



Student Achievement Plan

2023-2024 Year-End Report



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Durham Catholic District School Board

The Durham Catholic District School Board shares a sense of community among families, educators and parishes and is committed to integrating the teachings of the Gospel with quality educational programs that guide students in their journeys to meeting the Catholic Graduate Expectations. The board currently serves approximately 22,500 students in Oshawa, Whitby, Ajax, Pickering, and the townships of Uxbridge, Scugog and Brock.

Mission:

We are an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education.

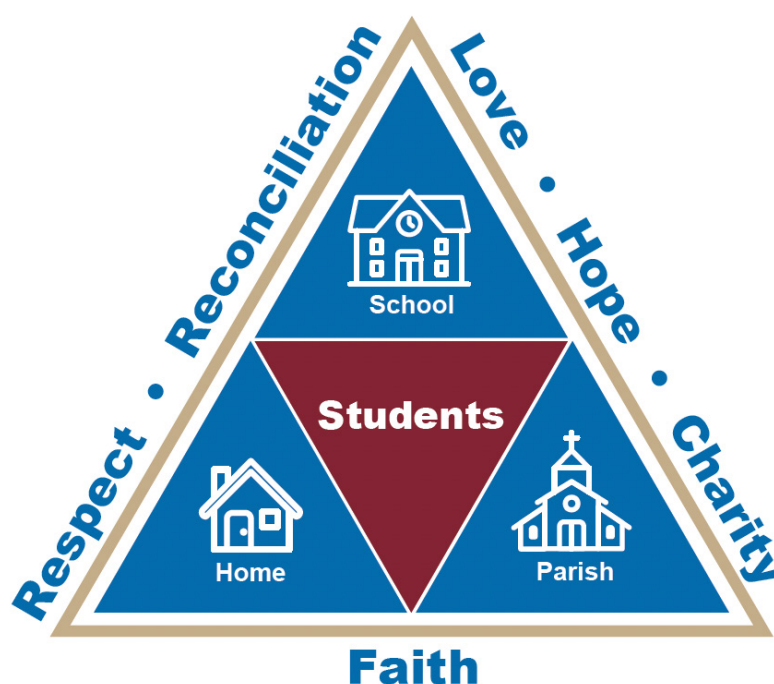
Vision:

By fostering positive relationships with home, school, parish and community, students and staff will learn and work in a Catholic environment where every person is:

- Safe and welcomed
- Accepted and valued
- Heard and engaged
- Supported and prepared

Values:

We support all students through our shared commitment to the values of love, hope, charity, respect and reconciliation.



Contents

Introduction	3
Provincial Priorities and Goals	3
Connections to our Multi-Year Plan, <i>Inspire 2026</i>	4
2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan Highlights:	5
Indigenous Education	5
Supporting Faith & Well-Being	7
Faith Formation	7
Mental Health & Well-Being	10
Improving Students' Participation	13
Advancing Human Rights & Equity	14
Improving Student Learning	17
Literacy	17
Math	18
Pathways	20



Introduction

Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) is pleased to present the year-end report for the 2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan. The 2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan was developed in accordance with the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act (2023) and aligned with the provincial priorities and goals.



Provincial Priorities and Goals

In accordance with the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023, which received royal assent on June 8, 2023, the DCDSB 2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan was developed to include the following mandatory provincial priorities and goals:

- Priority 1: Achievement of Learning Outcomes in Core Academic Skills
 - [Goal #1 \(a\) – Improve students’ literacy learning and achievement.](#)
 - [Goal #1 \(b\) – Improve students’ math learning and achievement.](#)
- Priority 2: Preparation of Students for Future Success
 - [Goal #2 \(a\) – Improve graduation rates and preparedness for future success.](#)
- Priority 3: Student Engagement and Well-Being
 - [Goal #3 \(a\) – Improve students’ participation in class time and learning.](#)
 - [Goal #3 \(b\) – Improve student well-being.](#)

Connections to our Multi-Year Plan, *Inspire 2026*

In February 2022, the Durham Catholic District School Board launched its community consultation and planning process for the development of its new multi-year plan. [Inspire 2026](#) was approved by the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2022 and scheduled to officially launch for the 2023-2024 school year.

