



PDSB

ONLINE SCHOOL

Family Handbook

Stay up-to-date: www.peelschools.org/schools/reopening/onlineschool/

Last updated: October 22, 2020

**Please check this Family Handbook periodically as there may be changes. We will communicate with you about any significant changes.*

Message from Interim Director of Education

Dear Peel District School Board Families,

Welcome to another school year and to the beginning of what we know will be a unique school opening at the Peel District School Board (PDSB)! We are excited to welcome you and look forward to working alongside you to support your child/teen's learning and mental health needs.

The global pandemic has shifted the way we live our lives and has led us to reinvent school in many ways. Many of the structures we are implementing this school year didn't exist just a few weeks ago; this includes *PDSB Online School*. After many hours of planning and preparing, however, we are ready for the 2020-21 school year and all the opportunities it will bring for the PDSB community.

As we navigate this new landscape, we will focus on the delivery of high-quality, culturally responsive and relevant learning opportunities that meet the diverse needs of students, while acknowledging that many have already been impacted in disproportionate ways by COVID-19. We will continue to identify and challenge discrimination in all forms whether it occurs online or in-person. Our team of *PDSB Online School* educators are committed to the growth of each learner and will deliver an educational program, based on high expectations and a commitment to excellence, in caring and thoughtful ways.

We look forward to your involvement as we strive to provide equitable opportunities and outcomes for all *PDSB Online School* distance learners. This handbook provides an overview of what you can expect as your child/teen engages in distance learning only from home. Please take the time to read the document in its entirety.

PDSB Online School was created using the board's *Empowering Modern Learners* vision and student voice, choice and identity as a foundation. It is our core belief that every learner is curious, competent and able to take an active role in their own learning, including from a distance.

We use the term "**distance learning**" as it reflects our belief that quality learning can occur at a distance without completely relying on technology. Rather than being tied to an electronic device for their learning, our goal is to encourage students to read, communicate and engage in authentic learning experiences while continuing to be physically active and mentally well.

We look forward to working with you as we provide rich opportunities for each student to learn and grow until such time when you feel ready to transition your child/teen back into their community school environment. Whatever choice you make, we know, will be the best choice for your family.

My best wishes for a successful school year.

Colleen Russell-Rawlins
Interim Director of Education
Peel District School Board

Mission, Vision and Values

At the Peel District School Board, everything we do is designed to help all students achieve to the best of their ability. We have the incredible opportunity to inspire a smile in each student. Our collective, daily efforts make a positive difference in the lives of our students, their families and the world. Guided by our mission, vision and values, we build positive places for learning and working together.

Mission

We inspire success, confidence and hope in each student.

Vision

We will help our students reach high levels of achievement. Our vision is to prepare each student for a successful future as a lifelong learner.

To do this, we will:

- Create places to learn and work where staff and students are happy, recognized and fulfilled.
- Engage all students and staff to achieve the high expectations of the peel board.
- Offer all students a range of learning programs to help them discover their passions and potential.
- Be a leader in the use of technology to encourage creative and innovative learning.
- Provide equity of access and opportunity for students and staff to learn, work and succeed.
- Openly communicate as we welcome the involvement of all parents, staff and students in the diverse communities we serve.

Values

Our values, based on our Character Attributes, are the foundation of our genuine relationships with students, parents and each other. Our values are core to how we fulfil our mission: to inspire success, confidence and hope in each student. Taught in our school, our values, based on our character attributes, help create safe, nurturing and positive climates for learning and working.

We want to prepare and empower students to be modern learners and leaders who are:

- Caring - by being compassionate and kind towards all members of our community.
- Cooperative – by being committed to working collaboratively and valuing the contributions of others for a common purpose.
- Honest - by demonstrating integrity in our words and actions. We are truthful and trustworthy.
- Inclusive – by respecting differences, and treating everyone fairly and equitably.
- Respectful - by treating others, ourselves and our environment with high regard and value.
- Responsible – by being accountable and reliable in our actions and commitments.

