

News

Days of Awareness 2023-24

As you prepare your school's newsletter package, please review the Days of Awareness (NM1) www.scdsb.on.ca/about/equity_and_inclusion. Please include what is relevant to your school community in your March newsletter package.

March Break

Please note that March 11 to 15 is March Break for all SCDSB students. Please refer to the 2023-24 School Year Calendar on the SCDSB website for more information: www.scdsb.on.ca/elementary/planning_for_school/school_year_calendar.

April PA Day

Due to the solar eclipse set to occur in our region, the Simcoe County District School Board has made the decision to move the elementary school PA Day originally scheduled for April 26, 2024 to April 8, 2024.

Monday, April 8 is a PA Day for elementary SCDSB students. Please refer to the 2023-24 School Year Calendar on the SCDSB website for more information: www.scdsb.on.ca/elementary/planning_for_school/school_year_calendar.

Below is a summary of the activities planned for the April 8 PA Day:

April 8, 2024

Length: Full-day

Topic: Curriculum content, student mental health and well-being, skilled trades and apprenticeships

Host: Simcoe County District School Board

Presenters/Facilitators: Combination of administrator-facilitated and self-directed learning modules planned by central staff

All educators will engage in professional learning with a focus on mental health promotion and literacy planning for students. Educators will learn about Wayfinder, a sequenced guide that offers a variety of mental health lessons and activities organized by grade. Included are core mental health literacy lessons, lessons linked to HPE curriculum, learning activities, and tools to support and consolidate student learning. Professional learning for grades 7 and 8 teachers will include a specific focus on the implementation of the mandatory grade 7 and 8 mental health literacy modules. All educators will also learn about strategies to support students who are dysregulated in the regular classroom.

Kindergarten educators will work collaboratively to use the data from the early reading screener to determine and plan next steps for small group reading instruction. They will also explore the new Kindergarten Math Course of Study instruction and assessment resources and create plans for an upcoming topic of study that is responsive to the needs and interests of their students.

Grade 1 to 3 educators will learn about the revised Social Studies curriculum related to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples. They will review the Indigenous Education Department online resources, learn about the Human Library available for all SCDSB teachers, and plan a cross-curricular literacy lesson which embeds the new social studies content. They will also engage in self-directed learning about math content knowledge for teaching planned by the district math team. This learning will focus on strategies for teaching number and algebra.

Grade 4 to 6 educators will analyze and use their classroom reading data to determine and plan next steps for literacy instruction. They will also engage in self-directed math content knowledge for teaching learning planned by the district math team. This learning will focus on strategies for teaching number and algebra.

Grade 7 and 8 educators will learn about each of the SCDSB programs offered to students which may lead to a career in the skilled trades including: OYAP, Co-operative Education, SHSM, SWAC, and Dual Credit. Educators will also engage in case studies on the topic of skilled trades pathways and then discuss in whole group sessions. School administrators will facilitate this centrally planned learning experience. They will also engage in self-directed learning about math content knowledge for teaching planned by the district math team. This learning will focus on strategies for teaching number and algebra.

Collection and use of personal student information

As students progress from elementary school to secondary school, important personal student information which eases each student's transition to secondary school is shared. Sharing this information improves our ability to program effectively to benefit all students. The collection and use of personal student information for such purposes is authorized under the *Education Act*. Please note that all information used for the transition process is limited, secure, and protected at all times. Please contact Charlene Scime, Superintendent of Education, if you would like more information about the transition process at Trillium Woods Elementary School.

School climate survey

During the month of March, all students in Grades 4 to 12 will be asked to complete an anonymous and confidential online SCDSB School Climate Survey about their school experience. Participants will not be asked to provide their name or any other identifying information because all surveys are anonymous.

The survey results will provide valuable feedback to staff related to the SCDSB Strategic Priorities.

Similar to prior SCDSB school climate surveys, the questions cover a range of topics, such as:

- excellence in teaching and learning;
- mental health and well-being;
- diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- community; and,
- experiences of school safety and bullying.

Student survey

A sample version of the student survey is available on the SCDSB website. The online survey is completed while students are at school and takes 15 minutes or less to complete.