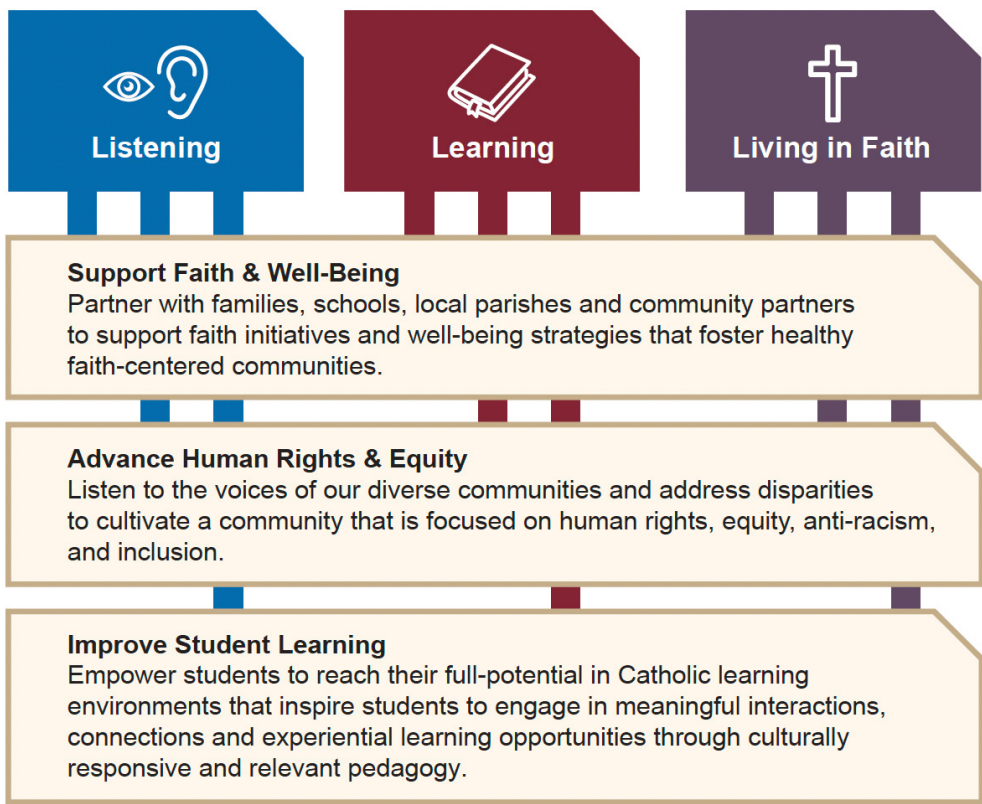
The strategic priorities identified in the Board-approved multi-year plan, [Inspire 2026](#), are to:

- Support Faith and Well-Being;
- Advance Human Rights and Equity; and
- Improve Student Learning.

Inspire 2026 also committed to focusing on the intentional use of three strategic processes - Listening, Learning and Living in Faith - to inform decision-making.

The graphic below visually represents the expectation that efforts to achieve the strategic priorities will be informed by, and reflective of, the strategic processes.

Actions taken to support faith and well-being and/or advance human rights and equity, in concert with the initiatives and commitments to Indigenous Education, are understood as creating the conditions necessary for improved student learning.



2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan Highlights

We are pleased to present highlights of the implementation strategies and actions in each of our Student Achievement Plan priority areas throughout the year. We have also included information on the impact of our plan, and how we will be using data and information from the 2023-2024 school year to inform future planning and processes.

Indigenous Education

Implementation Highlights:

We have continued to support the mental health and well-being of Indigenous students and have seen an increase in the number of students who have self-identified Indigenous ancestry and attribute this to our efforts to create safe spaces for Indigenous students, families and community partners. We also worked to centre and amplify Indigenous student voices across the board and increased the number of Student Indigenous Education Circles from one to two, which allowed for leadership opportunities for elementary students.



This year, we saw a significant increase in engagement and collaboration with local Indigenous partners and organizations. Schools had more requests than any prior year, and the DCDSB Indigenous Education team collaborated with Indigenous partners, community members and organizations to enable learning opportunities. There was significant interest in land-based learning opportunities. Indigenous Education staff attended and participated in local and provincial community partner events and symposiums.

Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, we focused on professional development and capacity building. We were able to increase the embedding of Indigenous perspectives in not only Indigenous education courses, but across a number of subject areas including math, literacy, science, and more.

We were pleased to once again offer a year-end celebration of Grade 8 and 12 Indigenous graduates, and we saw an increase in the number of students and families attending. We continue to use data to drive support for our students, as we work to increase graduation rates for Indigenous students.

Impact:

Our success can be seen in moving from working with community partners to true partnership. There has been a significant increase in the number of staff and students wanting and receiving professional development and learning. Anecdotal feedback from both our community partners and are student circles that they see the shift in change. Lastly, our increase in self-identified students is a success to the staff that have created safe spaces for Indigenous students.

How this will inform future plans:

In the 2024-2025 school year, we are going to expand our program offerings to support adult learners. We are also working towards the creation of an Indigenous Responsibility Framework as a self-assessment tool for school leaders to work with whole school to move reconciliation

Because of the increased interest in land-based learning, we are working on a land project which will create a space for students and staff to learn from, on, and about the land.



Support Faith & Well-Being

Faith Formation

Implementation Highlights:

The Durham Catholic District School Board has been engaged in reflection and dialogue about the Catholic identity of the Catholic school system. In the 2023-2024 school year, the DCDSB Pastoral Plan set goals for each of the five key elements of Catholic identity, as identified in the Pastoral Planning Reference Document (draft August 2023). These five elements are: Catholic Environment, Catholic Community, Catholic Curriculum, Catholic Social Teaching, and Staff Formation.

