A Parent’s Guide to High School

www.peelschools.org

We inspire success, confidence and hope in each student.
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Welcome to High School

Get ready for what could be the most exciting and important years your teen spends in school. For the first time, teens will have to make choices about what they will study and what career pathway they will choose.

Here is some more of what you can expect in high school:

- more courses and programs to choose from
- greater emphasis on career pathway exploration
- new teachers and classmates
- additional extracurricular and social opportunities
- increased independence and responsibility
- greater need for organization and time management

Whatever path your teen chooses, we want to make sure your entire family is ready to meet the challenges and embrace the many opportunities that await your teen upon graduation.

This guide will provide you with a snapshot of what you need to know to help your teen be successful.
Get involved

Student success is positively affected by parent involvement, so why not get involved in your teen’s education?

When schools and parents work together, students are more motivated and engaged in their school experiences. Explore the Parents section of www.peelschools.org to:

• find out how to get involved and volunteer in schools
• download tip sheets and other parent resources
• learn about the board’s Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
• find out about School Councils

Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
The purpose of PIC is to:

• support, encourage and enhance meaningful parental involvement within schools and across the Peel board
• seek advice and ideas of School Councils and other parents and partners as they plan and implement strategies to involve more parents at the regional level
• work collaboratively with the school board
• develop strategies for increasing parent engagement and outreach, including parents who find involvement more challenging
• support student success

To find out more about PIC, visit www.peelschools.org/PIC.
Stay connected

The school website is a great way to stay connected and up-to-date on school news. School and board websites feature an electronic subscription service.

By entering your email address, you can subscribe to receive school and Peel board news. Select the items you want to receive, fill out the information requested, and you will receive emails on a regular basis. Look for the Subscribe button on the board’s home page, and click on the Subscribe link on the left-hand side of your school website to register to receive updates.

The Peel board’s website – www.peelschools.org – is also an excellent source of information about the school system. Visit the Parents section for tips to help you boost your teen’s success.

Student Handbook

At the start of each school year, high school students are expected to review their Student Handbook, which will be available in print or on the school’s website. The handbook includes information about the school’s mission, vision and values, introduces students to the school’s Code of Conduct, outlines the role that students, parents and school staff play in students’ academic successes, and describes the assessment and evaluation policy. It is expected that both parents and students review the handbook together.

ParentConnect

Many schools provide parents with a login so that they are able to access information about their teen’s attendance, credit history and diploma status, as well as course selection and other information. Look for the ParentConnect button (on the right-hand side of the school’s website) to find out how you can register. You can also contact your teen’s school for information.
Tip: Make sure the school has your accurate contact information. Messages are sent via phone, text and email through the synrevoice system.

School year calendar

The school year calendar is posted on www.peelschools.org/calendar and includes:

- the first and last day of classes
- holy days and holidays, including breaks
- Professional Activity days
- turn-around days
- exam days
- year-end reporting days

School-based activities are sometimes posted on school website calendars. Check your school website and subscribe to receive notices about upcoming activities.
Leaving school property

High school students are permitted to leave school property on their lunch hour and/or study periods. Many students choose to go home or visit nearby restaurants and businesses.

Students do not need special permission to leave school property. Since attendance is taken by period in high school, schools are able to track attendance patterns to determine if students are not coming back from their lunch periods. Staff will intervene appropriately, which may involve a call home.
Attendance matters

Many things affect your teen’s success. One of the most important factors is regular and timely attendance. Getting to class on time and avoiding absences are critical if your teen is to get the most out of school.

Reporting an absence
If your teen will be absent, phone the school as soon as you can before the school’s start time. If an absence is not reported, parents will receive a call later in the day if their teen is absent from part or all of the school day.

Lates
Parents and students should refer to the school’s late policy for instructions on what to do if a student is late to school or to class.

Vacation planning
When it comes to planning family trips, please save them for scheduled breaks from school. Learning is cumulative, building on skills and concepts that were introduced before. Missing classes for an extended period of time can make it challenging to relearn classroom concepts and rejoin their peers.

Extended absences
If a student will be away from school for more than three days and less than 15 days, a signed note from a parent must be submitted to the office before the absence. The note must state the dates of the absence, student’s name and what date the student will return.

