



Greater Fort Erie Secondary School Student Handbook

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Welcome to the GFESS Family!

We are looking forward to working with you and your family to support all students.

The purpose of this handbook is to give you an understanding of how we support a safe, inclusive, welcoming school culture focused on student learning. In the following pages, you'll see the commitments we make to you and your students. This handbook also outlines the principles of good citizenship for all members of our educational community.

One of our most important commitments is to open communication between the school and home. If you have any questions about this handbook, we encourage you to contact the school who will be happy to discuss them with you.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

There may be times during the school year where inclement weather or other situations could cause transportation cancellations or school closures. At times, when student transportation has been cancelled and schools remain open, the decision to have student attend school on that day rests with the parent or guardian.

EXAMS: If inclement weather occurs on exam days, detailed instructions will be provided for rescheduling. Information about transportation cancellations and school closures will be available through the following channels:

- www.dsbns.org or www.nsts.ca
- **DSBN Facebook or Twitter**
- **NSTS Transportation Delay or Cancellation Alerts**
- **Niagara Student Transportation Service**
- **905-346-0290 Voice Auto Attendant**
- **Local radio and television stations.**

COLLECTION OF FUNDS & PERMISSION FORMS

School Cash Online is a safe, reliable portal that will ensure the security of your information. School Cash Online, enables you to use your debit or credit card to make quick and easy payments. Our school also uses School Cash Online to obtain permission for school events.

To gain access to the system, simply click on the "School Cash" button which is located on our school website. Parents that do not bank online are always welcome to come into the office to pay for items, and to sign permission forms.

VISITORS

We want all visitors to feel welcome at our school. The procedures we have in place help us provide you with timely access to the school and give our entire school community confidence that student safety is being maintained.

Once you enter the school, please report directly to the main office where our staff can assist you. There, you will sign in and receive a visitor badge that identifies you as a trusted member of our community. At the end of your visit you will sign out at the office.

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SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

At our school, we believe everyone has a contribution to make towards student success. We appreciate the support of volunteers who offer their services improve the education and lives of our students.

To ensure the safety of our students and the school community, the DSBN has created a helpful handbook to support our school volunteers. 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.

SCHOOL COUNCIL

Our School Council provides a vital link between the school, parents and community. The council is made up of dedicated parent volunteers interested in supporting student success. The council meets regularly throughout the school year and provides feedback and supports programs to improve student achievement.

We encourage you to become involved. You may also find more information on our website.

SMOKING/VAPING

Smoking and vaping are not allowed in schools or on school grounds. Adults wishing to smoke or vape in public areas must be at least 20 meters from school grounds.

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

At our school, students are assigned 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 the school has the right to search lockers and remove locks, if necessary.

Where the school has concerns of possible criminal violations, the search may also include the Niagara Regional Police who may use any of their investigative tools, including the trained canine unit.

PREVALENT MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If you have a student with a prevalent medical condition (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy or others) we want to make sure we have a current Plan of Care to support your student.

All parents of students with prevalent medical conditions are asked to fill out the new Plan of Care and submit to the school.

You can download the forms here: dsbn.org/prevalent-medical-conditions.

For more information, please contact the school.

CONCUSSIONS

The DSBN has a concussion policy and procedures to support proper prevention, identification, management, and return to learn strategies.

The DSBN 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 student has sustained a suspected or actual concussion while not at school, please contact the school, to make sure they are aware.

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FIRE DRILLS/EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS/ LOCKDOWNS

We're committed to maintaining our schools as safe places for all our students. To create and maintain a culture of safety, we practice both fire and lockdown procedures at several 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.

ONTARIO CURRICULUM

Click here to view the curriculum for your subject's www.dsbns.org/secondary/curriculum

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 parents as a team to support our students is essential to achieving success. For more information please contact your student's special education resource teacher.

INDIGENOUS SELF-ID

The DSBN provides programs and measures to support all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. All First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students have the right to voluntarily self-identify so that they may receive supportive programming and instructional practices that better serve their learning needs. The first such measure in recognizing this right is to establish self-identification procedures to identify, collect, and aggregate student achievement data for students.

Who Can Identify?

Any student of Indigenous ancestry, First Nations (Status, Non-Status), Métis, or Inuit can identify. This process is completely voluntary and confidential, and no proof of ancestry is needed.

How is the Data Collected?

Students can identify by filling in the student registration form or the student information update form any time during the school year.

What if I Do Not Wish to Participate?

Students and/or Parents/Guardians who do not wish to participate will not check off any box. The self-identification will remain open to all who attend the DSBN. You can activate self-identification at any time by requesting a student registration form or self-identification postcard from the main office.

