

Message from Our Trustee

Dear families,

The past few months has been challenging in many aspect within the system and particularly in the community I serve. First and foremost, I want to applause your perseverance and resilience demonstrated as a parent and as a community member. As a father with a child in the system, I can relate to each and every single one of you how much we have contributed together thus far. I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping well and are healthy.

As a Board of Trustees, we know that our families have experienced this pandemic and the school closures in different ways, and I want you to know that my thoughts have been with you all.

With your voices and inputs, PPEs narratives has come a long way since February to date both in a public health domain to local domain, as I brought your voice to board. You know the most as a community. I want to thank you for both yours and the board concerting effort.

Since the extension of March Break, the school board moved quickly to introduce an equitable and comprehensive [Learning and Caring Plan](#) through an intentionally phased approach. Our plan focused on both supporting student well-being and providing continuation of learning for more than 127,000 students. A plan was developed that respected each family's unique situations and focused on maintaining a caring, safe and inclusive learning environment. To support this, over 20,000 pieces of technology were distributed to ensure that all of our students could access the learning opportunities available to them, and resources and plans were put in place to support all of our learners, including students with special education needs and English language learners.

More information about the Learning and Caring plan as well as tips, resources and supports for students and families to support well-being and online learning can be found at www.yrdsb.ca/covid19 and it is continuing to be updated to find best serve our students across the system.

We are all part of a larger community and I am inspired to see the many different ways schools, families and students maintained their connections with one another. It was also moving to see the many inspiring ways our school board, students, staff and families acknowledged our frontline workers and made contributions to the fight against COVID-19. As a school board, for example, we [donated over 145,000 pieces of personal protective equipment](#), including gloves, masks and more. Also, we have both [students](#) and [teachers](#) taking an initiating and innovative role in combating COVID-19

Each and every one of us has made a difference - in staying home as much as possible and following [public health guidelines](#). I know that this has meant making sacrifices.

To our graduating class of 2020, I know this is not the graduating year you had hoped for. I appreciate that the school closures will not affect your ability to graduate, however this unique situation and the need to postpone graduations has been disappointing. I remain tremendously proud of all of our graduates and look forward to celebrating this important milestone with you as soon as we are able to reschedule the graduation ceremonies.

In addition, I know that you have missed out on field trips, awards events, athletic banquets, spirit days, assemblies, our annual [Celebrating Student Success awards](#) and the many other ways we extend learning, connect as a community and celebrate the achievements of our students.

We have also been unable to gather together as we normally would in our schools and communities to celebrate or recognize important dates, including Sikh Heritage Month, Pesach, Good Friday, Easter (Western), Vaisakhi, Holy Friday, Orthodox Easter (Eastern), Ridvan, Jewish Heritage Month,

Asian/South Asian Heritage Month, Ramadan, Pride, National Indigenous History Month, Italian Heritage Month and Portuguese Heritage Month. As a Board, these dates of significance are important for us to acknowledge and we will continue to celebrate and value the wealth of diversity in our community.

While this learn-at-home experience is unprecedented to all of our students, I trust and believe that this undesired but necessary extended school closure is prudent and best to our community, for the safety and well-being for the students we serve.

As the school year comes to a close, I want to wish you and your families a safe, healthy and happy summer. I look forward to a time when we can welcome your children back into our schools again. We know that families have questions about what the return to school will look like. We will continue to share information with you as it becomes available. In the meantime, we encourage you to continue following public health guidelines and to stay connected.

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