We understand that some students in the SCDSB may not be able to complete their school climate survey on their own and may require the help of staff. A modified version of the survey is available for students who require this assistance to complete their survey.

Questions?

School staff will be available to answer any questions or concerns a student may have. Questions about the 2023-24 SCDSB School Climate Survey can also be directed to schoolclimate@scdsb.on.ca.

The information that is collected will be used to help guide our schools in creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Thank you for your support!

Subscribe to Community Connects

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is excited to launch Community Connects, a new bimonthly newsletter for the SCDSB community. Our shared goal with this new tool is to keep our

community partners and stakeholders informed while nurturing relationships that are built on accountability, trust, and transparency.

To learn more and subscribe, visit the Community Connects page on the SCDSB website:
www.scdsb.on.ca/community/community_connects.

Kindergarten registration for September 2024 is open!

Kindergarten is the beginning of a wonderful journey of learning, and we want your child to begin their journey in a SCDSB school! Do you have a child who is turning four in 2024? If so, we invite you to register your child for Kindergarten. To register online or for more information visit:

www.scdsb.on.ca/kindergarten.

Child care programs available on PA days, holidays, and March Break

Child care programs for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6 are provided by independent, third-party child care operators in some SCDSB schools. To support your child care needs, some operators offer child care on PA days and holidays, including over the March Break (March 11 to 15). Registration in advance is required. Please contact the child care operator directly to discuss fees and to register. For more information and contact numbers, please

visit: www.scdsb.on.ca/elementary/planning_for_school/childcare_before_after.

Is your child starting JK or SK in September?

The Simcoe County EarlyON Child and Family Centres are excited to offer in-person and virtual programs that help prepare children and parents for Kindergarten. Parents/guardians and children will have the opportunity to interact together in a variety of school readiness activities.

These programs will look at and discuss: How Does Learning Happen, Self Regulation, Social Skills, and How to Get Ready to Start School. To register for a program in your area visit:

www.earlyonsimcoenorth.ca/GRFK.

Join us! A learning series for parents/guardians with Pine River Institute

Mental health and well-being continues to be a key strategic priority within the SCDSB. We are pleased to continue our partnership with the Centre for Family Initiatives at Pine River Institute (CFI@PRI) to provide several curated learning sessions focused on student mental health and well-being to SCDSB families.

There are eight webinars specifically planned for parents/guardians and other caregivers during this school year. The remaining webinars are:

March 28, 2024 Building parents' resiliency
April 18, 2024 Vaping, weed, and alcohol

We hope you save these dates in your calendar and join us for these learning opportunities. For more information and to register, please visit the SCDSB website: <https://bit.ly/3jGaC74>.

Pine River Institute is a live-in treatment centre and outdoor leadership experience for youth aged 13 to 19 struggling with addictive behaviours and often other mental health issues. Combining therapy with a fully-accredited education program, PRI reinforces the healthy life skills required for a successful future. CFI@PRI extends PRI's knowledge, experience and evidence-informed treatment approach to families and care providers in the community to support youth mental wellness and prevent the need for more intensive interventions. Learn more about PRI by visiting their website at www.pineriverinstitute.com.

Interested in learning more about the ways that the SCDSB supports students with special education needs and their families? Join us for a virtual special education information series

During the 2023-24 school year, the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is hosting virtual special education outreach sessions to assist parents/guardians in learning more about programs, supports, and ways that we work together to support students with special education needs.

Reading strategies

March 19

6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Supporting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

April 16

6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Every day mental health strategies

May 14

6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Participants are asked to register in advance. Information to access the sessions will be shared via email with individuals who have pre-registered. Learn more about each session and how to register on the SCDSB website:

www.scdsb.on.ca/elementary/special_education/special_education_outreach_sessions.

Registration now open for summer eLearning!

Create flexibility in your timetable and earn a credit! The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is offering summer school eLearning courses in July 2024 for current high school students or adult learners who are interested in creating flexibility in their schedule, earning a new credit, or upgrading a previous mark. Students can advance online learning skills, earn missed credits, or fast-track preparation for graduation or post-secondary in just four weeks.

Summer school program details can be found on the Learning Centres website at

www.thelearningcentres.com/programs/summer_school.

The SCDSB also supports secondary students in participating in a variety of EDUTravel credit programs in July and August. EDUTravel programs are offered in a variety of destinations including Canada, USA, and Europe. For more information including costs, destinations, credits, and dates of commitment, visit:

www.edutravelforcredit.com.

Grade 8 students – register now for summer eLearning!

Earn a reach-ahead credit with summer eLearning in the SCDSB! The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is offering summer school eLearning courses in July 2024. Current Grade 8 students are invited to complete a reach-ahead credit, creating flexibility in their high school timetables!

For summer 2024, courses available to students entering Grade 9 are:

- CGC1D - Issues in Canadian Geography
- PAF1O - Healthy Living and Personal Fitness Activities
- CHC2D - Grade 10 Academic - Canadian History since WWI
- CHC2P - Grade 10 Applied - Canadian History since WWI
- CHV2O/GLC2O – Civics/Careers

eLearning is fully supported by certified teachers who are available electronically daily. Summer school program details can be found on the Learning Centres website at

www.thelearningcentres.com/programs/summer_school.

Looking for ways to support your child in learning math? Check out the SCDSB's new Math at Home resource!

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is committed to supporting students in understanding and doing mathematics. The SCDSB has developed the Math at Home resource, a compilation of family-friendly, accessible, and engaging math resources and tools designed to engage families in supporting their children's learning.

The Math at Home page on the SCDSB website, available at www.scdsb.on.ca/MathAtHome, includes a variety of math games, number talks, problem solving opportunities, and practice tasks for students from

pre-Kindergarten to Grade 10. Families will learn about how to support the development of positive math mindsets in their children and discover activities with connections to math in the world. The resource also includes a variety of print and digital resources for students and their families.

Math @Home parent and caregiver series

It's back! The SCDSB math team is pleased to offer virtual sessions for parents and caregivers of SCDSB students. These sessions focus on practical and fun ways to support children with their mathematics learning and engagement at home. The first 200 registrants will receive a Math @Home kit of resources to use at home. Participants must pre-register for each of the sessions.

Games to support your child's math learning @Home

Thursday, April 4, 2024, 7 to 8 p.m.

This session is for parents, caregivers, and their children. Playing games at home is a great way to support child(ren)'s math development. In this session, several games will be explored, and participants will have the opportunity to try the games with their children during the session. The guided portion of the session will be 45 minutes in length followed by 15 additional minutes for further game play or to ask questions of our math facilitators. Bring your child(ren) and your math kit to this session!

Participants must pre-register. Registered participants will receive a kit of hands-on resources that will be sent to the school indicated on the registration form. Use this link to register: <https://bit.ly/24MathAtHome>. If you couldn't attend the previous sessions, visit the Math at Home page on the SCDSB website to view past sessions: www.scdsb.on.ca/MathAtHome.

Engaging in literacy during March Break

Local libraries offer many fun and engaging activities for families during March Break. Visit www.simcoe.ca/lists/locations/libraries.aspx for a list of libraries in Simcoe County. You will find a link to access each library's website to view their upcoming events. The Barrie Public Library is offering a puppet show at their downtown location. Make sure to check out what your local library has to offer during March Break!

March cyber awareness topic: backup your data

Why does backing up your data matter? Data loss can happen unexpectedly due to various reasons: hardware failure, accidental deletion, or even cyber threats. By regularly backing up your data, you create a safety net that allows you to recover important files and memories.

Access the ECNO cyber awareness tip sheet to stay informed about this month's topic and explore additional resources: https://ecno.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ECNO-CAM-Calendar-23-Aug3023_BackupData.pdf

Let's make March a month of digital preparedness!