For further information email: Indigenous@dsbn.org or call Indigenous Consultants at: 905-641-2929

K-8 ext. 52246, 9-12 ext. 52317

<https://www.dsbns.org/indigenous-education/>

FIELD TRIPS/EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Field trips and experiential learning provide your student the opportunity to learn outside of their 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 your student's participation.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

To enhance the learning and empowerment of our students and maintain an effective and safe electronic learning environment, the DSBN requires that all students follow the rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Education.

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REPORT CARDS/PARENT & TEACHER MEETINGS

Each semester, there are three reporting periods: progress report, mid-term report and final report. After the progress report, parents can meet with their student's teacher.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

DSBN schools strive to help students develop integrity, a strong work ethic, learning skills and work habits needed for success beyond school. Academic integrity means that students complete their own work, ask the teacher questions if they are unsure, and use proper citations when using another person's work for reference.

Plagiarism is when students claim that schoolwork, they have submitted is theirs, even when a part or all of it has been taken from an uncredited source.

Some examples are:

- Using a sentence word for word without citing the source
- Using diagrams, charts, graphics, without citing the source
- Submitting work by another person and claiming it as your own
- Paraphrasing without citing the source
- Copying and pasting from the internet

What is a Proper Citation?

A citation is when the student gives credit by including the name of the author, title of source, and location of the original source. An example is, "Trudeau, J. 2019. Statement by the Prime Minister on Earth Day. Accessed from: <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/speeches>"

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences for academic dishonesty are considered on a case-by-case basis. Teachers use their professional judgment in cases of suspected academic dishonesty. Consequences may include one or more of the following:

- Redoing part or all of an assignment
- Completing an alternative assignment
- A loss of marks
- A mark of zero
- Suspension

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT HOURS

Every student who begins secondary school in Ontario is required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement to receive their diploma. This requirement encourages students to develop an understanding of the various roles they can play in their communities and to help them develop a greater sense of belonging within their communities. Talk to guidance to learn more about how to earn and track your hours.

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HONOUR ROLL

DSBN secondary schools value the commitment and hard work of all our students. The honour roll is one way that students can be recognized for their academic accomplishments. Students in all pathways will be considered for the honour roll if they have an average of 80% on their top eight courses for the school year. Grade twelve academic achievement is honoured through graduation awards.

Please note the following:

Summer School:

- **GRADE 9** - Summer school courses taken the summer before and the summer after grade 9 are included.
- **GRADES 10 & 11**- Summer school courses taken the summer after each grade are included.

E-Learning, Night School & Alternative Pathways Program

- all courses included

Cooperative Education (Double Credit)

- weighted according to the number of credits.

Students taking Resource & Student Success Periods (Spare in Grade 11)

- minimum credits to be adjusted.

Specialized School to Community

- include when integrated at principal's discretion

Students with unusual circumstance (e.g. Instructional Outreach, Supervised Alternative Learning)

- minimum credits adjusted at principal's discretion

GRADUATION CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

To graduate with your Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) you need 30 credits: 18 Compulsory and 12 Elective.

- **English:** 4 courses
- **Math:** 3 courses
- **Science:** 2 courses
- **French as a Second Language:** 1 course
- **Canadian Geography:** 1 course
- **Canadian History:** 1 course
- **The Arts:** 1 course
- **Health and Physical Education:** 1 course
- **Civics:** .5
- **Careers:** .5

PLUS ONE CREDIT FROM EACH OF THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

- **1 Group 1:** additional credit in English, or French as a second language, or a Native language, or a classical or an international language, or social sciences and the humanities, or Canadian and world studies, or guidance and career education, or cooperative education.
- **1 Group 2:** additional credit in health and physical education, or the arts, or business studies, or French as a second language, or cooperative education.
- **1 Group 3:** additional credit in Science (Grade 11 or 12), or technological education, or French as a second language, or computer studies, or cooperative education.

IN ADDITION, STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE:

40 Hours Community Service (completed over 4 years)

The provincial literacy requirement – OSSLT

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MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING SCHOOL SUPPORTS

Mental health and well-being is an important factor in student success. Learning to form healthy relationships, maintain physical health, academic engagement, and educational achievement are all impacted by mental health and well-being.

Students mental health and well-being is supported in many ways:

- Helping students feel safe and included
- Instilling a sense of belonging and connectedness
- Working with them to feel confident in their identity

There may be times where the challenges of school and life, lead 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 visit:

<https://www.dsbn.org/well-being>

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

KIDS HELP PHONE

Kids Help Phone is always there for you. No matter what you want to talk about, they're there to listen. No judgment, totally private, 24/7.

- **Call 1-800-668-6868**
- **Text CONNECT to 686868**
- **Live chat and explore resources at www.kidshelpphone.ca**

ANXIETY CANADA YOUTH

You are not alone! Many teens experience difficulties with anxiety. There are lots of things that you can do to take charge of your anxiety for good.

