



Supporting

MARCH 2021

Parents as Partners in Education

➤ E-newsletter from DDSB Parents Involvement Committee (PIC)



Message

from PIC Chair

To all parents, guardians and families, 2021 has continued to bring challenges and opportunities for families as we navigate stay at home orders, adjusted health and safety measures and supporting the well-being of our children. We understand that this has been a difficult time of many and feel privileged to be a part of this community alongside all of you. Over 600 participants attended the Parent Engagement Series event in February.

We are looking forward to the 16 upcoming Parent Reaching Out Grant projects and the Parents as Partners event on May 26.

We know that good schools become even better schools when parents are involved and this enhances student well-being and achievement. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to parent engagement and we hope you will participate in our upcoming events.

Stay safe and be well.

PIC Chair
Valrie Estridge

DDSB's Diverse Education Affinity Networks

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is dedicated to offering curriculum, programs and services that are grounded in Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP) and so do the Education Affinity Networks. These education networks operate independently and at arms length of the DDSB, they represent the District's rich and diverse cultural backgrounds and they help students achieve success. Learn more about how these networks are contributing to your children's education and well-being.



Durham Black Educators' Network (DBEN)

Purpose: Since 2005, DBEN has striving to optimize educational experiences for students, staff, parents and community contacts of the Black Diaspora within Durham Region.

Who: Members are DDSB employees who identify as Black. Other members who identify as allies, in addition to parents, caregivers, and community members.

Impact: Their programs are informed by CRRP and based on students' strengths, needs, and desire for leadership opportunities. Always grounded in a focus on curriculum – DBEN continues to personalize their focus on student success and excellence. Actively creating spaces where students will see themselves represented within the materials they learn from.

CONNECT

Instagram: [instagram.com/durhamblackeducators](https://www.instagram.com/durhamblackeducators)

Website: dben.org

Email: durhamblackeducators@gmail.com



Durham Educators' Network for South Asians (DENSA)

Purpose: To inspire and lead students and educators as well as facilitate change in our education system by embedding CRRP, and to engage parents in their child's learning.

Who: Educators, students and parents who identify as South Asian or the South Asian diaspora. There are also members who are allies and others who do not trace their roots to South Asia.

Impact: Engaging in meaningful conversations about identity, as well as build leadership capacity amongst its members. Hosting events and workshops for students and parents focussing on identity, CRRP and the needs of the communities they serve.

CONNECT

Twitter: twitter.com/densanetwork

Instagram: [instagram.com/densadddb](https://www.instagram.com/densadddb)

Facebook: [facebook.com/densadddb](https://www.facebook.com/densadddb)

Website: densa.ca

Email: densadddb@gmail.com



Muslim Educators' Network of Durham (MEND)

Purpose: Meeting the needs of a growing and diverse Muslim population in Durham by building positive and meaningful relationships through allyship with a focus on supporting student success and well-being through parent involvement and educator awareness.

Who: Welcoming members from all DDSB employee groups, additionally included are parent members, and student ambassadors.

Impact: Striving to remove barriers for members and creating access to success. Providing professional development for

educators, leadership opportunities, networking knowledge construction and building capacity. MEND establishes platforms for activating student and member voice through curriculum development and design, CRRP initiatives, and community engagement.

CONNECT

Twitter: twitter.com/MEND_DDSB

Email: questions@wearemend.ca



Keenanow Indigenous Educators' Network (KIEN)

Purpose: Working together to make DDSB a better place for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. KIEN supports DDSB employees and students who identify as Indigenous or allies in the pursuit of a healthy, informed, and collaborative community.

Who: They are Nations with distinct identities, cultures and histories and inherent rights. KIEN includes individuals who are DDSB employees representing Durham's Indigenous community and allies.

Impact: Providing support towards reconciliation, cultural revitalization and building strong, healthy, respectful relationships that will benefit Indigenous students, families, and educators. KIEN is committed to providing safe and positive spaces for employees to connect and explore their identity in a supportive way. Promoting equity, cultural growth, community interaction, student achievement, and a sense of belonging.

