



Dear Parents/Guardians,

We would like to welcome your family to our Catholic school community. This *Come Grow With Us* package has many items we hope you will find useful, including:

- Tip sheets outlining how our school year works, your role as a parent, as well as information about academics and school life. All of this information is available on our board website at www.smcdsb.on.ca/ESL. You can also use the “Google Translate” feature to read the information in your first language.
- The booklet covers a wide range of topics explaining routines, procedures and activities in our elementary and secondary schools. If English is not your first language, we encourage you to find someone in your community to help you review the material in the booklet.
- The DVD will give you a visual sense of what life is like in our elementary and high schools.

There are employees at your school ready to answer your questions at any time. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

School Information

School Name: _____

☒ School Address: _____

☎ Telephone: _____

Fax Number: _____

Principal: _____

Vice-Principal: _____

Secretary/Office Administrator: _____

Guidance Counsellor: _____

Progress report sent home: _____

Report cards sent home: _____

This school is:

scent-free

nut free

shellfish free

School Hours

Classes start at: _____

Lunch: _____

Dismissal bell: _____

Transportation

Your child will:

Walk to school

Take a bus to school

☞ Your child's bus number will be: _____

☞ Bus stop pick up time: _____

☞ Bus stop drop off time: _____



Secondary Academics

Welcome to High School

We are happy that you have chosen a Catholic education for your child and we are looking forward to helping your family make an easy transition to school life in Canada. This tip sheet will give you details about academics in Grades 9 to 12.

Semester System

Our high schools use a semester system - a semester covers one half of the school year, and every school year has two semesters. Semester one begins the first day of school in September and ends the last school day in January. Semester two follows from the beginning of February to the end of June.

Normally, your child will study four subjects and earn four credits in each semester. Half credits are available for some courses, like civics and career studies.

Credits

All secondary schools in the province of Ontario use a credit system. Students must earn 30 credits to graduate from high school with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

One credit is equal to a 110 hour course, which students must complete with a minimum mark of 50%.

There are compulsory credits (credits that your child must take) and optional credits, so that your child can choose courses that suit his or her individual interests.

What Your Child Needs To Graduate

To graduate from high school students must earn the following credits:

Compulsory Credits⁴ credits in English (1 credit per grade)

- 1 credit in French as a second language
- 3 credits in mathematics (at least 1 credit in Grade 11 or 12)
- 2 credits in science
- 1 credit in Canadian history
- 1 credit in Canadian geography
- 1 credit in the arts
- 1 credit in health and physical education

- .5 credit in civics and .5 credit in career studies
- 4 credits in religion

Plus:

- 1 additional credit in English, or French as a second language or a Native language, or a classical or international language, or a social science and the humanities, or Canadian and world studies, or guidance and career education, or cooperative education
- 1 additional credit in health and physical education, or the arts, or business studies, or cooperative education
- 1 additional credit in science, or technological education, or cooperative education

Plus:

- 4 credits in religion – students at a Catholic school must take four religion courses - one in each year of high school.

8 Optional Credits

Using the high school's *iPlan Course Calendar* that lists all courses, your child will choose optional credits based on his/her interests and plans for the future. Whether your child will enter directly into the workforce, complete an apprenticeship or attend college or university, these credits help prepare for life after high school.

Report Cards

Students will receive four provincial report cards throughout the school year (two each semester).

You will be invited to a parent/teacher/student interview each semester, to meet the teachers and discuss your child's progress in courses.

You can contact your child's teacher any time during the school year if you have question or concerns.



Secondary School Year

Welcome to High School

The school year in Ontario is likely different from what you are used to. We have outlined some important dates so that you can become more familiar with our school year calendar.

In Ontario, the school year begins in September and ends in June. Your child will receive a calendar at the beginning of the school year. This calendar can also be found on the school's website or the board's website at www.smcdsb.on.ca. The calendar will let you know about holidays, professional development days, exams and other important dates.

What is a Professional Development (PD) day?

You will notice PD Days marked on your school year calendar. These are days set aside by the school board for the training and development of our school staff. Students will not be required to attend school on PD Days.

Some Important Dates

September

Labour Day is the first Monday in September and is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed. School usually begins the day after Labour Day. High school students will begin their first semester of courses.

October

Thanksgiving is the second Monday in October. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

November

Remembrance Day is November 11th. Schools are not closed on Remembrance Day. In school, students will celebrate this day by remembering those who sacrificed their lives in military service.

December/January

Schools are closed for a total of two weeks at the end of December and beginning of January for Christmas holidays and New Year's Day. Please check your school's calendar to find out when Christmas holidays begin and when students are expected back at school.

High school students will usually have final exams at the end of January. Final exams are tests given at the end of the courses studied in the first semester.

February

The second semester usually starts at the beginning of February. Your child will begin four new courses in the second semester.

The third Monday in February is Family Day. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

March/April

In mid-March, schools are closed for one week for March Break. Schools are also closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May

Victoria Day is a Monday near the end of May. This is a holiday for all government offices; some businesses and schools are closed.

June

High school students will take their final exams for semester two at the end of June.

The last day of school is at the end of June, following final exams. Students will then be on summer holidays for the months of July and August.



