



Balaclava Elementary School

PROUD SCHOOL OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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February 2024 Balaclava School Newsletter

Principal's Message

In 2023, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) released a report detailing the impact of cellphone use in classrooms. Schools, boards, and governing bodies around the world have struggled to define how to find the balance between the use of technology to support and enhance educational outcomes versus the negative impacts of harmful use of social media and loss of focus during learning time. UNESCO's report: *"shows that some technology can support some learning in some contexts, but not when it is overused or inappropriately used. In particular, the use of smartphones can disrupt learning in classrooms."* (UNESCO Smartphones in School? Only when they clearly support learning, 2023).

At our own microcosm of Balaclava, this research resonates. Educators use technology to support student engagement, differentiation, and accessibility. However, a considerable amount of time is spent each day trying to help students manage the appropriate use of technology and reduce its distractability.

HWDSB permits students to bring a personal device to school, however, it should be noted that ***at no time is a student ever required in Grades K to 8 to bring a personal device to school*** that hasn't been assigned by the school for special education needs.

Does your child need to bring a personal device such as a cell phone to school? Absolutely not from an educational point of view. We understand that some parents want their child to have a device to support safe transit to and from school, and there are a small number of cases where a personal device supports medical needs. But consider this information from that same UNESCO article about the distraction of smartphones to student learning: *"Even just having a mobile phone nearby with notifications coming through is enough to result in students losing their attention from the task at hand. One study found that it can take students up to 20 minutes to refocus on what they were learning once distracted."*

What can you do as a parent/guardian? Consider whether your child needs to bring a device to school at all, weighing out the benefit with possible risks. If you feel they do need a device, consider whether it needs to be with them during the school day or kept out of easy reach. Consider blocking pop up notifications and discuss appropriate uses of technology at school (and at home). Consider discussing with your child whether you want them to be device-free at lunchtime; time to eat and chat with peers without devices can be supportive of student mental health and well being.

This month, all grade 4 to 8 students will be provided with a Personal Device Agreement to bring home and discuss with a parent/guardian. Please review the school's expectations of

appropriate use and your own expectations for your child. It will feature a contract that should be signed by both the student and a parent/guardian and be returned to school.

If you have questions about how appropriately your child uses a device at school, or if it is distracting them from learning to their full potential, consider reaching out to your child's teacher for their observations.

To read the UNESCO synopsis article: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/smartphones-school-only-when-they-clearly-support-learning>

To read the complete UNESCO report:

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi>

Kindergarten Registration is Here

Children born in 2020 or 2019 who are not currently registered at school are now eligible to register for JK (2020) or SK (2021)! Registration begins on Monday February 5th online. Please go to the website for more details and the online registration information:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/kindergarten/>

Balaclava Closed to Out of Catchment

Please note that all students are expected to attend their in-catchment school in HWDSB. In a small number of schools, there may be opportunity to apply for an out of catchment placement. Please note that Balaclava is on the closed to out of catchment list for 2024-2025 school year. For more information, please see: <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/find/#tabs-113>

Change in School Calendar

HWDSB Board of Trustees recently voted to amend the 2023-2024 school year calendar to change the next PA Day (Professional Activity day – no school for students). Instead of occurring on Friday March 1st, the PA day will now take place on **Monday April 8, 2024**. This change is due to a total solar eclipse occurring in the afternoon of April 8th that may negatively impact the health and well being of students, families, and staff at dismissal. March 1st is now a regular school day, to be attended as per usual by students and staff. The PA days that remain for the 2023-2024 school year are: Monday April 8 2024, Friday June 7 2024, and Friday June 28 2024. Here is the link to the revised Day 1-5 school year calendar: <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Elementary-5-Day-Cycle-2023-24-School-Year-Calendar-Revised-January-2024.pdf>

Elementary Remote Learning 2024 – 2025

From January 30 to February 6, families committing to remote learning for 2024-2025 will be asked to complete a Remote Learning Intent to Register form in the Parent Portal. For more information about this process, please go to: <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/blog/elementary-remote-learning-2024-25-register/>

Home and School Hot Dog Day Change

Please note that the Home and School Association had planned a Hot Dog Day and Blue Jays Spirit Day for April 8th, which is now slated to be a PA Day. The organizers are working on

finding an alternate day to serve the hot dogs that families have already ordered on Cheddar Up. We will update everyone soon with that new date.

Valentine Candy Grams

Balacava student leadership is selling candy grams Feb 9, 12, and 13 for \$0.50 each at nutrition breaks. Students may purchase a card, fill it out to send to a friend and our team will deliver the card and a treat on February 14th to the classes. Share the love!

Calendar of Events

Feb 1, 15, 29	Home and School Booster Juice Days
Feb 2	Experience a Day at Waterdown District High School, Gr 8s, a.m.
Feb 5	Kindergarten registration begins online
Feb 6, 13, 20, 27	Home and School Pizza Days
Feb 8, 22	Home and School Sub Days
Feb 8	Boundary Review Meeting, 6 p.m.
Feb 12	Hot dog day
Feb 13	Class 23A and 3A to Westfield Heritage Village
Feb 14	Spirit Day: Red and White Day
Feb 19	Family Day, no school for staff or students
Feb 29	Xello course entry, Gr 8s, a.m.