If a student will be away from school for more than 15 days, a signed note from a parent/guardian must be submitted to the office. The note must state the start and end dates of the absence and the reason for the absence. If a note is not provided, the student will be removed from the school’s register.
Equity and inclusive education

The Peel board’s Equity and Inclusive Education Policy #54 reflects the board’s commitment to provide and maintain safe and healthy environments conducive to learning and working for all. The policy affects all areas of the board’s programs, guidelines and practices, ranging from curriculum and assessment to religious accommodation, creating a welcoming school climate, and preventing discrimination and harassment.
Religious accommodation
To learn about the Peel board’s religious accommodation process, human rights, accessibility and our commitment to equity, visit www.peelschools.org/aboutus/equity.
Safe places to learn

As a parent, nothing is more important than your teen’s safety and well-being. We share that priority. We’re committed to providing a healthy, supportive learning and working environment for our students and staff.

Peel schools provide a safe environment for staff and students to work and learn. The Peel board has many procedures to ensure safety, including regular fire drills, evacuation plans and criminal record checks for staff and volunteers.

A focus on safety

The Peel board’s Safe Schools Policy is based on the Education Act and the Human Rights Code. The policy is available from the school or on www.peelschools.org – search for Policy #48 in the search bar.

Code of Conduct

Each school has its own Code of Conduct, based on provincial and Peel board policies, that is included in the Student Handbook. It applies to all members of the school community including students, parents/guardians, volunteers and school staff, whether they are on school property, on school buses, at school-authorized events or activities, or in any other situation that may impact school climate.
All members of the school community have a responsibility to respect and honour the school Code of Conduct, to behave appropriately and to take responsibility for their own actions.

**Bullying prevention and intervention**

Across the Peel board, schools use many programs and initiatives to prevent bullying and to intervene when it happens. Every school has a Climate for Learning and Working Team that develops a Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as part of the School Success Plan.

Schools take the issue of bullying very seriously. Once a report of bullying has occurred, the board’s Safe Schools Policy #48 and the school’s Code of Conduct guide appropriate progressive discipline supports and consequences for all students (or individuals) involved. We encourage parents with concerns to contact the school directly.
We encourage students to self-advocate — to reach out to an adult at school that they trust — if they find themselves overwhelmed or discouraged. Staff members are open to hearing their concerns and will assist in ensuring the appropriate supports are put in place.

Guidance counsellors, teachers and administrators are there to help. School-based psychologists, social workers and student success teachers are also available to support students who may be experiencing difficulty or who are struggling.

If you need to speak to someone about your teen’s well-being, please contact a school guidance counsellor or speak to one of the vice-principals.
Assessment, evaluation and reporting

“The primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning.”

Processes around assessment, evaluation and reporting are governed by Ministry of Education and board policies. In April 2010, the ministry published Growing Success, a policy document that directs the assessment, evaluation and reporting of student achievement in Ontario schools, from grades 1 to 12. Growing Success aims to update, clarify and coordinate ministry policy, and achieve fairness, transparency, equity and consistency across the province.

For more information about Growing Success, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reportcard.html.
How are students assessed?
Assessment is the process of gathering, from a variety of sources, information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectation in a subject or course. Teachers will use information gathered from observations, conversations and products to provide feedback to students. In the classroom, there are three types of assessment: assessment as learning, assessment for learning, and assessment of learning.

Term work
Students’ final grades are determined by the learning they demonstrate throughout the term with special emphasis on their most recent and most consistent demonstration of each course’s expectations. Learning may be demonstrated through presentations, conferences, websites, tests, and/or performance tasks.

Some of the assessments completed by students during the term will be formative (assessment as and for learning), or serve the purpose of informing the student (and teacher) of how closely they are meeting the success criteria and what they need to do to improve. Other assessments are summative (assessment of learning)—the teacher will evaluate student learning and assign a grade or level.

Learning skills and work habits
Learning skills and work habits allow students to know how to learn more effectively, develop their potential as independent learners and take ownership over their own learning. They are evaluated separately from student achievement of course expectations.

How will my teen be evaluated?
Evaluation is the process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria and assigning a value to represent that quality. It is based on assessments of learning that provide data on student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/subject/course, often at the end of a period of learning.
Teachers gather evidence of student learning taken from observations, conversations and student products (e.g. conferences, demonstrations, inquiries, tests, labs and assignments) over time and use this evidence along with professional judgment to determine students’ grades. Determining a report card grade involves teacher interpretation of evidence and should reflect the student’s most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence. These evaluations form the basis of report card grades or marks, and are made so that progress can be communicated to students and parents.

**Final Evaluations**

Final evaluations occur according to the Peel board’s published calendar. Information about how each school runs final evaluations will be distributed to families in September. The final 30 per cent of the student’s grade is determined during the final evaluation period, which occurs in the final few weeks of each semester. During these periods, students are asked to complete tasks that demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired over the entire semester. Students must be present for this important time period as these learning opportunities must be done under the supervision of a teacher.