- **Visit www.youth.anxietycanada.com**
- **Download the MindShift CBT app**

PATHSTONE MENTAL HEALTH

NEED HELP NOW?

Call 1-800-263-4944

Youth up to age 17 may visit the Hear & Now Walk-in Clinic at:

- **1338 Fourth Ave. in St. Catharines**
Open Mondays to Thursdays 9am - 7pm; Fridays 9am - 4pm

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (CMHA) – NIAGARA BRANCH

If you're age 16 or older, you may visit the CMHA Adult Walk-In Clinic at:

- **1338 Fourth Ave. in St. Catharines Open Tuesdays 11:30am-5:30pm**

LGBTQ+ YOUTH LINE

A confidential, safe, and judgment-free place to talk for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning youth.

- **Call 1-800-268-9688**
- **Text 647-694-4275**
- **Live chat and explore resources at www.youthline.ca**

TEENMENTALHEALTH.ORG

This website is designed to share information about teen mental health and provide resources that can help you understand your mental health and help those you care about.

- **Start by visiting www.teenmentalhealth.org/learn**

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CODE OF CONDUCT

District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) believes that a school should be a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, accepted, and agree that it is the responsibility of all individuals to actively contribute to a positive school climate.

The DSBN believes that to foster a positive school climate that supports student achievement and well-being, a focus should be on prevention and early intervention strategies to address inappropriate behaviour. These standards of behaviour apply whether 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 climate.

The provincial Code of Conduct outlined in PPM 128, revised October 17, 2018, sets clear provincial standards of behaviour.

All DSBN schools will have a link to policy G-08: Code of Conduct for Schools on their website and if applicable, in their school agendas.

PURPOSES OF THE CODE

Subsection 301(1) of Part XIII of the Education Act states that “the Minister may establish a code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in schools”. Subsection 301(2) sets out the purposes of this provincial code of conduct, as follows:

1. To ensure that all members of the school community, especially people in positions of authority, are treated with respect and dignity
2. To promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community
3. To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility
4. To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict
5. To promote the safety of people in the schools
6. To discourage the use of alcohol, illegal drugs and, except by a medical cannabis user, cannabis
7. To prevent bullying in schools

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

Respect, Civility, and Responsible Citizenship All members of the school community must:

- Respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal laws
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity
- Respect differences in people, their ideas, and their opinions
- Treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there is disagreement
- Respect and treat others fairly, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability
- Respect the rights of others
- Show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others
- Take appropriate measures to help those in need
- Seek assistance from a member of the school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully
- Respect all members of the school community, especially persons in positions of authority
- Respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching
- Not swear at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority

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SAFETY

All members of the school community must not:

- Engage in bullying behaviours
- Commit sexual assault
- Traffic in weapons or illegal drugs
- Give alcohol or cannabis to a minor
- Commit robbery
- Be in possession of any weapon, including firearms
- Use any object to threaten or intimidate another person
- Cause injury to any person with an object
- Be in possession of, or be under the influence of alcohol, cannabis (unless the individual has been authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes), and illegal drugs
- Provide others with alcohol, illegal drugs, or cannabis (unless the recipient is an individual who has been authorized to use cannabis for medical purposes)

TEACHERS AND OTHER SCHOOL STAFF

Under the leadership of their principals, teachers and other school staff maintain a positive learning environment and are expected to hold everyone to the highest standard of respectful and responsible behaviour. As role models, teachers and other school staff uphold these high standards when they:

- Help students work to their full potential and develop their sense of self-worth
- Empower students to be positive leaders in their classroom, school, and community
- Communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents
- Inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person
- Engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias
- Commit an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property or to property located on the premises of the school

According to PPM 128, the following responsibilities are outlined to support a collaborative ownership of the code of conduct.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Under the direction of DSBN, school administrators take a leadership role in the daily operation of a school. They provide this leadership by:

- Demonstrating care for the school community and a commitment to student achievement and well-being in a safe, inclusive, and accepting learning environment
- Holding everyone under their authority accountable for their own behaviour and actions
- Empowering students to be positive leaders in their school and community
- Communicating regularly and meaningfully with all members of their school community
- Maintain consistent and fair standards of behaviour for all students
- Demonstrate respect for one another, all students, parents, volunteers, and other members of the school community
- Prepare students for the full responsibilities of citizenship

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STUDENTS

Students are to be treated with respect and dignity. In return, they must demonstrate respect for themselves, for others, and for the responsibilities of citizenship through acceptable behaviour. Respect and responsibility are demonstrated when students:

- Come to school prepared, on time, and ready to learn
- Show respect for themselves, and for others, and for those in positions of authority
- Refrain from bringing anything to school that may compromise the safety of others
- Follow the established rules and take responsibility for their own actions

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/Guardians play an important role in the education of their students and can support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe, inclusive accepting, and respectful learning environment for all students.