Registration and Withdrawal

For the start of the 2020-21 school year, families were asked to make a decision on whether their child would return to their community school and attend school in-person. As per the Ministry of Education, families also had the option to opt their child(ren) out of in-person learning, and receive full distance learning instruction only. In the Peel board, these students will be enrolled in the *PDSB Online School*.

Families may decide to change their decision regarding whether or not their children attend school in-person or through distance learning at key entry dates throughout the school year. The key entry dates will be determined based on formal reporting and assessment periods throughout the school year.

Please note that depending on the number of students who enrol in *PDSB Online School*, we may need to adjust our plan for how students can re-enter. We'll provide families with advance notice if any restrictions need to be added.

More information will continue to be shared on the board's [Switching between Learning Models page](#).

Contact Information

The Peel District School Board is committed to developing strong relationships with parents, students and the community. Together, we create safe, positive climates for learning and working.

If you have a concern about your child's education, your first step should be to contact the teacher of the *PDSB Online School*. If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the matter, it should be discussed with the *PDSB Online School* principal. As we continue to work on developing class lists and teacher contact information is finalized, please know that supports are available for you and your family.

Elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8)

If you are a *PDSB Online School* elementary student, [view a list](#) of the *PDSB Online School* administrators and their contact information based on your home community school. Your child's teacher will be in touch with you.

Secondary (Grades 9 to 12) (updated Oct. 22, 2020)

If you are a *PDSB Online School* secondary student, please contact onsec.all@peelsb.com

Principals: Bruce Parrack, Karen Hobbins, Terry Whitmell, Sandra Dussiaume, Yvonne Howard, Sue Fried

Vice-Principals: Rita Betro, Janet Rogers, Sandra Ziemniak, Rada PetrovicLukich, Gayle Ackerman, Renu Kohli

Special Education

For *PDSB Online School* Special Education school, please contact communications@peelsb.com

Principal: Colin Jardine

Vice-Principal: Tracy Paiva

To stay up-to-date on information for *PDSB Online School*, visit <https://peelschools.org/schools/reopening/onlineschool/>.

Additional resources

To access the online resource centre with tips and resources for parents to help encourage student success at home, visit www.peelschools.org/parents/helpyourchild.

Mental health and well-being supports are also available for families by visiting <https://peelschools.org/schools/reopening/mental-health-and-well-being-supports/>.

Peel District School Board Forms

Please review the following forms for *PDSB Online School* students. (Updated Sept. 18, 2020)

Please complete the consent form and email it to your *PDSB Online School* teacher at your convenience.

- Elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 8 students) - [Elementary consent form](#)
- Secondary (Grades 9 to 12) - [Secondary consent form](#)

For review only:

- [Third party apps and web services](#)
- [Letter to Parents/Guardians - Child in Need of Protection](#)
- [Student Accident Insurance package](#)
- [Peel Learning Foundation Community Program](#)

Distance Learning roles and responsibilities

Students

In order for students to find success in PDSB Online School, it will require all students to shift and create their habits of success from school to home. Students, in consultation with their parents/guardians, and to the greatest extent possible given their individual circumstances, should:

- establish daily routines for engaging in online learning experiences (e.g., 8:30 a.m. start).
- if possible, identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where they can work effectively.
- monitor the established lines of communication with their teacher(s) to check for announcements and feedback.
- complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing their best work.
- do their best to meet timelines, commitments and due dates.
- communicate proactively with their teachers(s) if they cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
- comply with the board's Policies and Procedures including expectations for online etiquette and [digital citizenship](#).

Parents

As stated in the Ministry of Education's [Parents Matter](#) publication, as parents/guardians you have a strong influence on your child's attitude toward school, learning and future success. When you are involved in your child's learning – from the early years to high school – you are giving them an important head start in school and life. As always, as a key stakeholder in your child's development, your engagement with your child can play a crucial role during this time. By following the above mentioned guidelines, you can help minimize the inherent challenges that this new landscape presents. Your positive support will go a long way to ensuring your child's success.

Attendance

It's important for students to maintain and follow a daily schedule to ensure student success. Attendance will be taken daily for *PDSB Online School* and regular attendance is expected of all students. A typical school day will be filled with learning that is not limited to traditional textbook learning, i.e. direct synchronous learning in large and small groups, where it is expected that video will be turned on to enhance learning opportunities and assessment strategies, asynchronous learning through indirect teacher-designed lessons, and independent follow up learning introduced during direct and indirect sessions.

Staff absence (updated Oct. 14, 2020)

Should teachers be absent due to illness, they will have prepared lessons and activities to be used asynchronously during that day(s). Should the illness go on longer than three days at the elementary level or two days at the secondary level, an occasional teacher will take over the

planning and delivery of the program. [View](#) more information in the event of an educator absence.

Curriculum delivery (updated Oct. 22, 2020)

The *PDSB Online School* will offer the full Ontario curriculum through structured synchronous and asynchronous learning.

- **Synchronous learning:** Learning that happens in real time. Synchronous learning involves using text, video, or voice communication in a way that enables educators and other members of the school- or board-based team to instruct and connect with students in real time. Synchronous learning supports the well-being and academic achievement of all students, including students with Special Education needs, by providing educators and students with an interactive and engaging way to learn. It helps teachers provide immediate feedback to students and enables students to interact with one another.
- **Asynchronous learning:** Learning that is not delivered in real time. Asynchronous learning may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks, or contributing to online discussion boards.

It is expected that learning will be based on overall expectations across all subjects/courses and grades. Distance learning for children in Kindergarten will remain holistically focused on Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-Being, Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematical Behaviours, and Problem-Solving and Innovating. Invitations, provocations and learning experiences will emphasize interaction and creativity. These learning experiences will require minimal technology or specialized materials.

A school day, whether in-person or online, involves 300 minutes (or 5 hours) of learning. In the *PDSB Online School*, as per Ministry direction, students will engage in the following number of minutes of synchronous (live) learning:

- Kindergarten: 180 minutes
- Grades 1 to 3: 225 minutes
- Grades 4 to 8: 225 minutes
- Grades 9 to 12: 60 minutes for each 74-minute class period or 225 minutes per day for a full course schedule (whichever is higher)

The remainder of the 300 minutes, students will engage in asynchronous learning, where they will work on follow-up activities or assignments provided during the live learning portion of their day.

All classroom teachers are entitled to 240 minutes each week for the purpose of preparation time. Generally this time is broken into 48 minute periods daily over 5 days. In some cases the teacher providing French as a Second Language instruction will cover the class during this preparation period. In other cases, the preparation time will be taken from the asynchronous learning. Additionally activities will not be assigned during this time. Families and students may use the time to follow up on work and activities supportive of the student's overall learning.

Instruction will be delivered by Peel board Educators, but not necessarily by staff assigned to the student's community school or class. Each student will be assigned a class taught by a qualified teacher, who students and parents/guardians can connect with directly. Students will be provided with a timetable outlining the daily schedule of subjects/courses according to a five-hour instructional day with opportunities for frequent, live contact with a teacher and expectations for synchronous learning.

Elementary

A typical day will begin and end using the same time frame as the home community schools (e.g., beginning at 9:00 a.m. and finishing at 3:30 p.m.). Specific times for recess or wellness breaks and lunch will be built into each timetable. [View a sample](#) of what the flow of a day may look like for Kindergarten to Grade 8.

Secondary (updated Oct. 22, 2020)

For secondary students, there is a significant enrolment shift to online—from 26.4% to 44.6% of secondary students opting for online learning. Based on current data, approximately 1% of students chose to return to the adapted model from online. Our current PDSB Online School structure cannot support this increase in enrolment. With a decrease of in-person learning, our physical secondary schools also won't have enough students to offer a full breadth of courses for [Quadmester 2](#).

That's why, to better serve all students, we will move to a new hybrid learning model in grades 9 to 12, effective Nov. 18 (Quadmester 2). Students will continue to attend classes through their chosen learning model (online or adaptive), but they will all be taught simultaneously by the same teacher from their home school. [View more information](#) on what secondary students can expect, starting Nov. 18.