New Grade 7/8 Mental Health Literacy Modules support student mental health and well-being

As of January 2024, the Ministry of Education introduced a series of three modules per grade to support the existing mental health literacy expectations within the grades 7 and 8 Health and Physical Education curriculum. This series of three, 40-minute modules per grade will be delivered by educators to support the existing mental health literacy expectations within the Health and Physical Education curriculum. They're not new learning – they offer ways to enhance the delivery of the existing curriculum and focus on mental health literacy.

This learning will help equip students with inclusive, culturally responsive, evidence-informed knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being. They align with and support the work we do in the Simcoe County District School Board to support student mental health.

The modules were informed by extensive consultation with parents/guardians, students, cultural, and community organizations.

There are important reasons to bring these modules into the classroom:

- Students want to learn more about mental health at school (<https://smho-smsso.ca/online-resources/hearnowon-2021-student-voices-on-mental-health-final-report/>).
- This learning helps students develop skills that support positive mental health.
- Mental health learning supports learning in all other areas.
- This learning can encourage conversations and help students in need reach support.
- As caring adults in the lives of young people, we want students to be well!

Feel free to watch the introductory video that provides more information:

<https://vimeo.com/857720241/3877843c8c?share=copy>.

Mental health promotion strategy of the month - *Tense and Relax*

Well-being is a Strategic Priority in the Simcoe County District School Board, and our mental health and well-being department provides monthly strategies to support student and family well-being.

This month's strategy is *Tense and Relax*. This strategy helps children and youth develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate.

To practice *Tense and Relax* at home, together with your child, model this relaxation practice and work your way down your bodies, slowly tensing and relaxing each of your muscles. Discuss with them how each area of their body feels before the exercise, and then discuss how it feels afterwards. Have your child get comfortable; this exercise can be done when standing, sitting, or lying down. Children can be encouraged to: bring their shoulders up to their ears, hold for a count of 3, slowly relax for a count of 3, and repeat; push their arms down towards to floor, hold for a count of 3, slowly relax for a count of 3 and repeat; squeeze their hands into fists, hold for a count of 3, slowly relax for a count of 3 and repeat; squeeze their stomach in as if trying to fit between a fence, hold for a count of 3, slowly relax for a count of 3 and repeat; push their feet down to the floor, hold for a count of 3, slowly relax for a count of 3 and repeat.

Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4mQm0hux1Q&t=1s to watch a video that guides you through a *Tense and Relax* muscle relaxation exercise.

See our elementary (<https://smho-smsso.ca/online-resources/sel-posters/>) and secondary (<https://smho-smsso.ca/online-resources/sel-posters-for-secondary/>) social-emotional learning poster series for a tense and relax classroom poster than can be used at home.

Follow along the Mental Health and Well-being social media accounts (@SCDSB_MHWP) to see how well-being is being supported in our schools.

Foster families needed in your community!

Children in our community need you! There is an urgent need for foster homes in Simcoe Muskoka. Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions is looking for diverse foster care providers who understand children's needs. The needs are diverse and range from babies to teens. Open your home to a child/youth and receive training, support, and between \$85 and \$155 per child and per day. Do you know anyone who may be interested? Visit <https://familyconnexions.ca/fosterconnexions/> to inquire, apply, and for more information. You may also call 705-726-6587 ext. 4.

Information provided by Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions

YouthReach

Every child should have the opportunity to participate in programs such as dance, music, and sports – but we know not all families can afford the registration fees. YouthReach is a Simcoe County based charity that helps provide kids with the opportunity to get involved in the programs they want to participate in. For more information and to apply visit: www.youthreach.ca.

Information provided by YouthReach

Sleep

Help your child get a good night's sleep by:

- Setting a consistent bedtime and wake-time for your child (even on weekends). Children aged 5 - 13 need at least 9-11 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night.
- Encouraging your child to establish a relaxing bedtime routine that includes reading, taking a bath, or listening to music.
- Setting up a sleeping space with your child that is cool, dark, and quiet.
- Keeping technology out of your child's bedroom – it interferes with natural sleep cycles.
- Discouraging caffeinated products, as they may interfere with your child's ability to fall asleep.
- Being a role model by making sleep a priority in your own life!

Looking for more information? Call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-5720 to speak with a public health nurse or visit www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.

Information provided by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit