of Peel's *Community Response Table Working Group* has provided an update for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports resource (PDF) document. [Click here for more information](#). Another resource for families is 211 Central, for information about additional community programs and services: Website: www.211.ca or call 2-1-1 (available 24/7).

Enrolment Report – The Ministry of Education mandates the submission of enrolment counts at two points in the school year (October 31 and March 31), as well as staffing data for the purposes of determining and/or verifying eligibility for the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) education funding model. The GSN funding model is heavily dependent on enrolment for grant calculations and has a major impact on the annual budget development process and deficit management plan.

DPCDSB schools reported 45,942 elementary students and 30,651 secondary students, for a total enrolment of 76,593 students on October 30, 2020. This represents an enrolment decrease of 2,178 elementary students (-4.5%) and a decrease of 235 secondary students (-0.8%) since October 31, 2019. The overall board-wide enrolment decreased by 2,413 students (-3.1%) on a year-over-year basis.

All grade levels experienced a decline in enrolment from the previous school year, however, the greatest change occurred in Junior Kindergarten (JK) with a decrease of -13.4% (563 less JK students from the previous year). Across the province, and particularly in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), school boards have experienced a decrease in enrolment that is widely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. As kindergarten is not mandatory for children to attend, parents may have opted for an alternate mode of learning that guaranteed smaller class cohorts (private school or learning pod/private tutor) or opted out of kindergarten entirely for their families. Historic enrolment data demonstrates decreasing trends in enrolment. It is anticipated that this is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that many students will return to DPCDSB schools for the 2021-2022 year. The declining trend is concerning and the investigative work is ongoing.

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 is also working with the federal government to negotiate the second half of federal funding under the Safe Return to Class Fund. The Ministry is looking to provide additional technological devices, such as laptops and tablets, to support school boards in procuring additional devices province-wide. DPCDSB parents/guardians and students can contact our ICT Support Line for technology requests and issues. Call Monday-Friday 7am-5pm: 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.

Staffing – DPCDSB has used the provincial and federal funding received for new hires (as required by the funding requirements) to lower class sizes across the board at the elementary level, support physical distancing measures in classrooms, add custodial staff to assist with enhanced cleaning and administrative staff to support the virtual school originally implemented. The staffing costs well exceed the provincial and federal funding that was provided to our board. The operational requirements of COVID have resulted in substantial increases in teacher hiring. Across the province there is a demand for new teacher hires, to the point that there is a shortage of staff available to cover teacher absences. DPCDSB added over 110 FTE positions to support students. These hires included teaching staff supporting the diverse learning needs of students, Educational Resource Workers, Psychology, Social Workers and Child Youth Workers, Secretarial staff and Custodial and Maintenance staff.

Custodial Services – In total, 320 hours of custodial resources have been added by the DPCDSB with the funding received from the government, based on the addition of 40 casual custodians to the existing custodial staffing.

However, the funding was not adequate to assign an additional custodian to each school. Each school has its own allocation of custodial/cleaning staff based on size, enrollment, program and community use activity. New hires help to provide coverage for absences and support to schools in need of additional cleaning on any given day.

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 meet 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. The letter from the Medical Officer of Health for Peel Region is available on the DPCDSB and STOPR websites and has been forwarded to each school to be shared with their school communities.

Holy Name of Mary Catholic Regional Secondary School Update – While construction had been expected to be completed by the end of December 2020, the general contractor experienced challenges with some sub-trades to complete specialized rooms within the new addition, as well as confirmed positive COVID-19 cases among some construction crew members. As a result, substantial completion of the addition was delayed until January 15, 2021. All necessary preparation work was completed and ready for the opening of the entire building at the anticipated conclusion of the current restriction period in February.

Elementary Extended French Information Session - DPCDSB is pleased to offer the Extended French Program at 11 elementary school locations, including St. Therese of the Child Jesus for Mississauga North/West and St. Rose of Lima for Mississauga Central/North. Applications for the 2021–2022 Grade 5 Extended French Program will be online this year. Online application opens February 3 (9:00 am) until February 16 (3:00 pm). Transportation is currently provided for students living within the approved boundaries of an Extended French school. [For more information.](#)

Amendments to 2020-2021 School Year Calendar – As a result of a quadmester schedule for secondary school students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with Ministry directions related to assessment and evaluation of student achievement, the following amendments have been made for *Secondary Schools only*. There are no changes to the 2020-2021 elementary school calendar. [For more information.](#)

- February 1 remains a Professional Activity Day for Secondary Schools;
- Previously identified secondary exam days June 17-24 (inclusive) have been repurposed as instructional days;
- June 25-29 (inclusive) remain Professional Activity Days for Secondary Schools

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.

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 Family Day and enjoy the day with your family and loved ones.

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

Yours in learning, growing and leading with Christ,

Trustee Brea Corbet

DPCDSB Trustee - Mississauga, Wards 9 and 10 | Chair - Bylaw & Policies Review Committee

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