PDSB Online School platforms

The *PDSB Online School* will operate online via Brightspace and/or Google Classroom. Teachers will advise on which platform they will be using for their class(es) and will provide support to families as needed. [View](#) resources available to support families in navigating *PDSB Online School* platforms.

Assessment, evaluation and reporting (updated Oct. 22, 2020)

All *PDSB Online School* students will receive a Report Card as they would if they attended school in person. They will be evaluated as per curriculum requirements. This also applies to Progress Reports, the Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations, and the Kindergarten Communication of Learning.

Evaluation is the process of making a judgment of evidence of student learning, based on established and shared success criteria. Teachers gather evidence of student learning taken from observations, conversations and student products (such as assignments, reflections, performances, interviews, investigations, inquiries and tests) over time and use this evidence, along with professional judgment, to determine students' grades. This is one of the key reasons that students are asked to turn their video on during remote learning. Teachers are better able to assess students when they can observe their approach to learning and engage with them in conversations. Determining a report card grade involves teacher interpretation of evidence in light of clear criteria and should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence. The marks of levels of achievement gathered through these assessment opportunities are used to inform report card grades and to communicate progress to parents and students.

Special Education

All students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), requiring accommodations or modifications, will continue to have their needs met in the online classroom. *PDSB Online School* staff will liaise with the special education staff at your child/teen's home community school and with the centrally-assigned itinerant and resource teachers in order to understand the information contained in your child's IEP to meet their needs in the best way possible.

When an IPRC is scheduled, it will be initiated through the home community school and staff from the *PDSB Online School* will be invited, along with you, to participate virtually.

[View a sample](#) flow of the day for those students enrolled in a distinct special education class.

Code of Conduct

Together with staff, students, parents, community members and faith groups, the board developed a common language and commitment to model, teach and reinforce character attributes through the selection of six core attributes. These attributes are taught in schools, but they are also the basis of the Board's working relationships and they help to create a positive climate for learning and working.

We want our staff and students to be:

- Caring – showing compassion and kindness towards others
- Cooperative - working collaboratively with others for a common purpose
- Honest – being truthful, trustworthy and sincere in your speech and your actions
- Inclusive – treating everyone fairly and equitably
- Respectful - treating others, yourself and the environment with high regard and value
- Responsible – being accountable and reliable in your actions and commitments

We believe that parents, the school and community must all work together to help students learn to become responsible members of society, being responsive to the diversity, culture and special needs and well-being of individual students. We support the goals of anti-oppression, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of teaching and learning. We must clearly demonstrate a commitment to

social justice and human rights, and promote the values needed to develop responsible members of a diverse, democratic and inclusive society.

The Code of Conduct for each school is aligned with and supports the principles and expectations of the Board's Human Rights policy (Policy 51) and the Equity and Inclusive Education policy (Policy 54). At all times the code should be interpreted to be consistent with the Board's policies and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

DRESS CODE

Students

It is expected that students will come to class, dressed appropriately for a day of learning. Clothing which depicts or contains offensive images and/or words will not be considered acceptable. School administrators will engage with students at the start of the year around what types of images and sayings could be considered offensive. Clothing choices should also cover one's person in an appropriate, acceptable and safe manner. Ultimately clothing choices should not compromise the moral tone of the school.

For additional information refer to the links provided:

[Policy 48 - Safe and Accepting Schools](#)

Equity of Access to Devices

We recognize that families may not have access to Wi-Fi or to devices that are necessary for distance learning. To help remove these barriers to learning, the Peel board has developed a plan to provide families who need it with these tools. We will connect with students and their families to determine the best way forward for each learner while meeting the expectations defined by the daily timetable.

In April and May 2020, the Peel Board distributed over 25,000 devices to students for distance learning. Peel Board students who choose the *PDSB Online School* may keep the Board-loaned devices to use for the 2020-21 school year, until they choose to return to school in person for the full delivery model. SEA technology has already been distributed to students who need it and they will continue to use it for the 2020-21 school year.

