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# DSBN Secondary Handbook

## *Helpful Guidance for Students & Families*

The purpose of this handbook is to deepen your understanding about how the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) supports a safe, accepting and inclusive school culture that is focused on student learning and well-being. In the following pages, you will learn about the commitments we make to our students and their families. One of our most important commitments is to create open lines of communication between our school and home. If you have any questions about this handbook, we encourage you to contact your school Principal, who will be happy to discuss them with you.

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### CODE OF CONDUCT

DSBN believes every school should be a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. To effectively foster a positive school climate that supports student achievement and well-being, there should be a focus on prevention and early intervention strategies as needed, to address inappropriate behaviour. Standards of behaviour apply whether students are on school property, on school busses or other transportation means supplied by DSBN, at school-related events or activities or in any other circumstance that could have an impact on the school culture.

We encourage you to click the links below to review the following resources related to the Code of Conduct:

- DSBN Policy: [G-08: Code of Conduct](#) (read in full)
- School Rules: [Ontario's Provincial Code of Conduct](#)
- [Code of Conduct Reminders for School Communities](#) from the Ministry of Education

### SAFE ARRIVAL/ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

We encourage regular student attendance because it helps students stay on track with their learning and maintain regular school routines. When students are present, they can participate in class, collaborate with classmates, and make the most of lessons and discussions, all of which lead to improved learning.

In the event a student needs to be absent from school, you can report your child's absence quickly and easily using Safe Arrival. This program allows you to report daily absences and schedule absences (including medical and other appointments) via one of the following methods:

- Phone (toll-free): 1-866-606-5567

- Online: visit <https://www.dsbni.org/safearrival/> to log in
- Download the app (on your smartphone or tablet): <https://www.dsbni.org/safearrival/>

We ask that you report all absences before bell time for the current day. To support the safety of our students, if your child is not at school and has not been reported absent, our staff will attempt to reach you and your associated contacts to confirm their whereabouts.

### AGE OF MAJORITY

Students who have reached the age of 18 are treated as adults in the educational setting. Reports regarding attendance and achievement are issued directly to the student and notes or phone calls from parents regarding absences are not required. Additionally, parents should be aware that the automatic phone system for student absence does not call the homes of 'age of majority' students.

Students 18 years of age or older are permitted, and expected, to take responsibility for their attendance and achievement. They may sign themselves out at the Attendance Office without parental permission. Students are reminded, however, that with age and privilege comes responsibility. Being 18 does not mean that students can sign themselves in and out without reason. In addition, students are responsible for the consequences of their decisions.

If adult students wish to authorize school staff to continue sharing their information with parents/guardians, they have the option to complete the Over 18 - Permission to Communicate form, available upon request at your school's main office.

## STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Niagara Student Transportation Service (NSTS) takes care of transportation for the DSBN. If your child has transportation to and from school, all information can be found on the NSTS website: <https://nsts.ca/>

It is expected that students will comply with the authority of the school bus driver and the basic rules that are established for the safe riding of school buses. Students are expected to follow the DSBN Code of Conduct and behave as they would if they were in school. Failure to do so may result in progressive discipline actions including the removal of busing privileges.

## PARKING/SAFE DRIVING

Parking and driving on school property are privileges which may be withdrawn as the result of careless driving. Students may not sit in or socialize around the cars in the parking lot during the school day, including during the lunch hour.

## FIRE EMERGENCY EVACUATION & LOCKDOWN DRILLS

We are committed to maintaining our schools as safe places for students. To create and maintain a culture of safety, we practice both fire and lockdown procedures at various times during the school year. School staff work with students to ensure they understand these procedures and feel comfortable acting should the circumstances ever warrant.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER

There may be times during the school year where inclement weather causes transportation cancellations or school closures. In the event student transportation has been cancelled and schools remain open, the decision to have children attend school on that day rests with parents/guardians/families. Information about transportation cancellations and school closures will be available through the following channels:

- [www.dsbn.org](http://www.dsbn.org) or [www.nsts.ca](http://www.nsts.ca)
- DSBN social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram or X (Twitter)
- NSTS voice message: 905-346-0290
- Local radio and television stations

## ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to providing a learning environment that adheres to Indigenous rights, human rights, and

equity. Fostering spaces that are accessible, welcoming, safe, inclusive, equitable, and free from all forms of discrimination is a system priority. The continual improvement of accessibility in all DSBN spaces and the ongoing removal of barriers in order to provide greater equity for all in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act are paramount. To learn more, please visit: <https://www.dsbn.org/about/accessibility>

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Mental health and well-being are important to student success. Learning to form healthy relationships, maintain physical health, academic engagement, and educational achievement are all impacted by mental health and well-being. DSBN students are supported in a variety of ways:

- Helping them feel safe and included
- Instilling a sense of belonging and connectedness
- Inspiring confidence in their identity

There may be times when the challenges of school and life tip the balance, leading students to feel overwhelmed. Every student has access to a comprehensive support system to help them succeed. It starts with anyone in the DSBN that students identify as a caring adult. To learn more, please visit: <https://www.dsbn.org/programs-services/well-being/home>

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

The Ministry of Education has revised its legislation with respect to personal electronics through the introduction of PPM 128.