Parents/Guardians fulfill their role when they:

- Are engaged in their student's schoolwork and progress
- Communicate regularly with the school
- Help their student be appropriately dressed and prepared for school
- Ensure that their student attends school regularly and on time
- Promptly report to the school their student's absence or late arrival
- Become familiar with the provincial Code of Conduct, the DSBN Code of Conduct, and, if applicable, the school's Code of Conduct
- Encourage and assist their student in following the rules of behaviour
- Assist school staff in dealing with disciplinary issues involving their student

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Through outreach, existing partnerships may be enhanced and new partnerships with community-based service providers and members of the community (e.g., Elders, Senators, Knowledge Keepers) may also be created. Community-based service providers and resources that boards can use to deliver prevention or intervention programs. Protocols are effective ways of establishing linkages between boards and community-based service providers and of formalizing the relationship between them. These partnerships must respect all applicable collective agreements.

POLICE

The police play an essential role in making our schools and communities safer. The police investigate incidents in accordance with the protocol developed with the DSBN. These protocols are based on the Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol, 2015, developed by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Ministry of Education.

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COMMUNICATION

The relationship between parents and the school is a key component of student success. Our staff work hard to foster open communication with parents. If you have feedback or concerns about your student’s education, we invite you to contact your student’s teacher as a first point of contact. We use a variety of tools to provide families and the community with timely information about the school and activities.

These tools include:

[GFESS School Website](#)

[GFESS Facebook](#)

[GFESS Twitter](#)

[GFESS Instagram](#)

BELL TIMES

Period 1 - 8:10-9:15

Period 2 - 9:20-10:20

Period 3 - 10:25-11:25

Lunch - 11:25-12:00

Period 4 - 12:05-1:05

Period 5 - 1:10-2:10

AGE OF MAJORITY

Students who are 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.

PARKING/SAFE DRIVING

The parking lot is available for use by both staff and students. Students are reminded to drive slowly and carefully, obeying the 10 km/h speed limit.

PICK UP/DROP OFF

Pick up and drop off are some of the busiest times of the day, with many buses, students, and parents in our parking lot. The procedures we have in place are designed to support a safe, smooth, and efficient transition for everyone at the critical times.

To support student safety, we ask that you:

- Park in a location that does not block buses from entering or leaving the school property.
- Follow the traffic arrows and drive no more than 10km/h.
- Be mindful of walkers.

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SAFE ARRIVAL/ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Our school has an easy method for you to report your student's absences. With Safe Arrival, you can report daily absences and schedule absences by using one of the following:

- Calling the toll-free phone line at 1-866-479-3261.
- Logging on to the web portal at www.safearrival.com.
- Using your smart phone or tablet. Simply download the School Messenger app.

We ask that you report all absences prior to bell time for the current day.

To support the safety of our students, if your student is not at school and has not been reported absent, our staff will attempt to reach you and your contacts to confirm their whereabouts.

If a student arrives late to school or needs to leave early, they must sign in/out. It is the responsibility of the student to make up missed work.

DRESS CODE

Everyone has their own unique style and aesthetic. We celebrate students' individuality and respect their ability to express themselves. Our only expectation is that all students come to school dressed appropriately for a learning environment.

When deciding 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)

MSIP – MULTI SUBJECT INSTRUCTIONAL PERIOD

At our school, student success is supported by a creative timetable structure that provides a one-hour academic support for each student, each semester. The MSIP period may be used to:

- Complete work as instructed by classroom teachers
- Work quietly on individual homework or on assigned group work
- Use the MSIP travel privileges
- Complete missed tests, labs or in-class assignments
- Students in an MSIP class can sign-out of their MSIP period to visit the class of a teacher from whom they need additional academic support.

DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING – MSIP SCHOOLS

Demonstration of Learning is a secondary school initiative that applies to all Grade 9 and 10 Applied, Essential and Open level classes. The goal of Demonstration of Learning is focused on students achieving a minimum of 70% in all classes. Students who meet the criteria may be eligible to complete the course without writing the final exam and will not be required to come to school the day of the exam.

Any student who meets the criteria may choose to write the exam if they wish. The school staff will determine

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the eligibility in the final weeks of each term.

To be eligible to complete the course without writing the final exam, students must have met the following criteria:

- Final course mark for the semester work must be a minimum of 70%.
- Students have had no more than 9 absences from class – including MSIP class. In the event a student misses more than 9 MSIP classes the student will forfeit one exam exemption from an Applied or Open course. The exemption will be removed from the course in which the student has the lowest mark.
- All major course assignments, culminating activities and the DoL exemption unit have been completed (details about these assignments will be provided by the teacher).
- No suspensions from school.