CONNECT

Website:

<https://sites.google.com/ddsb.ca/kien/home>

2SLGBTQ+ Pride Network

The 2SLGBTQ+ Pride Network is a new network. It is a safe and supportive space, inviting forum for all DDSB employees to share and discuss strategies and best teaching practices in addressing 2SLGBTQ topics in our schools. A Google classroom has been created for educators to share resources, lesson plans and teaching tools to support students.

Face on the Data

Meet a champion of Human Rights and Equity at the Durham District School Board, Devika Mathur

Devika Mathur joined the DDSB in the role of Human Rights and Equity Advisor in Feb 2020. She has been tasked with collaboratively building a culture of human rights at the DDSB.

Mathur has over 23 years of experience engaging and collaborating with diverse communities and working with vulnerable populations. She has been an investigator at the Ontario Human Rights Commission and has held a variety of leadership roles at Ontario Public Service and the Toronto District School Board's Human Rights Office.

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to have equal rights and opportunities without discrimination at school and at work.

Mathur explains, **“Human rights are important so that everyone is treated equitably in our schools and workplaces, and everyone feels welcomed, that they matter and that they belong.”** She is passionate about strategies and innovations that remove systemic barriers in large and complex organizations, like school boards. She believes that there are many opportunities to enhance culturally relevant and responsive services, service delivery, experiences and outcomes for all.

She is closely connected to the District, having attended DDSB schools as a student and she is thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the development of a human rights policy, procedures and initiatives in the service of the DDSB and its students, parents/caregivers and staff.

Since starting at the DDSB, Mathur has worked tirelessly to canvas as wide a range of opinions, thoughts and ideas as possible, consulting across the geographical ranges of the District.

As part of the first phase of consultations from October - December 2020, Mathur has logged:

- Engaged with **15** human rights and equity advisors from other boards across the province.

- **13** virtual consultation meetings with internal and external groups and committees



- **15** phone calls and **20** emails, direct input from DDSB families and community members
- **1450** survey participants

Mathur is currently processing the information from these consultations that will help inform the writing of policy and related procedures. The second phase of community consultations is expected to begin at the end of March with internal consultations and then in April with wider consultations in the DDSB community and beyond.

All DDSB community members will be invited to provide feedback on the draft policies and Mathur encourages everyone to visit the board's website and get involved in this undertaking.

The final versions of the policies and procedures will be presented to the Board before the end of the school year.

Parent Engagement Series Recap

The pandemic created the opportunity to host one of the largest online events in recent memory through the Parent Engagement Series “How to Talk to Your Children about Anti-Black Racism.”

On February 24, over 600 parents, guardians and DDSB staff attended the Parent Engagement Series, How to Talk to Your Children about Anti-Black Racism, with guest speaker Bee Quammie. Quammie is a writer, speaker, and social media influencer and a DDSB parent. In her discussion she defined systemic racism, colourism, stereotypes, and shared her lived-experiences as a Black woman and mother.

She said that it's important to talk to children about what they are seeing in the media regarding anti-Black racism. She encouraged attendees to use trust-worthy sources for help to explain these topics and that it's OK to say, 'I don't know'. This provides an opportunity to research the topic together as a family and work beyond it.



“We often underestimate children and what they understand”, Quammie states.

“When having discussions with children, a lot of it rests with us as adults.”

After Quammie’s session, members of DDSB’s psychological services and social work teams presented the recently launch **Anti-Black Racism Well-Being Toolkit**. They provided everyone with highlights of resources in the toolkit and they let families know how they could connect with them for support. Anyone who missed the discussion can view it by visiting:

<https://youtu.be/pyygYSgAR6k>

To access the Anti-Black Racism Well-Being Toolkit visit: <https://www.ddsbc.ca/en/family-and-community-support/resources/Documents/Your-Well-Being-Matters/Anti-Black-Racism-Toolkit.pdf>

SAVE THE DATE

Parents as Partners SYMPOSIUM 2021

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2021

Join us for a virtual event, beginning at 7:00pm.
Stay tuned for more details.

WeAreDDSB stronger together | PARENT ENGAGEMENT | DDSB Ignite Learning

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 31** Education Finance Committee Meeting
- April 8** SEAC Meeting
- April 19** Board Meeting
- April 27** Virtual PIC Meeting
- May 26** Parents as Partners Symposium

Connect with us



engagement@ddsbc.ca



twitter.com/ParentsDDSB