**Spares/study periods**

When students are in grades 9 and 10, they are not eligible for study periods (sometimes referred to as ‘spares’) throughout the day. As students move into the senior grades, and the pace of their learning changes, they can designate one period as a study period. If students choose to do this, they must use their time wisely, either at home or at school, while managing their workload and accommodating extracurricular or other responsibilities.

**Reporting**

Reporting is the process of communicating with parents and students about student learning. Report cards are one part of continuous communication that provides students and parents with descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful and timely to support improved learning and achievement. Midterm reports are issued
once in the middle of each semester. Final report cards are issued at the end of each of the two terms — in February and in June.

**EQAO**
The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent provincial agency funded by the Government of Ontario. EQAO’s mandate is to conduct province-wide tests at key points in every student’s education and report the results to educators, parents and the public. EQAO measures students’ achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to Ontario Curriculum expectations.

EQAO assesses students throughout their school career:
- grade 3 assessment of reading, writing and mathematics
- grade 6 assessment of reading, writing and mathematics
- grade 9 assessment of mathematics — all students working toward a credit in grade 9 academic or applied mathematics are required to participate
- grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) - successful completion of the test is one of the requirements students must meet to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma

EQAO distributes an individual report to each student who writes the tests, and posts school, school board and provincial results on its website. Schools and school boards also create their own reports of EQAO data for distribution to parents and others in their communities. Learn more here: [www.peelschools.org/parents/EQAO](http://www.peelschools.org/parents/EQAO).

**Homework**
The Peel board supports the inclusion of homework in school programs, and recognizes the need for educators to clearly and effectively communicate the learning expectations related to homework.

The Peel board recognizes that homework expectations must be balanced with the student’s life outside of school. As a result, it is recommended that homework not be assigned on scheduled holy days and holidays as outlined on school calendars.
The homework policy is available from the school or on [www.peelschools.org](http://www.peelschools.org) — search for Policy #70 in the search bar.

**Peel schools support BYOD**

Today’s students are already technology leaders. Research tells us that if we reflect this in their learning experiences, we will increase engagement, which leads to improved student success. This is why our board’s vision for 21st century teaching and learning, and our *Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)* approach are so exciting.

Learn more about how Peel students’ increased use of technology helps them be successful today, and in the future at [www.peelschools.org/byod](http://www.peelschools.org/byod).
Student services

Choosing one’s path in life requires time and planning. Whether it involves further education and/or training, participating in an apprenticeship or directly entering the workforce, schools have a wealth of resources and opportunities to help students explore their interests, skills and abilities.

MakingMyWay.ca offers online resources and tools to help you make informed decisions and explore your options after high school. There are five main pathways to consider:

- apprenticeship
- college
- community living
- university
- workplace

Each pathway provides valuable skills and experiences that will be required in the future job market. Students should have confidence in their ability to implement, revise and adapt their pathway plan throughout their lives as they and the world around them change.

Students will be asked to consider four key questions of Career/Life Planning (Creating Pathways to Success: An education and career/life planning program for Ontario schools, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013) throughout their high school journey:

- Who am I?
- What are my opportunities?
- Who do I want to become?
- What is my plan for achieving my goals?
myBlueprint

www.myBlueprint.ca/Peel is an online planning tool used by all students from grades 7 to 12 in the Peel board. This planning tool is available for students and parents at home and includes features such as:

- high school course selection
- goal-setting
- learning style inventories
- financial planning
- interest inventories
- occupation planner
- resume and cover letter builder
- comparing post-secondary options and programs

Course selection

There are four different course types for grade 9 and 10 students:

- Academic courses focus on theoretical and abstract components. These courses best serve students who are independent learners and who enjoy a fast-paced learning environment.
- Applied courses focus on practical applications and concrete examples. Lessons are scaffolded to support students.
- Locally developed courses are designed for students who need more flexibility and support.
- Open courses are optional courses in areas such as The Arts, Health and Physical Education and Business Studies.

When selecting courses students and parents should consider the recommendation from the previous year’s teachers. Students can select a variety of types to best suit their learning strengths and needs, for example, a mix of academic and applied courses.

Course selection is a continual process and should be based on an individual student’s interests, abilities and goals. To assist with this process, students are strongly encouraged to speak to their teachers about proposed classes, read course descriptions online, talk to their counsellors and parents, and speak to students who have previously taken these classes.
If students wish to change their courses, they must see their guidance counsellor as soon as possible. Please note that requested changes may not be possible.