Students must not use personal mobile devices during instructional time except under the following circumstances:

- For educational purposes, as directed by an educator
- For health and medical purposes
- To support special education needs, as documented in the student's IEP
- During breaks, lunch, and spares if the student is in Grades 7 to 12

### ***Classroom Expectations:***

For all students, personal mobile devices must be stored out of view and powered off or set to silent mode during instructional time. If an educator sees a personal mobile device that is not out of view, they must require that the

device be placed by the student in a storage area in the classroom (Grade 7 - 12) or a storage area at the main office designated by the Principal (Grade 6 and under).

The student is responsible for their personal mobile device, how they use it, and the consequences for not following expectations. If a student refuses to hand in their personal mobile device when requested, they must be sent to the main office. Administrators will have the discretion to implement progressive discipline to address this behaviour.

### SOCIAL MEDIA USE

The Ministry of Education has directed school boards to restrict access to social media applications on school networks and devices to help strengthen in-person relationships, communication and social-emotional skills. Beginning in September 2024, students will not be able to access any social media applications via the DSBN Network or devices (e.g., Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, etc.). Designated staff members will still be able to post school updates and information for families on existing school Instagram, Facebook and X (Twitter) accounts to help keep our community connected.

### SMOKING/VAPING

The Ministry of Education has updated its legislation with respect to tobacco products and electronic cigarettes through the introduction of PPM 128. Students are banned from being in possession or use of tobacco/nicotine products and/or electronic cigarettes at school. If a student is caught with any of these items, the items must be given up and parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

Students will be subjected to progressive discipline, and schools may engage Public Health Units to support education, prevention and enforcement. Anyone wishing to smoke or vape in public areas must be at least 20 meters from school grounds, including in the parking lot.

### SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education supports and programs are responsive to the strengths and needs of each student, ensuring a successful learning environment for all. Working together and collaborating with families as a team to support our students is essential to achieving success.

For more information, we encourage you to click [here](#) to view DSBN's Special Education Guide. You are also welcome to contact your child's homeroom teacher to discuss special education supports specific to your child.

### FIELD TRIPS/EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING/GUEST SPEAKERS

Field trips and experiential learning provide students with the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom. When planning these experiences, we consider curriculum connections, safety of students and accessibility for all. We will work together to address any barriers to student participation. On occasion, we will invite guest speakers, outside agencies and performers into our schools to compliment the curriculum in our school. Families will be given advance notice with specific details of the topic and focus of the activity or event.

### BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

DSBN believes that providing students with an opportunity to learn and develop in a safe and respectful society is a shared responsibility in which school boards and schools each play an important role. A whole-school approach to an inclusive school culture based on caring and respectful relationships among and between students, teachers, other school staff and families is a necessary supporting condition to ensure students feel a strong sense of belonging so that they may learn and thrive.

We recognize that bullying (including cyber-bullying):

- Adversely affects a student's well-being and ability to learn
- Adversely affects the school climate, including healthy relationships
- Is a serious issue and is not acceptable in the school environment (including virtual), in a school-related activity, or in any other circumstances that will have an impact on the school climate

If you are concerned that a bullying incident(s) has occurred, we encourage you to contact the school to determine whether they are aware of the situation. Provide the school with as much information as possible about the bullying incident(s) - date, time, place, people involved, and specifics of the incident(s). It is recommended that families continue to work with the school to create a plan to ensure that the situation is addressed.

Our school Principal can and should always be your first point of contact with any incident, concern or issue. However, if you are not ready to connect directly with the school about the bullying incident, please click [here](#) to use our bullying reporting tool.

For more information and resources, please visit: <https://www.dsbni.org/safe-accepting-schools/bullying-prevention-and-intervention>

## PREVALENT MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If you have a child with a prevalent medical condition (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy and/or others) we want to ensure the school has a current Plan of Care to support your child. All parents of children with prevalent medical conditions are asked to complete a Plan of Care and submit it to the school at the start of each school year. To access the forms for a prevalent medical condition, please visit: <https://www.dsbni.org/prevalent-medical-conditions/>

Any changes to a child's Plan of Care throughout the school year should be promptly communicated to the school. Please contact the school for more information.

## CONCUSSIONS

DSBN has a concussion policy and procedure to support proper prevention, identification, management, and return to learn strategies. Our school board engages in concussion education in a variety of ways, including recognizing Rowan's Law Day commemorated on the last Wednesday in September to raise awareness about concussions. If your child has sustained a suspected or actual concussion while not at school, please contact the school.

