
Thursday, August 30, 2018

Dear Staff,

As we approach the end of the summer, I want to welcome you back and hope you have taken the opportunity to enjoy well-deserved rest and relaxation with family and friends.

This information is being provided to all educators in the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) to clarify teaching/learning expectations, specifically related to recent changes announced by the Ministry of Education regarding the elementary Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Grades 1 – 8). It is important to note that these changes only apply to the elementary Health and Physical Education (HPE) Curriculum and that secondary educators are expected to continue to use the 2015 HPE curriculum to develop lessons/units.

As you may be aware, earlier this summer, on behalf of the Board of Trustees and senior staff, Chairperson Peter Beacock and I issued a [joint statement](#) related to anticipated changes to the HPE curriculum. At that time, the Ministry of Education had not provided school boards with details, direction and/or resources related to those changes. That statement was guided by our unwavering commitment to equity and inclusion to ensure our schools are safe and welcoming for all students, staff and families. It articulated our concern that the curriculum should include important topics such as consent, gender identity and online safety.

Recently, the Ministry of Education released the [Health and Physical Education \(2010\) Interim Edition \(re-issued 2018\) for Grades 1- 8](#). Accompanying that release was messaging for parents about reporting non-compliance. It is unfortunate that this is the direction the Ministry of Education has chosen to take; however, the Ministry of Education has the legal authority to issue curriculum that must be followed. Therefore, the SCDSB expects educators to follow the Ontario Curriculum as prescribed. You are encouraged to continue to address parental concerns through regular channels.

The SCDSB's Program Department is currently reviewing the changes to the curriculum and developing appropriate resources to help our educators with implementation. We care deeply about our students and share a moral responsibility to ensure they have the latest information that will guide them in this ever-changing world. We also care about you and do not want you to have this additional burden, in an already challenging job. Recognizing that some elements included in the 2015 curriculum may not appear as evident in the recently revised curriculum, it does continue to emphasize that, *"in an inclusive education system, all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum...so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences"* (p. 57). As well, the re-released curriculum specifically addresses the concept of safety by noting, *"In health education, the study of healthy relationships, particularly with respect to bullying/harassment and violence prevention, should include a focus on sexist, racist and homophobic behaviour"* (p. 56). In addition, our commitment to our board's [Strategic Priority of equity, inclusion and diversity](#) will continue to guide our work. If a clear connection can not be made to the revised HPE curriculum, it is important to note that many former expectations are supported in other Ontario Curriculum documents. Our Program Department will map pathways for you so that you will still be able to teach important lessons without linking expectations to the former HPE curriculum.

Along with recent announcements to changes in the HPE curriculum, the Ministry of Education has provided preliminary information on a series of consultations that are expected to begin in September 2018, focusing on a wide variety of topics in addition to the HPE curriculum, including:

- improving math achievement
- financial literacy
- preparing students for jobs of today and tomorrow
- standardized tests
- banning cell phone use in classrooms

As additional information related to these consultations becomes available, that information will be communicated to staff.

As the Director of Education, I have every confidence that educators of the SCDSB will continue to deliver learning opportunities to students that will satisfy Ontario Curriculum expectations and meet the needs of all the students in their classes. Your commitment to equity and inclusion will help ensure our students are safe and feel welcome in your classrooms, which we know to be fundamental to their overall success.

Best wishes for another successful start to the school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "B".

Steve Blake
Director of Education