

SCHOOL COUNCIL

newsletter

June is
Pride Month

Supporting your gender diverse child

Thank you for being an advocate for your gender diverse child. This resource is meant to help guide you and your child in the Ontario education system. In it, you will find, an introduction to gender identity development, an outline of what schools are responsible for, what rights your child has, an exploration of some of the issues that gender diverse students face, and a guide to transition planning.

egale.ca/awareness/supporting-gender-diverse-child/

Setting up a virtual Gender Sexuality Alliance space

A Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) can be an essential safer space for many LGBTQI2S youth. To ensure that this valuable space is not lost when meetings cannot happen in person, here are some tips and suggestions for how to run a virtual GSA. A Guide to Virtual GSAs (egale.ca/awareness/a-guide-to-virtual-gsas/)

Inclusive Language

DO	DON'T
"Can I get you folks something?"	"Can I get you ladies something?"
"We don't know who they were."	"We don't know who he/she was."
Dear Mx. _____ or Dear "Full Name"	Dear Ms. or Mr.
Partner/spouse/ significant other	Husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend
"There's a visitor/person here to see you."	"There's a woman here to see you."
Esteemed guests	Ladies and gentlemen

Affirming Language

DO	DON'T
Trans(gender) Person	Transgendered
Transgender is a noun, not a verb.	
Gay men	The gays
Person-centred language avoids dehumanizing people.	
LGBTQI2S	Homosexual
Use the labels and categories that individuals and communities have self-identified.	
"He is a man/was assigned female at birth"	"They used to be a female/want to be a man"
Recognize that a person's gender is real and enduring, and avoid confounding gender with a point-in-time event or longing.	
"They transitioned"	"They had a sex change"
Living as one's true gender is a process, not a point-in-time event. Further, "switching genders" implies that the individual "opted" to change who they are.	

My Grade 12 year in a pandemic: A reflection by Yonatan Eben-Ezra, Grade 12 Student, Westmount Collegiate Institute, YRDSB

The feeling looming over everyone's head during the past 11 months has been disbelief. Suddenly, sci-fi movies and the empty streets of an apocalypse do not seem so far-fetched. Days feel fluid and time moves slowly yet it is unbelievable that it has been over a year since this nightmare began. Some days, I expect to wake up from this surreal reality. For the average student that would be ideal, getting back to a year of childhood, freedom and the comfort of normalcy. Sadly, the tinted reality of our world this past year is inescapable. Through technology, we have had the opportunity to stay in touch with our peers and the world, despite the social disconnect that the pandemic has created. However, I have noticed that this connection has been the main source of isolation for our generation. Having the ability to be connected with the world at all times has created people who do not know how to be alone and consequently have never met themselves. We are bombarded constantly with notifications from apps, people, and the news, never finding a moment of silence for self-reflection or solitude. What is the result? A false sense of connection, one that imitates the real way that we as humans interact and form bonds, leaving kids with a hole we are tricked to believe is filled. During the pandemic, this has become dramatic. "When we were your age, all we had were board games and a landline." How many times can we hear that sentence until we feel guilt for resenting the devices that deceitfully connect us? And while we are constantly distracted by this link that we have with the world, we forget to get to know ourselves, our interests and who we really are as individuals. I think that before this pandemic, it was hard for kids and teens to step back and look at how they function. COVID put a pause on our fast-paced lives. There is nowhere to go, no one to see and nothing to get ready for. Something positive bloomed from this. Teenagers and kids had time to get to know themselves, which many of us may not have had the time to do before. Extracurricular activities were shut down indefinitely, leaving the question, "What do I do now?" The answer, at the beginning of lockdown, was nothing. The dark cloud that took shape over the first few months of the pandemic was significant. Everything was unsure, and no one had any answers. Now, we have endured a lot and learned to

adapt to this new lifestyle. Learning about ourselves has been a positive opportunity that COVID provided. The isolation of online school and even the in-person alternative plays another role in the experience of students during the pandemic. While it isn't by intention, online classes lack engagement, keep us unmotivated and feel like an overall headache. Students are burnt out and are only waiting for things to get back to normal. Without the balance that social interaction and change of scenery provided, the course load that once felt like a manageable challenge became exactly the opposite. What have we learned? We need each other to feel motivated and keep the natural flow of passing time viable. The bonds that we create, and the friendships we cherish are built upon human interaction, and although we've been stripped of it, we've been given an opportunity to grow and learn. Our generation is all about innovation, rejecting the old and outdated, and embracing the new. In a far-from-ideal situation, I've watched my peers find solutions, some more successful than others, to make up for experiences lost to COVID. From Zoom PowerPoint nights, turning parking lots into chill spots, going on walks in the freezing weather, and Netflix party evenings, there's no doubt that we've gotten creative to keep some sort of social life running. The sad reality is that for us seniors, our time left together is running out. We have accepted that we may never be able to embrace our favourite teacher on the last day of school, that we may never walk across the stage to receive our diplomas, throw our hats in the air, or get ready for prom. We will never be able to relive these rites of passage as they were set to be. But I am proud of us students for going on, studying, and doing our best to support each other and persist. Even though every day feels unreal, like we are stuck in some sort of temporal anomaly, one day things will work out. That is the beauty in the sparks of joy we make and solutions we find in these unprecedented times. The most remarkable thing about our unique situation as students living through this pandemic is that we are truly learning a lot, about ourselves, those around us, and most importantly, a new perspective of the world, unfiltered.

What is privatization and how is Doug Ford trying to privatize online learning in Ontario

Documents from Ontario's Ministry of Education mandate TVO manage online learning in public schools, but simultaneously insisting the public agency "commercialize" content produced by its online learning subsidiary—something teachers are calling a "privatization scheme."

In 2016, the Ministry of Education secured an \$84.2 million license with D2L, one of Canada's most prominent online learning companies, on an agreement extendable to 2028 to host distance eLearning classes. The classes would be hosted by TVO's longstanding distance education program, the Independent Learning Centre (ILC).

But "confidential" plans show the Ministry of Education wants to put TVO in charge of "central coordination" of all future eLearning offerings—instead of school boards. For more information, please visit: pressprogress.ca/doug-fords-government-wants-tvo-to-commercialize-online-learning-content-designed-for-ontario-schools/

What can you do to fight against privatization in our public schools?

Here is a public board whose Trustees and Chair are rallying against permanent online learning—https://www.thestar.com/local-burlington/news/2021/05/17/so-frustrating-halton-district-school-board-trustees-say-ontario-online-learning-plan-a-step-closer-to-privatization.html?rf&li_source=LI&li_medium=star_web_ymbii

A parent perspective from Shameela Shakeel, York Communities for Public Education

I know it has been said many times over the past year, but I absolutely hold the strong belief that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have made many of us realize how much we value our relationships with family members, friends and close contacts. We are Zoomed out and definitely longing for personal connections again. As a parent of four, I have seen the impact, some positive and some negative, on my tweens and teens as they have navigated this challenging time. I have also become even more aware of my own needs and others' needs for socialization and continuing to build a sense of community.

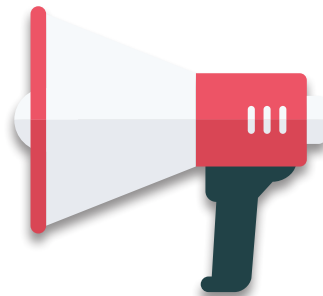
Community building and resource sharing have become passions for me. About 10 years ago, when I first joined School Council, I had the good fortune of connecting with two dynamic community advocates from Bully Free Community Alliance, who were also very active in School Councils at their children's elementary and secondary schools. They reached out by email and phone to School Council representatives at every elementary and secondary school in Newmarket. They set up and held monthly meetings for whoever could attend. At any given time, we had School Council representatives from at least 5 schools and sometimes as many as 10 schools. We talked about parent engagement ideas, fundraising strategies and events, how to manage expectations and to navigate conversations with school administrators, and how we could collaborate and extend our reach to more families in Newmarket. We share resources through Facebook and Twitter. We also pool our Parent Reaching Out (PRO) grants by submitting applications for the same events and speakers. Every year, our family of schools has coordinated a very successful speaker series covering topics such as youth mental health, bullying, special education, how to help our kids when they are witnessing and experiencing escalated behaviours in classrooms, parenting strategies, diversity and inclusion, and anti-Black racism. We have been fortunate to book many amazing speakers and we can confidently say that our families have benefitted from these experiences. I am proud to say that we had eight elementary schools plus two secondary schools in our Newmarket Parent Network this year. Despite having to hold only virtual events, we have managed to engage many parents for each of our five events, even during a pandemic.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

COVID-19 has created unique challenges for our students, schools, parents, province and communities. We want to know how you and your family have managed the return to remote learning, Ontario's third Stay-At-Home order and what you think the Ford government can do to ensure #SafetyForAll.

To complete the survey go to:
[www.hereforstudents.ca/
action/survey](http://www.hereforstudents.ca/action/survey)

One of the many benefits of building relationships among School Council representatives has been feeling a sense of community and establishing avenues for support. We regularly check in and ask one another for advice and ideas. We also share information about community resources and School Board resources. These connections have been crucial for many of us, particularly over the last year when we have felt disconnected in one way or another. If you haven't already reached out to neighbouring schools, I urge you to do so for the next school year and beyond. It truly takes a village to raise a child...and to build up our school communities!



Advocating for your Child in Times of COVID and Beyond

Recently, OSSTF/FEESO offered parent/community partners with the opportunity to participate in a webinar "Advocating for your Child in Times of COVID and Beyond" with guest speakers Laura Kirby-McIntosh from Ontario Autism Coalition, Theresa Pastore from Parents Engaged in Education, Shameela Shakeel from York Communities for Public Education and Nicole Cummings- Morgan from Community of Black Early Childhood Educators. To watch this webinar, use this link to our YouTube channel: youtu.be/LPe9uhXOXto

OSSTF/FEESO
AND COMMUNITY ALLIES PRESENT
**ADVOCATING
FOR YOUR CHILD
IN TIMES OF COVID
AND BEYOND**

OSSTF/FEESO is excited to announce two upcoming webinars for parents this summer on July 12 and on August 17. Please check out our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds to watch for upcoming information.

www.facebook.com/osstfnews

twitter.com/osstf

[instagram.com/osstf_feeso](https://www.instagram.com/osstf_feeso)



Education forum

Have you heard about the Ontario Federation of Labour Education Forum? It's a gathering of parents, community activists and students talking, candidly, about the future of education. The forum will be held on June 26 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. www.powerofmany.ca/education_assembly_uniting_workers_parents_and_students_from_child_care_to_post_secondary_through_education_inspiration_and_action_june



Summer reading to speak to young readers about race

How do you talk to young readers about the racism in the world and their own country? We have compiled a reading list of books that are a good start to conversations about racism, discrimination and #BlackLivesMatter. For each book on this list, we have provided a link to purchase from A Different Book List, which is a Black-owned and focused Canadian independent bookstore located in Toronto.

See more at: bookcentre.ca/news/canadian-books-tackle-racism#sthash.f7GfACVK.dpuf