## SCHOOL VISITORS

We want all school visitors to feel welcome. The procedures we have in place help us provide timely access to the school and give our entire school community confidence that student safety is a priority. For safety purposes, all DSBN elementary school doors are locked during the day. Our buzzer system allows visitors to identify themselves to the office on arrival. Once inside the school, visitors should report directly to the office where staff will help them sign in and provide a visitor badge to identify them as a trusted member of our community.

## SCHOOL COUNCIL

School Council creates a vital link between the school, families and community. The council is comprised of committed volunteers who are enthusiastic about promoting student success. They convene regularly during the academic year to offer input in an advisory capacity, and support initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing student achievement and well-being. We encourage you to get involved – visit our school website or contact the Principal for more information.

## SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

We believe all members of the school community can make

contributions towards student success. We appreciate the support of volunteers who offer their services to improve the education and lives of our students. If you are interested in becoming more involved with our school, please contact the office and our staff would be happy to work through the process with you based on school needs.

## DRESS CODE

We celebrate the individuality of all students and respect their ability to express themselves. Everyone has their own unique style and aesthetic. Our only expectation is that all students come to school dressed appropriately for learning. When deciding on clothing, we ask that all members of our school community are mindful of:

- Health and safety considerations
- The dignity and well-being of all students and staff (i.e. clothing that is free of inappropriate or discriminatory imagery or wording)

## BELONGINGS

Students who choose to bring personal items to school do so at their own risk and must accept responsibility for their care. We will not be held responsible for damage, loss, or theft.

## LOCKERS

Students are expected to keep their personal belongings in their locker, clean it regularly, and make sure locker doors are locked. Lockers are the property of the DSBN and are used by students with permission of the school. Students are advised that if the school has concerns of possible Code of Conduct violations, the school has the right to search lockers and remove locks, if necessary.

## COLLECTION OF FUNDS & PERMISSION FORMS

School Cash Online is a safe, reliable portal that our school uses for collection of funds and permission forms. This portal allows you to quickly and easily make school-related payments using your debit or credit card, as well as complete and submit permission forms for students. School Cash Online ensures the safety and security of your information.

To access the portal, please visit our school's website and click on the 'School Cash Online' button or visit the website directly: <https://www.dsbni.org/schoolcash/>. If you do not bank online, you are welcome to visit the school office to make payments and sign permission forms as needed.

## ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning. Teachers use assessment to gather information about students' strengths and needs as learners to assist in planning and evaluation to judge how well students are meeting the Ontario Curriculum expectations. As part of the assessment process, teachers provide students with descriptive feedback and coaching for improvement. Teachers engage students in assessment and learning by helping all students develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous learners who are able to set individual goals, monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their thinking and learning.

Evaluation refers to the process of judging the quality of student learning based on established performance standards and assigning a value to represent that quality. Students are responsible not only for their behaviour in the classroom and the school but also for providing evidence of their achievement of the overall expectations within the time frame specified by the teacher, and in a form approved by the teacher. Students must understand that there will be consequences for not completing assignments for evaluation or for submitting those assignments late.

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LATE AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS FOR EVALUATION

### *Teachers will:*

- Maintain ongoing and timely communication with students, parents/guardians and administrators
- Establish deadlines, in collaboration with students, for assignments for evaluation and clearly communicate those deadlines to students, and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians
- Use appropriate strategies, based on their professional judgement, to help students provide the required evidence of their learning
- Communicate with and return work in a reasonable timeframe to students
- Ensure the needs of students with exceptionalities are met, consistent with the strategies outlined in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)

### *Students will:*

- Be responsible for providing evidence of their achievement of the overall expectations within the timeframe specified by the teacher, and in a form approved by the teacher

- Be encouraged to discuss assignments and issues with timelines with their teachers
- Understand that there will be consequences for not completing assignments for evaluation and/or for submitting those assignments late

## DETERMINING A REPORT CARD GRADE

Before determining the grade to be entered on the report card, teachers will consider:

- All individual evidence collected through observations, conversations, and student products
- Equity, by ensuring evaluation is completed whenever possible, with teacher supervision
- Assignments for evaluation must not include homework or practice opportunities
- Assignments for evaluation may involve group projects as long as each student's work within the group project is evaluated based on independent work and individual skills
- The impact that missing or incomplete assignments will have on the student's overall grade

## REPORT CARDS/PARENT & TEACHER MEETINGS

Each semester, there are three reporting periods:

1. Progress Report (4-5 weeks into the semester)
2. Mid-term Report Card (approximately 10 weeks into the semester)
3. Final Report Card

Parent-teacher interviews are scheduled after the progress report. Further details can be provided by the school.