This year, schools grew in awareness of the signs of symbols of faith and welcome that permeate the school environment, are inclusive, and reflect the diversity of students, families, and the community. School administrators surveyed the school's Catholic Environment to identify such signs and symbols of faith and welcome. Administrators collaborated to create a tool that can be used to assess the effectiveness of these signs and symbols. The board's Spiritual Theme, *Speaking With the Heart*, served as an exemplar to break open the multi-dimensional aspect of symbols.

A focus on Catholic Community highlighted the importance of regular, intentional conversations to support effective partnerships among the triad of home, school, and parish. All elementary and secondary schools engaged in a new pastoral planning process to engage in conversation and set goals for their Catholic school community. In June 2024, approximately one hundred parents, administrators, school staff, and parish priests and staff participated in a Home-School-Parish Symposium to dialogue and share ways to strengthen partnerships.

Academic Services staff have been in-serviced on the use of a "Catholic Curriculum Tool" to support the integration of Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and Catholic Social Teaching across the curriculum when planning instruction and assessment. Staff are at an early-awareness stage of implementation and see value in adopting the tool in their practice with educators. Kindergarten educators across the system received professional learning to support the implementation of the new *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* Religious Education resource. Also, a number of Kindergarten classes participated in a workshop entitled "Drawing God." The masterpieces of our young theologians are proudly displayed in a "God Gallery" on the DCDSB website.

There has been a renewed focus on Catholic Social Teaching to guide all practices. Equity training with all administrators has been grounded in an understanding of the principle of both Community and the Common Good, as well as Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. Similarly, training for administrators to share with school staff connects an understanding of tiered approaches to mental well-being and student learning as necessary according to each student's Human Dignity. The intention to connect educational pathways to the principle of Dignity of Work was met with limited success. More opportunity to work with Guidance Curriculum Chairs and Intermediate Guidance Teachers will be sought.

There was a great response to the Advent and Lenten Twilight Retreat offerings. Both Staff Formation opportunities saw registration exceed the capacity of the evenings. The plan to revise the Adult Faith Ambassador Handbook was not brought to completion this year. The complexity of the task and the limited availability of Adult Faith Ambassadors to provide input has resulted in revised timelines.

Impact:

An analysis of the elementary and secondary pastoral plan goals revealed that 84% of all plans included a Catholic Community goal related to fostering collaboration and/or strengthening relationships between the triad of home, school, and parish. The recent Home-School-Parish Symposium was very well received with participants appreciating the opportunity to dialogue with one another about their shared mission to educate in faith. The responses gathered during the Symposium will be shared back to the system in a summary report in the Fall of 2024.

School administrators enjoyed sharing examples of the signs and symbols of faith and welcome that are currently displayed in their schools. The tool that was developed through administrator feedback to assess the quality of the Catholic Environment was welcomed.

Administrators noted that it will help them to think differently and intentionally about the images that permeate the school and look forward to engaging in dialogue with students, staff, and families to help to curate these images in the upcoming school year.

An unintended outcome was the replication of faith experiences observed across the system. The kindergarten workshops that had students “Draw God” became a faith formation opportunity for staff at a number of schools. Similarly, many more school staffs enjoyed creating beautiful “good deed beads” after participants at the Lenten Twilight Retreat engaged in this hands-on faith experience. This is evidence that staff appreciate the opportunity to share meaningful Staff Formation activities at their home schools.



How this will inform our future plans:

Year two of the board's Pastoral Plan will build upon what we've learned and the foundation we've laid to "name and notice" the Catholic identity of our publicly funded school system. The key goal for each of the five elements of Catholic identity will be maintained for the next school year, while the strategic actions will aim to move the system to deeper understanding.

The feedback received from the Home-School-Parish Symposium will help inform the actions taken in support of the Catholic Community goal. Opportunity will be provided for administrators and school teams to provide feedback on the new pastoral planning resource and template. Identifying best practices and areas for improvement will ensure that school pastoral plans serve to enliven the faith in each school community.

Building upon the success of the Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ Kindergarten Religion resource rollout, we will prepare to in-service all elementary educators on the new Family Life Education Curriculum Policy, as well as the new Family Life resource for Grade 1. Also in the area of Catholic Curriculum, we will continue to highlight the free Catholic Virtual Ontario secondary school resources, which are secondary online courses, created by Catholic teachers for Catholic students.

Finally, we will strive to be more intentional to connect the way in which our processes and decisions are guided by Catholic Social Teaching. As we "educate with a difference," we must be ever mindful to make this difference intentional and explicit.



Mental Health & Well-Being

Implementation Highlights:

Over the 2023-2024 school year, we concentrated our efforts on establishing a board-level mental health student champion leadership and planning group, named BWell, which engaged secondary students in mental health promotion at the system-level and provided a platform for their leadership, agency and voices. In addition, we created DCDSB Let's Talk Day, which focused on supporting student's understanding of how to access help and supports for their mental health. During the school year, the board also worked to support the implementation of the Ministry of Education new mental health modules for all Grade 7 and Grade 8 students.