**Chart Your Course**

*Chart Your Course* is the common course calendar for the Peel board. This important document outlines courses available to students in Peel secondary schools. The guide is available at [www.peelschools.org/students/commoncoursecalendar](http://www.peelschools.org/students/commoncoursecalendar).

**Diploma requirements**

In order to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), a student must:

- earn a minimum of 30 credits, including 18 compulsory credits and 12 optional credits
- complete 40 hours of community involvement activities
- successfully complete the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)* or the *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC)*

**Community service – 40 hours**

Students must complete 40 hours of community involvement activities to graduate, which they can begin to accumulate in the summer before they enter grade 9. The student is responsible for finding and completing 40 hours of volunteer work on his or her own. The school will not be directly involved in finding volunteer placements for students or monitoring students while they are completing their volunteer work.

Parents are responsible for checking potential placements before the student begins volunteering. More information, including a list of eligible and ineligible activities, can be found at [www.peelschools.org/students/40hours](http://www.peelschools.org/students/40hours).
Pathway programs

Peel board pathway programs provide a range of diverse and engaging learning opportunities, courses and programs, both inside and outside the classroom. These programs are available to students beginning in grade 11 and 12.

Co-operative Education Programs
The Co-operative Education Program (co-op) allows students to earn credits by integrating course curriculum with learning at a work placement. They can be designed to include up to four credits per semester to a maximum of 12 co-op credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Students are monitored and supported in their learning by the placement supervisor and co-op teachers. For more information, see your guidance counsellor or visit www.peelschools.org/CoopEducation.

Dual Credit Programs
Dual Credit programs provide students with a unique opportunity to earn both college and non-compulsory secondary credits at the same time. College credits earned may be applied to a college program after high school. Choose from a variety of courses at colleges such as: Centennial, George Brown, Humber, Seneca and Sheridan. For more information, see your guidance counsellor or visit www.peelschools.org/DualCredit.

Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)
The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) provides students with practical, hands-on training in a skilled trades environment while they earn credits towards their high school diploma and explore a potential career. Students wishing to pursue a career in the trades may choose to become a registered
apprentice and member of the Ontario College of Trades. For more information, see your guidance counsellor or visit www.peelschools.org/OYAP.

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)
In the SHSM program, students focus their learning on a career area of interest. These sector-specific programs, unique to each high school, enable students to earn sector-recognized certifications towards the SHSM seal diploma. For more information, see your guidance counsellor or visit www.peelschools.org/SHSM.

Regional Programs
The Peel board is committed to meeting the needs of all learners. This not only means accounting for the differences between students, but offering innovative programs that extend beyond the traditional classroom. Information about our Regional Learning Choices Programs and where they are offered is available on the Peel board website at www.peelschools.org/RegionalPrograms.

Summer and Night School
Summer School and Night School credits are offered through the Peel board’s Continuing Education department. Credits are offered in class or online to both Peel and non-Peel students.

Learn more about Summer School by visiting the Continuing Education – Credit Summer School section of the Peel board’s website at www.peelschools.org/adulteducation/summerschool.

Learn how to register for Night School by visiting the Continuing Education – Credit Night School section of the Peel board’s website at www.peelschools.org/adulteducation/nightschool. Night School registration takes place each year in September and January/February.

eLearning
Learning online is an option that can suit the varied schedules, interests and strengths of students. eLearning can serve as an option for students when they cannot access a course through traditional timetabling. More information about eLearning is available at www.peelschools.org/parents/programs/online.
• If you have specific questions or concerns about the education of your son or daughter, the first person to talk to is your teen’s teacher.
• If you need extra help, or have more general questions, your school principal is there to assist.
• Your local school trustee is elected to represent your interests and is always ready to hear and discuss your suggestions or concerns. If you do not know the name of your trustee, visit the Trustee section of www.peelschools.org or your school website.
• If you have general questions about curriculum, call the Curriculum & Instruction Support Services department of the board at 905-890-1010 (or 1-800-668-1146) ext. 2559.
• All curriculum material is available at your teen’s school. Curriculum documents are also available on the Ministry of Education’s website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum.
We inspire success, confidence and hope in each student.

Visit www.peelschools.org/PIC to learn how you can support and encourage parent involvement.

Visit www.makingmyway.ca to explore pathway programs and career opportunities.

Parent Involvement Committee

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THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM:

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