Approximately 1,000 devices will be available to donate to *PDSB Online School* students who demonstrate a need. If you require a device, please [contact](#) the principal at your home community school.

All distributed technology used by students and staff is governed by Peel Board [Policy 78](#).

Ten guidelines for supporting your child's distance learning at home

We recognize that the transition to distance learning may be challenging for some families. Parents/guardians will need to consider how to support their children, how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful, and how to monitor and support their children's learning. We also recognize that parents and guardians are experiencing their own demands on time and challenges too. *PDSB Online School* is here to support you. To help, the board has developed these ten guidelines for families to help their children find success in a distance learning environment. These guidelines have also been [translated](#).

1. Establish routines and expectations

The absence of routine may make it difficult for some children to adjust. Try setting regular hours for your children's school work and keeping normal bedtime routines. Children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents/guardians set these expectations in advance for how their children will spend their days once distance learning is implemented, and not several days later when it may become apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.

2. Define a physical space for your child's study

Families are encouraged to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. To help your child stay on task, try establishing a space where you are able to monitor your child's learning. Please connect with your child's teacher for support and suggestions in this area.

3. Monitor communications from your child(ren)'s teachers

Teachers may communicate with parents/guardians through email or through the online platforms, Brightspace and Google Classroom, and/or by telephone. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. Please note that teachers will be communicating with many families and immediate responses may not be available. We also encourage parents/guardians to have their children explain the learning tools that are being used. The online platforms, Brightspace and Google Classroom, also have parent communication tools.

4. Begin and end each day with a check-in

Some children struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. By having a daily timetable established for them, children can better process the instructions they've received from their teachers, organize themselves and set priorities. In the morning, ask what is your child learning today? What are their learning goals? How will they spend their time? Which resources do they require? Which supports do they need? Secondary students may not want to have these check-ins (that's normal!), but we recommend they do nevertheless. Parents/guardians should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day to establish a routine and to be able to develop habits of success.

5. Play an active role in helping your child process and own their learning

In the course of a regular school day, your child engages with other students and/or adults. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of the regular school day social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Circle back and engage with your child regularly about what they're learning. It's important, however, that your child owns their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are challenged.

6. Establish times for quiet and reflection

Each family's circumstances are unique and will require families to not only adapt but to also do what's best based for their situation. Consider using headphones to create a quieter space to complete work. If your living arrangements allow, try finding different times or rooms for siblings to complete work to avoid distractions. Establish these parameters from the beginning to build habits of success.

7. Encourage physical activity and/or exercise

Remind your child to move and exercise. Research shows that increased physical activity links with positive changes in cognitive functioning, health, well-being and learning. Consider going for a walk while honouring the expectations of social distancing and following the Government of Canada's [physical distancing](#) guidelines. Consider an online physical challenge and/or exercise class.

8. Be mindful of your child's feelings

Try to help children manage the worry, anxiety and range of emotions they may experience. Distance learning can be seen as an opportunity to learn with your kids and increased family time. Stay connected through social media, phone calls or video calling with family and friends. Remember that it's alright to have time for self-reflection, relaxation and relationships. Some children may be nervous, anxious or worried and some may not understand what's happening. Let them explore these feelings. It's alright to pause, take a deep breath and let them be kids. View [mental health and community support resources](#) that may be helpful in supporting you and your family at home.

9. Monitor how much time your child spends online (updated Oct. 22, 2020)

With the minutes devoted to synchronous learning, it's important to continue to monitor the length of time your child is spending online in addition to the time for school work. Encourage your child to spend their time away from distance learning, participating in activities designed to balance their time online.

10. Keep your child social, but set parameters for social media

Monitor your child's use of social media and the platforms they use. Help your children maintain contact with friends, while adhering to social distancing rules and being safe, both online and

offline. Remind your child/teen to be polite, respectful and appropriate in their online communications, and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. Online interactions should continue to align with the school and board's values and [Digital Citizenship](#) policy.