Staff professional development and training in the 2023-2024 school year included:

- All DCDSB staff received training in creating a regulated classroom, by supporting students with self-regulation, connection and reflection.
- Child and Youth Counsellors offered a lunch bunch program in September 2023 to support the transition of students returning from the Virtual Secondary School.
- School mental health professionals attended various professional development opportunities in order to ensure that they are equipped to respond to students with mild to moderate mental health needs as well as those who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, social determinants of health, racism and/or oppression.
- Educators and school staff were offered opportunities to engage in professional development focused on noticing signs of student mental health difficulties and providing support in the classroom. Topics covered included: substance use, suicide prevention, supporting students with anxiety, mood and attention difficulties, and creating mentally healthy classrooms.
- Training opportunities for staff on the DCDSB Suicide Prevention and Intervention Protocol, which strengthened the safety net around student suicide prevention and intervention.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the board's efforts to provide mental health and well-being resources for parents, guardians and caregivers included:

- Prepare, Prevent, Respond; Suicide Prevention and Life Promotion Workshop for families and caregivers, to continue to build capacity.
- A new parent/family/caregiver video series on various mental health/well-being topics was established.

In addition, we continued to explore partnerships with community agencies to offer services, professional development and to support board initiatives events. These partnerships included Pinewood Centre of Lakeridge Health, Women's Multicultural Resource Counselling Centre, TAIBU Community Health Centre, Durham Family & Cultural Centre, and many more.

Impact:

The first BWell summit included 31 secondary students, representing all DCDSB secondary schools. During the summit, students had the opportunity to create their mission statement: Empowering a united community built on faith and respect, fostering mental health education and ending stigma. Students reported being in an environment where they could share their opinions and ideas around mental health promotion. The increased visibility of help-seeking materials in schools also lead to an increase in knowledge of supports available.

Through the staff professional development and training, the following successes can be highlighted:



- Educators who engaged in professional development for the implementation of the new Grade 7 and Grade 8 mental health modules expressed the lessons provided valuable learning for their students.
- Feedback found that 100% of staff that attended professional development offered by the board found that they felt more confident in supporting students with mental health and substance use concerns.
- School mental health professionals reported feeling more confident in supporting students who with more serious mental health concerns and/or may be may disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, social determinants of health, racism and/or oppression
- 136 staff attended suicide prevention and intervention training and reported feeling more confident in creating suicide safe schools.

Website and social media data analytics show a marked increase in the number of families accessing the mental health webinars and accessing the DCDSB website for resources and supports. Staff and families expressed gratitude for the connection to community partners and resources, and for the sharing of knowledge and resources.

How this will inform our future plans:

Students who attended the summit collected feedback from students at their respective schools about what they believe the needs are in the area of mental health promotion and support. The BWell student mental health champion group will come together next year and use the data collected to inform their plans.

After the success of the inaugural DCDSB Let's Talk Day, this day will be established and recognized by the board each year moving forward. A different aspect of mental health and well-being will be the focus/theme each year.

The mental health modules will continue to be integrated into all Grade 7 and Grade 8 classes. Building on this, the board will introduce and implement the new Ministry of Education mental health modules for the Grade 10 Careers classes, in an effort to support student mental health and an understanding of when to seek help.

In terms of building capacity with staff, the board will continue to provide professional development opportunities through various means, including staff meetings, lunch and learns, and workshops. The board will extend professional development to staff that may not have received mental health and well-being professional development opportunities, including administrative and custodial staff, so that all staff can identify and support students with mental health concerns. Targeted professional development for Guidance educators and Chaplains will be created, as these staff are often the first people that students seek out when needing support. Further professional development for school mental health professionals on culturally responsive and critically reflective assessments and interventions with students will be established and implemented in the 2024-2025 school year.

The board will continue to increase school-based parent/family/caregiver workshops in order to expand engagement through offerings from student service staff, and community partners. Partnerships with additional community agencies will be explored in future, in order to continue to serve students and families.



Improving Students' Participation

Implementation Highlights:

In the 2023-2024 school year, we focused on building staff capacity to support positive student attendance at school. We offered training, supports and resources, which included:

- Communication of updated enrolment register instructions to school administration.
- An attendance support video for all school staff was completed and shared with a Professional Activity (PA) Day. The video featured the perspective of school social workers/attendance counsellors, administrators, educators and school administrative assistants. Key messages in the video focused on engagement, creating positive connections with students, and addressing underlying barriers as key enablers for positive school attendance.
- Resources for school administrators and staff were created and added to the board intranet so all staff can access as needed.
- Templates were created and made available for attendance tracking to better support students with chronic attendance needs.
- Regular monitoring of attendance by school administrators, and involvement of school attendance counsellors as required.

Impact:

In comparing 2023-2024 to 2022-2023 school year data, there was a 32% decrease in the number of referrals to Attendance Counsellors for consecutive absences greater than 15 days. This is likely the result of improved attendance data monitoring and earlier intervention when consecutive absenteeism begins to emerge. In addition, when comparing the percentage of students who attended 90% of the time or more, 37% of students reached this benchmark in 2022-2023, compared to 73% of students in the 2023-2024 school year.

In addition, analysis of the student attendance data at the 12 Mathematics priority schools indicates that attendance for this cohort of students increased from 65.9% of students with attendance rates of 90% or more to 72.4% of students with attendance rates of 90% or more throughout the year. This increase is as a result of targeted intervention and supports.

How this will inform our future plans:

Building on the successes of the 2023-2024 school year, we will continue to monitor attendance and utilize data to inform targeted interventions. In addition, we plan to strengthen the trauma-informed lens in future attendance awareness messages, interventions/supports, and communication campaign materials.

Advancing Human Rights & Equity

Implementation Highlights:

In promoting a whole school approach to safe, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming schools that enable students to reach their full potential, we engaged in capacity building for staff on human rights and equity principles, to equip board employees to identify and address racism and other forms of discrimination that violate the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code). Senior Administration, school administrators, facilities services, managements and professional staff, and support staff received training in the 2023-2024 school year. Approximately 500 staff attended these professional development and capacity-building training sessions throughout the school year. This year, we held two Equity



Invitational Learning Series sessions on the topics of Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism: Providing Overdue Outcomes for our Kids and The Role of Active Allyship in Dismantling Anti-Black Racism in Schools.

These sessions were attended by members of the Board of Trustees, Senior Administration, staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, and community partners. Pursuant to the provisions of the Code, the Education Act, the Safe and Accepting Schools Act, and the DCDSB Anti-Racism Policy (PO200), DCDSB has developed concern/complaints resolution processes for addressing incidents of alleged discrimination contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code grounds experienced by students, staff and other members of the board community. These processes, focused on addressing allegations of incidents of Code-based discrimination, express the board's strong commitment to dismantling all forms of discrimination in the board's schools and workplaces.

Training on the DCDSB Code-based concerns/complaints resolution process and investigating Code-based concerns/complaints have been delivered to all elementary and secondary school administrators, along with central system staff. These capacity building opportunities will continue in the 2024-2025 school year.

The DCDSB conducted a Student Demographic Survey from April 22 to May 3, 2024. The technology to administer the survey was developed by the board's ICT department, and through this process, the board capacity for conducting surveys was enhanced. Grade 9-12 survey completion rates was 57.2%, and parent/guardian completion rates for the Kindergarten – Grade 8 survey was 21.8%.

Impact:

Through training and capacity-building initiatives, staff have an increased understanding of human rights and equity principles. Post-training feedback indicates continued positive response, and increased understanding. Anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests an understanding and use of human rights and equity principles in interactions with students and families, leading to restorative resolution of human rights concerns/complaints.

The Equity Invitational Learning Series has proved to be an effective means of collaboration and improved relationship between the board and the Black community. Educators, staff, parents/guardians, and community members valued the opportunity to engage in learning on practical strategies for addressing the anti-Black racism. The board will continue to embed culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, including Africentric principles in curriculum implementation.

Through the development of the concern/complaints resolution processes for addressing incidents of alleged discrimination Ontario Human Rights Code grounds experienced by students, staff and other members of the board community, there is an awareness amongst administrators and other board employees of the discrimination threshold test and how it is conducted. It is hoped that these processes and subsequent training will result in earlier recognition of alleged discrimination on Code grounds, and more timely and efficient response and resolution.



How this will inform our future plans:

Based on feedback received, future training will include more focused and department-specific scenarios which will assist with more engaged participation. Co-creating training resources with school administrators and board departments will be considered for some sessions to ensure training is relevant and role-specific.

Human Rights and Equity trainings will be offered at New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) sessions, and for school administrative assistants in the 2024-2025 school year, to ensure more school educators and staff are equipped with knowledge of human rights and equity principles.



In order to ensure resources and supports for human rights and equity professional development are available to employees at all times, the board will be creating further online resources, including recordings of training sessions, for staff.

To amplify student voice and improve student capacity to address human rights and equity related discrimination, the board plans to hold a Student Human Rights Conference in the 2024-2025 school year and plans to host engagement sessions to consult with Black Student Unions at secondary schools on various programs and initiatives.

Next year's Equity Invitational Learning Series will be organized collaboratively across departments to address issues regarding various marginalized groups. One of the three sessions planned for the 2024-2025 school year will showcase the various equity initiatives and programs in the board, using booths in carousel style.

Disaggregated data from the Student Demographic Survey will be used to inform resource allocation, programming, and required policy reviews. The survey data outcome and action steps/plan will be shared with staff, families, and the community, and will be posted publicly.

Improve Student Learning

Literacy

Implementation Highlights:

Professional Development and training to build awareness and support of the newly revised (2024) Language curriculum, Kindergarten – Grade 8, and the new Grade 9 de-streamed Language curriculum was provided to educators through a variety of means, including professional activity days, lunch and learns, literacy intervention teachers, teacher inquiry projects and online learning modules. Additionally, universal reading screeners were administered on all students from Year 2 Kindergarten – Grade 3 in their early reading skills. In supporting the use of reading screeners, educators were also provided with evidence-based intervention resources that were used to close early reading learning gaps, such as the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) foundations toolbox, and/or the Lexia learning program.

Based on reading screener assessments, six literacy intervention teachers were deployed in high priority schools to work with at-risk students in Grade 2, providing intensive targeted reading instruction. Nine transition intervention teachers were also deployed in Grade 9 classrooms to provide targeted support for students in achieving expectations in the new elementary and de-streamed curriculum.

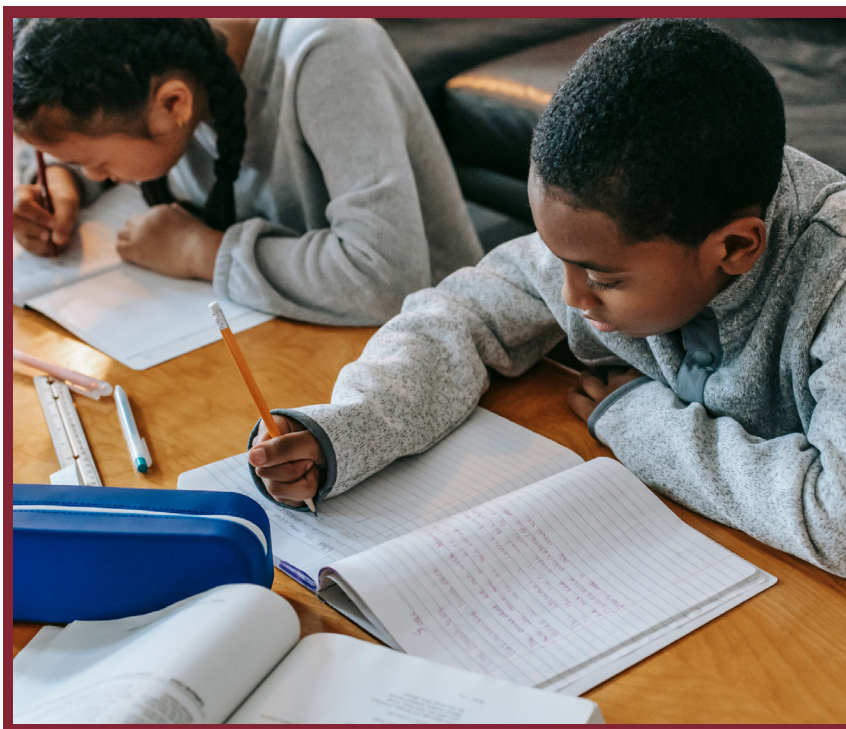
Impact:

A review of the impact of the strategic actions in literacy indicate the following:

- As we implement the new Grade 9 curriculum in our de-streamed classrooms, we are seeing student confidence increase as evident through an 6% increase in the number of students selecting Grade 10 English Academic courses in comparison to course enrolment prior to the new curriculum.
- A system review of educator comments in report cards indicate teachers are using the new curriculum to teach and assess student understanding of reading and writing.
- The results of the first universal screener indicate 32% of Grade 2 students were requiring considerable support for early foundational reading.
- 100 percent of Grade 2 students (over 110 students) who were supported with intensive literacy intervention by a literacy intervention teacher achieved a minimum composite score equivalent to the beginning of Grade 2 or higher. These were students who were considerably below grade level in the initial reading screening. Indeed, 81 percent of students who were below the beginning of the Grade 2 benchmark achieved the middle of the year Grade 2 benchmark by the end of the intervention block. This targeted and intensive intervention reduced the basic foundational skill gap by half a year or greater in over 110 Grade 2 students.
- Educators have indicated that their confidence level in administering universal screeners and using available resources for intervention is slowly emerging but that further training required to fully implement reading intervention programs like UFLI. Continued professional development and training in reading intervention was requested in feedback from educators.

How this will inform our future plans:

Continued professional development in the use of universal reading screeners and reading intervention will continue in 2024-2025. Educators have indicated anecdotally that their confidence level in administering and using these screeners continues to emerge, so we will continue to deepen educator understanding of universal screening, UFLI and Lexia. We will now extend this understanding and training to educators above Grade 3, along with all Program Support Teachers, to meet the needs of students who continue to have gaps in reading in the junior or senior grades.



Math

Implementation Highlights:

The Durham Catholic District School Board Numeracy Team supported 12 priority schools as identified by the Ministry of Education. Numeracy Intervention Teachers supported classroom educators bi-weekly through co-planning and co-teaching to fill student learning gaps. The Numeracy Team also facilitated over 80 professional learning opportunities for educators and administrators through professional activity days, staff meetings, lunch and learn sessions, divisional meetings and the Sharing of Excellence professional learning series. Program Support Teachers were supported through the purchase of concrete mathematics learning tools and a professional learning series to deepen educator content knowledge for teaching mathematics.

Impact:

Analysis of priority school assessment data indicates improvement in each mathematical skill assessed, with the highest increases occurring in Grade 3 geometry and measurement and in Grade 6 patterning and algebra. Student confidence in mathematics and attendance rates improved throughout the school year. Survey data from school administrators and educators indicated that all participants found the Numeracy Intervention Teacher support impactful and the Math Hub professional learning sessions useful to support their mathematics programming.

How this will inform our future plans:

As the board reflects on the success and limitations of the 2023-2024 Math Achievement Action Plan, we will refine practices to further enhance mathematics programming in schools. The Ministry of Education has allocated 12 priority schools to DCDSB for the 2024-2025 school year, and the board is currently in the process of analyzing data to select which schools and classrooms will be the 2024-2025 priority classes who will receive Numeracy Intervention Teacher support. The board is considering ways to scale the learning and successes from this year, to impact a greater number of schools across the board in future.

In 2024-2025, professional learning opportunities for administrators and educators to share the impactful work that was done in the 2023-2024 school year are planned. The board will support classroom educators by refining mathematics resources and learning materials. Families will be engaged through the introduction of a parent mathematics learning series to give families the tools to support their child at home.

Further ways to deepen support for students with special education needs will be sought, by continuing the mathematics professional learning series for Program Support Teachers and providing resources and supports to parents of students with special education through a dedicated learning series.



Implementation Highlights:

A cross-departmental steering committee was created to create a plan to implement the new Grade 9 and 10 Technological Studies. Schools created course offerings, and Guidance departments worked to share information with Grade 8 families prior to their transition to secondary school. In order to sufficiently staff for these new technological courses, Human Resource Services and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association worked together to explore different ways to promote our school board to prospective Technological Education Teachers.

To build capacity in staff in terms of using of experiential education for the development of STEM skills in students, Learning Inquiry For Teachers funds were allocated for STEM projects. In addition, a partnership was established with Ontario Tech University to provide STEM workshops in schools. A focus this year was to have students to participate in the Skills Ontario Competition.

Many new partnerships were established in the 2023-2024 school year. These include:

- The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program Advisory Committee creating a key partnership with LiUNA Local 183.
- A partnership with Supporting Ontario Youth (SOY) which resulted in a Trades Bootcamp Day.
- SOY facilitated a experiential learning day for Guidance Counsellors and Intermediate Guidance Teachers at the Oshawa build site for Habitat for Humanity.
- The board partnered with the CWB Welding Foundation to offer certification testing to give students their CWB Flat Welding Certification. Furthermore, our CWB Welding Foundation partnership enabled us to bring an application forward to create new welding facilities at All Saints Catholic Secondary School and Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School. Ontario Power Generation is also involved with the application.
- DCDSB's on-going partnership with Ontario Tech allowed for many of our Specialist High Skills Major Students to visit the Ontario Tech facilities.
- Our continued partnership with Durham College allowed elementary students to attend their Taste of the Trades Program.
- An affiliation agreement with the Region of Durham for co-op placements at their four long-term care facilities was created to expand the variety of placement opportunities for students in Grades 11 and 12.

DCDSB Student Services and Academic Services departments lead the inaugural year of Project SEARCH Durham Region. Project SEARCH provides career exploration and employability skills development for students with mild intellectual disabilities. 10 placements were developed and overseen by Program Support Teachers.

The Student Success Team provided experiential learning opportunities for female students and their families. An after-school welding program was offered to Grade 8 female students and their families. Grade 8 female students also experienced a skill trades day at St. Mary Catholic Secondary School. Grade 7 and 8 Female Students participated in the Strong Girls, Strong World Workshop. Grade 7 and 8 Female Students experienced Durham College's Expand the Possibilities 2024 – Young Women in Science, Technology and Trades Conference.

The Student Success Team established three new Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs in the 2023-2024 school year - two in Construction at All Saints Catholic Secondary School and Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School, and one in Business at Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School. The SHSM program continues to deliver certification training and events with community partners.

The Continuing Education Staff finalized and implemented a process between Continuing Education and Secondary Schools for mature Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR). Information sessions with Student Success Teachers, Guidance Chairs, and Secondary Principals addressed concerns and improved the understanding of how mature PLAR can improve OSSD success rates for marginalized students.

Alternative Education successfully opened a Reconnect Site for students 16-17 years of age who are credit deficient. This site is located at Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School and will service students that reside in the eastern area of the DCDSB.

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) provided experiential learning opportunities for students and families. Secondary students attended the Level Up! Skilled Trades Career Fair, and DCDSB families were invited to an evening session. An OYAP Level 1 Transition Advisor met with students and families to help them better navigate the apprenticeship pathway. Guidance Teachers were also given opportunities to participate in experiential learning opportunities focused on the apprenticeship pathway.

Impact:

The Grade 9 and 10 Technological Studies new course requirements committee's plan resulted in increased course offerings for regular school and summer school programming. Enhancements to school facilities are being made as a result and includes additional welding bays being installed at two DCDSB secondary schools.

