



81 Batteaux Road, RR#2, Collingwood, ON L9Y 3Z1 Phone: 705-445-1827 Fax: 705-443-4018

Website: <http://not.scdsb.on.ca>

Principal: Melissa Mortimer

SASe (Nottawa Office): Leslie Beattie

Superintendent: Michael Giffen

Trustee: Robert North

## December 2021 Newsletter

### *December Character Trait: Empathy*

Empathy - we strive to understand and appreciate the feelings and actions of others. More information about character education can be found here:

[www.scdsb.on.ca/about/character\\_education](http://www.scdsb.on.ca/about/character_education).

### **Backpacks and Back Pain**



For years, students have complained about how heavy their backpacks are, and it turns out that could be more of a problem than parents may have realized. Recent studies show that carrying a heavy backpack to and from school on a regular basis can lead to bad posture and back problems. [One study found](#) that 33.5 percent of students have back pain stemming from heavy backpacks, indicating that this is a fairly common issue. So, how heavy is too heavy, and how can students avoid getting back problems from their backpacks? Here's what the newest studies suggest.

### **The Impact of a Backpack on the Spine**

Recent studies have focused on whether students are hurting their spine when they wear heavy backpacks, and the answer appears to be that they are. In particular, [a study titled “Backpack Forces on the Spine”](#) published by the U.S. National Library of Medicine NIH found that when the average student uses a backpack, the stress on the back may be more than 11 times the weight of the bag. That’s because most students slouch as they carry a heavy backpack, compressing the spine.

More specifically, when researchers in this study added weight to the model spine when it was straight, they saw that it experienced the equivalent of 7.2 times the weight for every pound. But when they added weight to a spine that was hunched over, it experienced 11.6 times the stress of every pound. So, they were able to conclude that heavy backpacks, in general, put a lot of stress on the spine, especially considering that students’ spines are still growing and are, therefore, susceptible to long-term problems that could follow children to adulthood. And bad posture—including the hunched position many students take on under a heavy backpack—could make the issue much worse.

### **Guidelines to Avoid Back Problems**

It’s clear that heavy backpacks can lead to back issues for many students. But just how heavy is too heavy? Dr. Ken Hansraj, who co-authored the above study about stress on the spine, says that for young children, [backpacks should be no heavier](#) than 10 percent of their body weight.

This means a 50-pound 7-year-old should carry a backpack that weighs 5 pounds or less. Older children can handle slightly heavier backpacks, as Dr. Hansraj said a 150-pound teen can safely carry up to 23 pounds in a backpack, while most heavier adults can likely handle about 40 pounds. Considering that a single textbook can weigh a couple of pounds on its own, it may seem hard to keep backpacks as lightweight as the recommendations encourage. But it may be possible if students become more selective about which books they transport back and forth from school to home every day, and if they use lockers or similar options that schools might offer.

The weight of the backpack isn’t the only detail to pay attention to. Students should also focus on having good posture, as standing up straight will reduce the stress on the spine. Additionally, they should always use both straps on the backpack, ensuring those straps have been properly tightened.

Clearly, the issue of overly heavy backpacks isn’t one we should ignore. The latest studies should urge teachers and parents to take this common complaint seriously. Helping students implement these tips would be a good start when it comes to reducing back injuries from backpacks.

**Reference:** Learning Liftoff. Published Feb 5, 2019 New Study Issues Warnings for Students with a Heavy Backpack, <https://www.learningliftoff.com/warnings-for-students-with-a-heavy-backpack>

**Article by:** Melanie Silver BSc PT, Registered Physiotherapist, Body ‘n Balance Creemore

## **Change of Learning Mode Requests (Elementary)**

As previously communicated to SCDSB families in May 2021, Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) elementary school families are being provided an additional opportunity to request a change in learning mode (In-Person or Learn@Home) for their child(ren), where available space exists for Term 2 (February 22 to June 30, 2022).

As you are aware, the Ministry of Education directed school boards to develop plans for the 2021-2022 school year that included both In-Person and Learn@Home options, as well as flexible and responsive options should the need arise for schools to pivot based on local public health conditions. Operating successful instructional programs for both In-Person and Learn@Home programs requires considerable coordination and planning, taking into account multiple factors such as existing enrollment, school composition, continuity of cohorts and collective agreements.

While it is expected that the vast majority of elementary students will remain in their existing learning mode for the remainder of the school year, the SCDSB recognizes that individual situations may have changed; therefore, SCDSB families will be provided with the opportunity to request a change to their child(ren)'s mode of learning effective February 2022, where available space exists.

Families requesting a change of learning mode from Learn@Home to In-Person learning are asked to contact their child(ren)'s home school directly prior to December 10, 2021, to discuss whether space is available to accommodate their request.

Families requesting a change of learning mode from In-Person to Learn@Home are asked to complete an online request form. The online form will be emailed to families on Monday December 6 and be available from Monday December 6 at 9 a.m. and close Friday December 10 at 4 p.m. It will also be available on the SCDSB's public website ([www.scdsb.on.ca](http://www.scdsb.on.ca)).

The deadline to request a change of learning mode is December 10, 2021.