Secondary School Procedures

Welcome to High School

To help you adjust to school life in Ontario, we have outlined some tips about attendance, daily routine, clothing, food, safety and transportation. You can find more details about each of these items in your child's agenda or on your school's website.

Safe Arrival and Attendance In Ontario, students between the ages of 6 and 18 are required to go to school. Our schools take attendance every day to ensure your child has arrived. If your child is going to be late or absent, it is important that you call the school immediately. If you don't get through to someone at the office, be sure to leave a message. For example, if your child is sick you need to call the school and let them know.

If you know your child is going to be away for a longer period of time, write a note or call the school to notify them. A note explaining your child's absence, and signed by a parent or guardian, should be sent with your child when he/she returns to school. Students over the age of 18 can legally write their own note.

Daily Routine

Your child's school will have its own schedule and routine. Talk to the staff in the office or student services department to find out specific information about your child's schedule.

What to Wear in High School

High school students wear a school uniform. Schools have established dress codes so that learning environments are safe, positive and respectful. Students are always expected to wear modest and appropriate clothing. Some courses (such as gym class) may require students to wear specific clothing and footwear. You can find more information about uniforms and dress codes on your school's website.

School Supplies

Students will receive textbooks for each class. They are responsible for returning the textbook at the end of the semester. If textbooks are lost or damaged, then students will have to pay for these books.

Students should bring the following items to school: lined paper, dividers, pens, pencils, and binder. Some courses may require additional supplies.

Lockers

Students will be assigned a locker for storing their school supplies and clothing. Students are encouraged to ask for assistance with locks if needed. Lockers should not be used to store valuable property because the school is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Eating At School

Students will have a lunch break scheduled into their personal timetable. Your child can bring a lunch to school or purchase one from the cafeteria. The cafeteria will sell hot and cold meals as well as snacks. Purchasing lunch is optional.

Student Transportation

Not every student qualifies for daily bus rides – in order for a high school student to qualify to ride the bus, the distance to travel one way from home to school must be more than 3.2 kilometres. To be safe, everyone must follow rules set out by the bus company and the school.

Students who do not qualify for school bus transportation will come to school in other ways, for example: walking, driving or being dropped off by parents.

Inclement Weather

If the roads are considered unsafe for buses to transport students to and from school because of bad weather, then the buses will be cancelled. Even when buses are cancelled, schools are open for student learning. Updates about bus cancellations can be found on your school's website or through the local news reports.



Parent Role

Welcoming Your Entire Family

Families are at the centre of our Catholic school communities. We want you to become involved in your child's education. A positive relationship between parents, teachers and students is an important part of achieving success at school.

We know that your entire family is adapting to life in Canada and that attending school is only one of the major changes that your child is experiencing.

Adapting To Life in Canada

The transition to life in Canada may take longer than initially expected. Your child and family may go through many stages before feeling completely at home.

Stage 1

Arrival in Canada - Your family may feel excited about beginning a new life in Canada.

Stage 2

Culture Shock - Members of your family may begin to feel depressed or overwhelmed with all of the change they are experiencing.

Stage 3

Recovery - As your family becomes more familiar with life in Canada, you will all begin to feel more confident about your new lives.

Stage 4

Acceptance - Your family will become fully comfortable with life in Canada. Some members of your family may take longer to reach this stage than others. *Many Roots, Many Voices – Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom*. A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, 2005. p. 39

Regardless of what stage you and your child are at, we hope that you will become involved with life at school.

How To Get Involved

Participating in School Events – attending special events such as plays, assemblies, and barbecues to meet teachers, school staff, other children and parents. This also shows children that you are interested in their school experience.

Volunteering – our schools are always looking for parent volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, contact your school.

Communicating with Your Child's Teacher – you will have opportunities to meet with your child's teacher through parent/teacher/student interviews. You can also contact your child's teacher directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Parent Council – every school has a parent council, called the Catholic School Community Council. This group of parents and staff help make decisions, improvements, and changes in the school. You are welcome to become a member of this team. Please contact your school's principal to find out how to join the Parent Council.

Tips For Parents

- Continue to use your first language (reading, writing, speaking) with your child. Research confirms that the stronger you are in your first language the easier it is to learn a new language.
- Become familiar with the school before your child's first day of classes. Ask for a tour of the school when you first arrive.
- Encourage your child to ask questions if he/she is having a difficult time or if he/she is unsure of school work or social situations.
- Proficiency in English may take up to seven years. Be patient with yourself and your children.
- Contact the school for help if you have any questions.

Who to Contact at Your Child's School

If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact your child's school. There is professional staff at our schools ready to provide you with answers and support.

Principal - the person responsible for the entire school, students and staff.

Vice-Principal - the person who is second in charge, and helps the Principal with discipline and the general organization of the school.

Teacher - the person responsible for planning, teaching, evaluating, and reporting on your child's education. This is the person you should talk to if you have questions about your child's academic progress.

Guidance Counsellor - the person who will help make course selections and choose career paths. This person will also help you communicate with subject teachers. If your child is having any difficulty, socially or academically, the guidance counselor may be able to help.

Chaplaincy Team Leader - the person responsible for the faith development of students. This person organizes retreats, masses, and faith activities within the school.

Office Assistants - the people who will answer the phones, verify attendance, and contact you in the event of an illness or emergency.