The Durham Catholic District School Board's partnership with Ontario Tech University resulted in STEM presentations in 17 schools. Participation in the Ontario Skills Competition included five secondary schools participating, which resulted in 22 students competing across 15 categories. In addition, approximately 800 students in 27 DCDSB elementary schools attended a virtual skilled trades presentation.

Through various STEM capacity building initiatives, the success of experiential learning was seen as over 700 students participated in cooperative education programs. An additional cooperative education program was developed with Durham College for placements in Horticulture.

Highlights of the successes from some of the partnerships established include:

- 45 students from three secondary schools participated in the Trades Bootcamp Day. The Guidance, Cooperative Education, and Intermediate Guidance Teachers commented that their experiential learning activities allowed them to learn more about the skilled trades pathway.
- The SHSM student visits at Ontario Tech University enhanced the learning of 41 students. This allowed the students to experience a post-secondary campus and learning about program options and pathways.
- 45 students from three secondary schools participated in the Trades Bootcamp Day. The Guidance, Cooperative Education, and Intermediate Guidance Teachers commented that their experiential learning activities allowed them to learn more about the skilled trades pathway.
- The SHSM student visits at Ontario Tech University enhanced the learning of 41 students. This allowed the students to experience a post-secondary campus and learning about program options and pathways.
- Durham College's Taste of the Trades Program was experienced by 210 elementary students.
- DCDSB's partnership with the CWB Welding Foundation and Ontario Power Generation created opportunities for schools that would not be possible without the financial support and technical expertise of these organizations.
- The Project SEARCH Program experienced many successes. All 10 interns completed three different internships and successfully graduated from the program. Additional internships were added based on student interests. Through a skills assessment process, 10 new interns have been selected for the 2024-2025 school year.



Experiential learning opportunities for female students and families included:

- 48 Grade 8 female students and their families attended welding workshops.
- Over 150 Grade 8 females from all the St. Mary Catholic Secondary feeder schools participated in the skill trades day.
- 100 Grade 7 and 8 female students attended Durham College's Expand the Possibilities 2024 – Young Women in Science, Technology and Trades Conference.
- Over 100 Grade 7 and Grade 8 female students participated in the Strong Girls, Strong World Workshop.

The implementation of the mature PLAR process was very successful. 65 secondary students participated in mature PLAR assessments which is a 55% increase over the previous school year. This resulted in 231 credits earned, which is an increase of 90% over the previous year.

Three adult dual credit courses were offered during the 2023-2024 school year in the areas of Hospitality and Healthcare. In addition, a new team-taught dual credit course in Plumbing and Electrical were created with Durham College. DCDSB also offered a new dual credit course where students receive a credit for the first year Welding course at Durham College.

The inaugural year of the Alternative Education Reconnect Site was successful with 11 students attending by the end of the school year.

The Student Success Team was approved for three new SHSM programs, giving DCDSB a Skilled Trades SHSM sector in all secondary schools. SHSM enrollment continues to grow with over 900 students projected for the 2024-2025 school year.

The OYAP activities were very successful. Over 150 Grade 9-12 students from five secondary schools attended the Level Up! Skilled Trades Career Fair. The OYAP Level 1 Transition Advisor met with students and families throughout the year and plans to meet throughout the month of July 2024. Guidance Teachers found the experiential learning opportunities focused on apprenticeship pathways informative.

How this will inform our future plans:

The Grade 9 and 10 Technological Studies new course requirements committee plans to continue to review course selection data in to inform needs for the 2025-2026 school year. The committee will explore the potential of an Indigenous module to be part of an introductory Technological Studies course.

The Project SEARCH program will be partnering with the Durham Region for internship placements in the 2024-2025 school year. To support job development and placement, students will be followed by the Abilities Centre for one year after graduation.

Experiential learning opportunities for female students will be expanded during the 2024-2025 school year. For example, more welding workshops will be offered to Grade 8 female students and their families.

The OYAP activities will continue for the next school year with the goal of students from all secondary schools attending the Level Up! Skilled Trades Fair. The Student Success Team will continue to offer Guidance Teachers new experiential learning opportunities focused on the apprenticeship program.

Continuing Education PLAR Assessors will be aiming to ensure mature PLAR is implemented consistently across the system. PLAR Assessors plan to meet with secondary schools in September to quickly identify at-risk students before they disengage.

The inaugural year of the Alternative Education Reconnect Site was successful, and through this first year, staff found students are more successful when they are actively engaged in hands-on/experiential learning. Therefore, the Alternative Education Reconnect Site will be transitioning away from the correspondence booklets and focusing instead on in-person learning. In the 2024-2025 school year, Food Preparation courses, Hospitality and Tourism courses, and Fitness courses will be made available to students at the Reconnect Site.

Co-op placements were successful at the Region of Durham long-term care facilities. As a result, the Student Success Team is going to explore an expansion of co-op placement opportunities within the Lakeridge Health Network.



Visit dcdsb.ca/2023-2024StudentAchievementPlan for more details.

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