



## Week of February 1, 2021

Upcoming Dates	
Ongoing	Kindergarten Registration is now open (online)
Jan 15-Feb 5	French Immersion Registration (online)
Feb 1	PA Day
Feb 1-8	Model Change Survey
Feb 2	Term 2 Begins
Feb 8-12	Term 1 Report Cards to be emailed to families by YRDSB
Feb 11	School reopens for in person learning

Dear VDPS Families,

Thank you to those who were able to join us for an engaging evening with the Board's Mental Health Lead, Patricia Marra-Stapleton this week. The presentation and conversation included some key messages including how to take care of ourselves and our children during these challenging times. During the presentation, the following resources were shared:

- [Parents for Children's Mental Health](#) Tips to help manage frustration while at home.
- [Prepare. Prevent. Respond \(When suicide May be a concern\)](#)
- [Noticing MH Concerns For Your Child \( Includes conversation starters\)](#)
- [Tips for Speaking with Children about Recent Violence in US Capital \(NASP\)](#)
- [Fun Mental health Activities for Home](#)
- [Staying Active at Home during COVID](#)

February is Black History Month. We are going to be focusing on the big ideas of strength and resilience as our students learn about Viola Desmond and other Black Canadians who have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to Canada. We look forward to engaging in this learning in February and beyond.

Your partners in education,

Tamar Swerling

Janis Castle-Jones



## Model Change Requests

Dear Families of Elementary Students:

As communicated on January 13, the decision was made to postpone distributing the Elementary Model Change Survey due to the extension of the Provincial Lockdown.

At this time, the Ministry has set February 11, 2021 as the date for schools to open for face-to-face learning. Whether schools reopen on this date or after, if there is an extension to the shutdown, we will be asking you to let us know if you would like to request a change in your child's school program model from face to face learning to virtual school or from virtual school to face to face for the remainder of the school year. Following the Ministry's confirmation of the date of our return to face-to-face learning, we will provide you with the official YRDSB change of program start date for students.

On **Monday, February 1**, families will receive an email with the process to request an Elementary School Model Change. **Only families requesting a school model change need to complete the survey.** Please complete the survey (to switch models) by **Monday, February 8, at 5 p.m.**

Please note that **there will not be another opportunity to change program models this school year.**

Families who would like to request a change in the model of learning their child is currently receiving within the **Community Class blended model**, do **not** need to complete the survey and should contact their school principal to discuss this change. Families whose children are in a **Gifted Community Class**, and wish to request a change, **need** to complete the survey.

Staff will continue to work diligently to provide the best program for each child and to comply with the reduced cohort class size targets. However, we cannot guarantee that there will not be an increase in combined grades or a change to the number of students in classes in some schools. Due to the complexity of the pending reorganization and staffing, your child may be assigned a new teacher.

You will be informed of any changes to your child's class placement or program model through the school principal.

We thank you for your support, patience and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Louise Sirisko

Director of Education



## Thoughtexchange

Thank you for your ongoing support this school year as we continue to adjust to changing circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The York Region District School Board is committed to ensuring our students continue to have effective teaching and learning through access to technology, resources and engaging learning experiences and environments.

To further support students and families, the Board will continue to gather parent/guardian and student feedback on learning environments. We want to hear from elementary families and students to better understand best practices and suggestions for student learning and well-being support.

We are using an online tool called Thoughtexchange to invite meaningful feedback from our students and families. Parents and guardians of elementary students are encouraged to support their children in responding to the Thoughtexchange. The current Thoughtexchange asks:

### [FAMILIES / STUDENTS](#)

What successes have you/your child experienced this school year?

What supports do you feel will increase your/your child's learning and engagement experiences?

Please provide any comments or suggestions you feel may help us when considering the improvement of your/your child's learning experiences

To participate and learn more, please visit the [YRDSB website](#).

This opportunity closes on February 8 at 11:59 p.m.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Please visit [www.yrdsb.ca/covid19](http://www.yrdsb.ca/covid19) for school board information and [www.york.ca/coronavirus](http://www.york.ca/coronavirus) for public health information.



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## Message from Our Trustee Dr. Elizabeth Sinclair

Dear families,

I hope that you and your families are healthy and doing well. I want to thank all of our students, families and staff members for their flexibility, patience and perseverance during the school closures. We understand that the pandemic is creating challenges and hardships, and we will continue to prioritize and do our very best to support the well-being, learning and achievement of our students during these difficult times.

There are resources on the Board website that students and families may find helpful, including tips for speaking with your child about COVID-19, support using technology, community and mental health resources and more at [www.yrdsb.ca/school-reopening](http://www.yrdsb.ca/school-reopening).

One of our [priorities](#) as a Board of Trustees is to Champion Equity and Inclusivity: we aim to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to remove barriers in support of all learners.

### Anti-Black Racism

We want each and every one of our students to know that they are valued, welcome, safe and respected in our schools. We know that sadly that is not the reality for some students and that incidents of anti-Black racism continue to occur in our community and our schools. These incidents cause pain, make our students feel unsafe and affect their well-being and achievement. This is not acceptable.

In the coming weeks, we will be sharing information and inviting you to participate in the *Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy: Creating anti-racist and Black affirming learning and working environments* virtual event. During this event we will be unveiling our Anti-Black Racism Strategy, which was developed in coordination with families, students, community partners, educators and members of our senior leadership team. The strategy was developed in response to continued evidence of anti-Black racism, and it will be a critical tool to support positive change in the system and to improve the experiences of Black students and staff.

A series of training sessions, webinars and opportunities for learning will also be made available. Future communication will provide registration options.

I want to thank the members of the Anti-Black Racism Committee for generously giving their time, sharing their difficult experiences and their voice. We are committed to ensuring that this strategy is more than a piece of paper and are committed to doing the work to create more equitable learning environments.

I also want to acknowledge that February is Black History Month, and while we take this opportunity



to highlight and celebrate the incredible contributions made by Black Canadians, we will also be looking forward to launching our Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy. We will also be continuing our [celebration of Black excellence](#) in our community and I encourage you to take the time to read the stories of some of the inspiring individuals learning and working here in York Region.

We all have a role to play in creating a community that enables everyone in it to thrive, and in doing this work, we will create a more inclusive and positive environment for *all* of our students and families.