It is important to note, requests for a change of learning mode will only be accommodated where available space exists.

## Holy Days, Holidays and Heritage Recognition occurring in December



### Daily COVID-19 self-assessment

All students and staff are required to complete the daily COVID-19 self-assessment prior to entering SCDSB schools and buildings, using the provincial self-assessment tool. Students or staff with symptoms must stay home from school. To access the COVID-19 self-assessment tool, please visit <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>.

## **Updates to the School Screening Tool for the 2021-22 school year - International travel**

Recently, the COVID-19 school and child care screening tool was updated to reflect the return to school requirements for students who are returning from international travel. Individuals who are unvaccinated and returning from international travel may not attend school or child care for 14 days upon their return. For further clarity, while unvaccinated children and those under the age of 12 are exempt from federal quarantine if they travelled with a fully vaccinated companion, they may not attend school or child care for 14 days upon their return. Individuals with all other quarantine exemptions (e.g. travelling for cross-border custody arrangements, travelling for medical treatment) may continue to attend school or child care.

### **Considerations prior to travelling this winter**

Is your family thinking of travelling this winter? Here are some things to consider before you make the arrangements:

1. Learn about travel advisories related to COVID-19 where you are headed, before leaving - <https://bit.ly/3Czlk5l>
2. Be sure you understand how the Quarantine Act applies to travelers arriving back in Canada - <https://bit.ly/3HAIOfT>

Students who have travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days if they do not qualify for a federal quarantine travel exemption. Your child's ability to return to school after travel outside of Canada will depend on whether or not they are fully vaccinated. If they are fully vaccinated, they may be exempt from federal quarantine. If they are not fully vaccinated, they are not to attend school/child care for 14 days, even if they traveled with a vaccinated companion.

A reminder that all students must complete the COVID-19 Screening Tool before going to school each day. This includes questions related to travel and guidance for those who have travelled. More information can be found on the Government of Canada website: <https://bit.ly/3ctaLqa>.

Information provided by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

## **Standards of behaviour and consequences for student action related to racism, bias or hate**

At the SCDSB, we are committed to maintaining safe, inviting and supportive school environments, and recognize that all students have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in our schools. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive school climate.

We want you to know that any incident of racism, bias or hate will not be tolerated. Any such incident is treated very seriously with immediate action and consequences in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act, and consistent with our values and obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Students who engage in acts of racism, bias or hate will face severe consequences as a result of their actions. Please take a moment to review the SCDSB Code of Conduct with your child(ren). The Code of Conduct sets clear standards of behaviour and specifies consequences for student actions that do not comply with these standards.

We are dedicated to educating our students and staff about the injustice and impact of systemic racism. We continue to work with students, staff, parents/guardians and community partners to ensure that our schools are the safe places they are intended to be for all students.

Building intercultural understanding through Grade 11 English courses: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices will be offered in all SCDSB Secondary Schools Starting September 2022 (for secondary schools only)

The SCDSB is committed to supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action, and the building of intercultural understanding within our schools. The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit studies curriculum offers a variety of courses that can provide all students in Ontario schools with a broad range of knowledge and skills needed for work in fields such as law, environmental and other sciences, health, economics, politics, social services, and education. With the skills and knowledge they acquire in the program, students will have much to offer in work, continuing study, and community service settings after graduation. We know that it is important that students be connected to the curriculum; that they see themselves in what is taught, how it is taught, and how it applies to the world at large. This curriculum recognizes that the needs of learners are diverse, and helps all learners develop the knowledge, skills, and perspectives they need to be informed, productive, caring, responsible, healthy, and active citizens in their own communities and in the world.

The Simcoe County District School Board is proud to announce that by September 2022, all secondary schools will offer the following as the compulsory English Credit:

(NBE3U) English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices English

(NBE3C) English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices English

(NBE3E) English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices English

These courses offer the same expectations, preparation and strands as previous Grade 11 English courses, but have an additional Strand A: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives and Text Forms in Canada. This additional strand builds upon the learning for all other strands within the course. The full curriculum document and expectations are linked here: [First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies \(Revised 2019\)](#).

Please feel free to contact the school at 705-445-1827, if you have any questions.

### **Communication to families regarding inclement weather days**

Please note that APM A3020 – Inclement Weather, 3.1.2 states that “parents/guardians are to be reminded, in writing at appropriate times (October and January) each school year, that it is their responsibility to decide whether or not it is safe for their child(ren) to leave for school under severe weather conditions.”

If you have not already shared this information with families at your school, please do so via your school newsletter, email or the communication method that you use to reach your families. Our communications department has provided the following message:

#### ***Inclement weather and bus cancellation information reminder***

All information regarding cancelled buses in Simcoe County is posted on the Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC)'s bus information website at [www.simcoecountyschoolbus.ca](http://www.simcoecountyschoolbus.ca). Our school is in the [insert zone for your school] zone. When buses are cancelled, schools remain open for student learning, unless otherwise noted. School staff are expected to plan for such emergencies in order to transition students who are unable to attend due to inclement weather, to their online platforms (Google Classroom and/or SCDSBhub [Brightspace by D2L]) and continue with academic programming. It is always a family decision whether or not it is safe for their child(ren) to leave for school under severe weather conditions.

The Consortium and bus operators try to make the decision to cancel school buses before 6 a.m. and make every effort to post announcements before 7 a.m. Inclement weather cancellations are effective for the whole day and buses cancelled in the morning will not run at the end of the day. You can follow the Consortium on Twitter [@SCSTC\\_SchoolBus](https://twitter.com/SCSTC_SchoolBus) for bus cancellations and other information. You can also subscribe to receive bus delay notifications here: <https://scstc.ca/Subscriptions/Login.aspx>.

### **High school information events for Grade 8 students**

Is your child starting Grade 9 next year? High school information events will happen virtually this winter. Student leaders and staff at the school will give an overview of what's new and what to expect. Please visit your school's website for more information.

Parents/guardians and students invited to learn about planning for apprenticeship at virtual event on Dec. 2

On Thursday, Dec. 2 at 7 p.m., parents/guardians and students in Grades 7-12 can learn about preparing for a career in the skilled trades at an interactive virtual session presented by the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB). Participants in High School Planning for the Skilled Trades – Let's Get Started! will learn about apprenticeship pathways and have the opportunity to ask questions about how to explore a career in the trades while in high school.

The virtual presentation will include information about the skilled trades as well as a question and answer segment. Participants are invited to submit questions in advance here: <https://bit.ly/32cfnPN>. To virtually attend the presentation, visit the SCDSB Facebook event page for more information: <https://bit.ly/3Fpds8D>.

## **Grade 1 French Immersion information**

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) offers French Immersion (FI) at select schools throughout Simcoe County beginning in Grade 1. The goal of the FI program is to enable students to communicate in French with a high level of proficiency, enabling them to function with ease in both French and English. Upon graduation from the program, students will communicate in French with confidence in a wide variety of real-life situations.

The SCDSB board-wide electronic application dates for the Grade 1 FI program for all sites will be Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending at 4 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 17, 2021. Consistent with last year's process, the online FI application process will be a randomized lottery system. To access the FI application form, visit: <https://bit.ly/3c0Md7K>.

Register now for Night School (semester two) to complete high school, prepare for post-secondary education

Night school offers secondary school credits in a variety of subjects for students completing their Ontario Secondary School Diploma, and for students who are preparing for post-secondary education. Subjects include math, English, chemistry, biology, physics and social science. All night school courses this year are offered virtually using Brightspace/D2L with opportunities for synchronous classes, small groups and one-on-one sessions each evening with the teacher in addition to asynchronous coursework. Classes are held two nights per week from 6 to 9 p.m. and run given sufficient enrollment. Learn more at: [www.thelearningcentres.com](http://www.thelearningcentres.com).

## **School playground structures are closed for the winter**

Every winter, school playground structures are closed. Students are made aware of this during school hours through announcements and staff reminders during breaks. This may not be well known throughout the community, despite signs indicating that playground structures are a

winter hazard and are closed. The Canadian Standards Association regulations make recommendations for the depth of ground cover required to minimize injuries (e.g., sand, pea gravel or wood chips). These surfaces cannot be maintained when the ground freezes. Injuries from falling would be more significant on frozen ground. We strongly recommend that you do not allow your children to play on any structures while the ground is frozen.

## **Math @Home parent series**

Thank you to everyone who completed the parent survey. The winners of the prizes will be notified in January. The SCDSB math department is offering three evening virtual sessions for caregivers of SCDSB students. These sessions will focus on practical and fun ways to support students with their mathematics learning and engagement at home. Participants will receive a math pack of resources to use at home, and must pre-register for each of the sessions by visiting this link: <https://bit.ly/SCDSBMathAtHomeRegistration>.

### **Having fun with math facts @Home**

Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2022 7 to 8 p.m.

This session will explore practical, intentional, and fun ways to practice math facts at home. Participants will leave with ideas, games, and activities to support their child in becoming fluent with their math facts.

### **Making math connections @Home**

Thursday, March 24, 2022 7 to 8 p.m.

This session will explore where we find numbers, patterns, measures, and shapes in our daily lives.

Participants will learn about practical ways to help their child notice and wonder about the math in their world.

### **Problem solving @Home**

Wednesday, April 26, 2022 7 to 8 p.m.

This session will explore how to encourage children to be active thinkers and problem solvers, both in math and around the house. Participants will learn about how solving problems at home can help their children solve problems in math class.

Participants must pre-register for the sessions they wish to attend. Registered participants will receive a math @Home pack of hands-on resources that will be sent to the school indicated on the registration form.

## **Is it time for your child to have a dental check-up? Let us help!**

The Oral Health Team at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is now available to provide a variety of dental health services for children and youth aged 0–17 at our various clinic locations. We can provide dental screenings, answer questions and guide you through the dental options that are available for your child through Healthy Smiles Ontario. If you don't have a dentist, we can provide you with options of dental offices that can help.

This is your personal invitation to contact us to discuss your child's dental needs and to ensure their dental concerns are addressed. For more information, contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit:

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 705-721-7520 or toll free at 1-877-721-7520, ext. 5867.

Information provided by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit