

DDSB

Durham District School Board

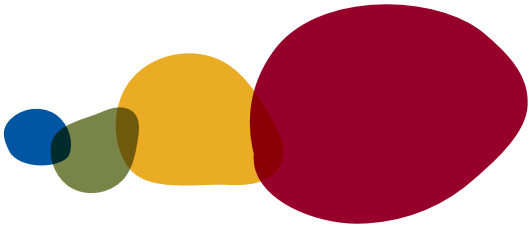
Milestones for Success:

Honouring Every Student's Journey

AUGUST 2026

At the Durham District School Board (DDSB), we are dedicated to fostering meaningful learning by recognizing and celebrating the unique strengths, interests, and entry points of every student. Grounded in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), our classrooms and learning environments are designed to be inclusive, adaptable, and supportive, ensuring that all learners can thrive and reach their fullest potential.

I am a Learner.



I am beginning a journey that is mine.

I am small, but my dreams are big. I am full of wonder—curious about how my hands can create, how words and numbers come together, and how the world around me is full of possibilities. I learn through play, through movement, through asking endless questions. I learn by listening, by watching, by doing and by trying again.

I am not just a student—I am a thinker, a creator, a builder, a dreamer. I learn in different ways, at my own pace, in my own style. I learn in classrooms, on the land, from my family, from my community and from my experiences. I use tools, supports and relationships to help me thrive, learning is not one thing—it is many things, and every way I learn is valid.

I am discovering how to share, how to take turns, how to be part of something bigger than just me. I am learning to express myself—through words, pictures, gestures, technology and movement. I am figuring out how to solve problems, how to ask for help and how to offer my help to others.

I am growing in ways that can be seen and ways that can't. Some days, I take big steps. Other days, I take small ones. Some days, I stumble—but I always get back up, because that is how I learn. My learning is supported by adults who care about me, challenge me and believe in me.

I am also learning about others—their perspectives, their experiences and the many ways we grow stronger when we listen, support and respect one another. I am finding ways to be kind, to understand and to contribute in ways that make a difference. I am supported to grow with dignity, care and encouragement.

As I grow, so do my dreams. I am learning to set goals, to advocate for myself and others, and to make meaningful contributions. My learning connects to my future, shaping the person I am becoming—not just in what I know, but in how I show up in the world.

I don't have to know all the answers right now—because learning is not about having everything figured out. It is about becoming, discovering and growing into the person I am meant to be.

I belong. I am becoming. I am enough.

I am ready for this journey, because this journey is mine.

Milestones for Success: Every Student's Journey

At the DDSB, we believe that learning is not just about what students know—it is a journey of growth, discovery and connection. Each student embarks on their own educational path with unique strengths, talents and experiences. Milestones for Success reflects this diversity, serving as guideposts rather than fixed destinations—benchmarks that inspire high expectations while honouring the varied ways students demonstrate growth and achievement. These milestones align with our strategic priority to centre students, ensuring that learning experiences are responsive, affirming, inclusive and tailored to their identities and interests, goals and evolving futures in a rapidly changing world.

Milestones: A Road Map for Growth, Learning and Contribution

From a child's first day of school, where they begin exploring, creating, and forming relationships, to their graduation, where they take their next steps with confidence, these milestones support the hollistic development of every student—academically, socially, emotionally, physically and personally.

Each stage builds on the one before, fostering curiosity, critical thinking, collaboration, leadership and resilience—all essential for success beyond the classroom. We are dedicated to fostering meaningful learning so all students leave secondary school with a strong sense of self, purpose and the skills to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

This journey leads to many defining moments—one key moment is crossing the stage. This is more than just a milestone; it is the bridge to the real world. Each student steps forward not only with knowledge and skills but with the values, confidence and capacity to make meaningful contributions in their communities and beyond.

How Milestones Support Students, Educators and Families

For Students

Milestones helps me progress, set goals and shape my future. They remind me that my learning is not only about grades, but about who I am, how I contribute and how I can achieve success in my own way.

For Educators

Milestones provide a flexible, high-expectation framework that supports every learner, celebrate progress and create meaningful learning experiences that honour student voice, identity and potential.

For Families

Milestones give me insight into my child's growth and the tools to support their learning, well-being and development. They help me partner with educators to ensure my child's journey is one of confidence, discovery and opportunity, recognizing every family brings strength, knowledge and experiences that enrich learning.

A Commitment to Inclusive Excellence and Future-Readiness

Together, educators, families and students form a collaborative partnership, working to make every learning journey meaningful, equitable and transformative. Through this shared commitment, we prepare all learners not just for their future careers, but for lives filled with purpose, compassion and the confidence to make a difference in the world.

These milestones serve as a foundation for lifelong learning, ensuring that every DDSB student is supported, challenged and encouraged in environments that honour their identity, voice and potential.

By fostering a sense of belonging, responsibility and self-advocacy, we empower students to see themselves as active participants in their own learning, their communities and the world around them. This journey is theirs—and we are here to support them, every step of the way.

Kindergarten

Building Foundational Skills

Essential Life Skills

I can...

- Work with others by sharing, taking turns, and listening to different ideas.
- Share my ideas, ask questions and talk about what I am wondering
- Follow daily routines with growing independence.
- Complete simple tasks on my own and ask for help when I need it.
- Use some problem-solving strategies when needed.
- Explore technology safely and responsibly.
- Share who I am, what I like, and what makes me unique.
- Care for my belongings and materials independently.
- Try new things and try again when something is hard.
- Express my needs and feelings with adults and peers.
- Use calming strategies when I feel upset.

Literacy Milestone

I can...

- Share my ideas, thoughts, questions and feelings in different ways (talking, drawing, writing, or acting them out).
- Recognize and match letters to their sounds.
- Begin reading simple words, blends, and short texts.
- Draw detailed pictures, write words or simple sentences to share my thoughts and ideas.
- Create imaginative stories through play.
- Talk about books, songs, stories that help me learn about others.
- Retell stories or experiences in the order they happened.

Application

I can...

- Write a note, list, label or detailed drawing.
- Read a list, street signs, and or labels.
- Talk about stories and predict what might happen next.

System Benchmarks (Year two to Kindergarten SK)

Acadience Reading screener

Transferable Skills:

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Self-Directed Learning

Numeracy Milestones

I can...

- Count and compare groups of objects in my environment.
- Recognize and represent various numbers.
- Compose and decompose numbers up to 10 using objects, pictures or words.
- Sort, match, find and describe patterns around me.
- Solve problems like "Do we have enough?" and "What comes next?" and use math language to explain my thoughts and ideas.

Application

I can...

- Solve every day math problems like "Do we have enough plates for everyone?"
- Sort laundry or items by colour or type.
- Share items with friends or count how many we have or need.
- Find patterns in the world around me.

Questions Students Can Ask Educators

- Can I tell you what I am wondering about?
- Can I choose a different way to share?
- Can I share what I created?
- What do I do if I need help?

Family Connections

In Your Language of Choice

This could look like....

- Sing familiar songs together.
- Share stories from other cultures, languages or communities.
- Talk about the best parts of the day.
- Play counting games or find patterns together.
- Do daily tasks together and talk about what is happening.

Questions Families Can Ask Educators

- How can I support my child's curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving at home?
- What are ways to help my child build independence and confidence?
- How can I encourage my child to express their ideas in different ways?

Collaboration

Communication

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Digital Literacy

Grades 1 to 3
Building Foundational Skills

Essential Life Skills

I can...

- Learn and play with others by sharing, taking turns, listening to different ideas and solving problems.
- Follow daily routines and complete simple tasks with growing independence.
- Use strategies to stay calm and focused during learning time.
- Use tools and technology safely to explore and share ideas.
- Share who I am, what I like and what makes me unique.
- Take care of my belongings and classroom material.
- Help others to take part in classroom responsibilities.
- Share what I need with adults and my peers respectfully.
- Make choices and explain why they are important to me.
- Try my best, learn from mistakes and keep trying even when something is hard.

Literacy Milestone

I can...

- Share my ideas, thoughts and feelings in various ways.
- Recognize letters, sounds, blends and simple words.
- Read and write simple sentences and messages.
- Read and understand short decodable texts.
- Retell stories or experiences in a logical sequence.
- Ask questions about what I read and reflect on how it connects to my world.

Application

I can...

- Read street signs, menus and labels.
- Write notes, labels or create drawings.
- Discuss stories and ask questions like, 'What was your favorite part?'
- Talk about stories that reflect a variety of cultures and identities.

System Benchmarks (by the end of Grade 2)

Acadience Reading screener, ***Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessment***

Transferable Skills:

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Self-Directed Learning

Numeracy Milestones

I can...

- Count by 2's, 3's, 5's and 10's.
- Recognize numbers up to 100.
- Add and subtract within 100 using objects, pictures or words.
- Begin to use multiplication and division by grouping.
- Identify and describe patterns in everyday life.
- Begin exploring fractions using real-world items.
- Share how I solved a math problem.

Application

I can...

- Count objects at home and in community.
- Spot patterns in clothing, tiles or nature. Compare, sort and make fair decisions.
- Solve simple addition or subtraction problems.

Questions Students Can Ask Educators

- Can I learn about something I am curious about?
- Can I show my learning in a different way?
- What can I do if I need help?
- How can I improve?

Family Connections

In Your Language of Choice

This could look like....

- Make up stories or retell family traditions.
- Talk during family activities about your child's favorite part of the day.
- Talk about healthy habits, rest and routines.
- Celebrate what your child is proud of.
- Read and talk about books, videos, podcasts, etc.
- Play counting games and highlight patterns.
- Measure ingredients while preparing meals.

Questions Families Can Ask Educators

- How can I support my child's curiosity and problem-solving?
- How can I help my child build independence and responsibility?
- How can I help my child explore their interests and strengths?
- Can you tell me about the EQAO? How can I help my child prepare?

Collaboration

Communication

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Digital Literacy

Grades 4 to 6
Applying Foundational Skills

Essential Life Skills

I can...

- Work with others on projects, navigate challenges with a positive attitude and listen to different perspectives.
- Try new tasks, apply feedback and persevere when learning is difficult.
- Use calming strategies when I feel frustrated and know when to ask for help.
- Use various digital tools to organize, create and share ideas.
- Talk about my strengths and next steps in learning.
- Respect differences and learn about cultures and communities different from my own.
- Develop goal-setting strategies and independent work habits.
- Understand online safety, and practice responsible use.
- Organize digital and non-digital learning materials.
- Identify when I make a mistake and make it right.
- Make choices about my learning and explain why they are important to me.

Literacy Milestone

I can...

- Organize and share ideas to communicate clearly through speaking and writing.
- Communicate ideas from a variety of sources in organized paragraphs.
- Reflect on how texts relate to fairness, identity and community.
- Collect and organize information considering different points of view.
- Show what I have learned using a variety of technology and tools.
- Ask questions and connect what I've read to the world around me.

Application

I can...

- Discuss books, movies and current media events and ask thoughtful questions.
- Write notes, journals, or invitations.
- Explore diverse online and print material.
- Read or listen to texts for enjoyment.

System Benchmarks

Grade 6 EQAO assessment

Transferable Skills:

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Self-Directed Learning

Numeracy Milestones

I can...

- Recall or use multiplication and division facts up to 12 multiplied by 12.
- Add, subtract, multiply and divide to solve problems.
- Represent, compare, and order fractions, decimals and percentages.
- Solve problems involving ratios, proportions, and basic algebra and explain my thinking.

Application

I can...

- Calculate discounts, prices and taxes.
- Divide items equally.
- Compare costs or quantities in daily tasks.
- Create and interpret graphs to show data.
- Plan how to save money or save for a goal.

Questions Students Can Ask Educators

- Are there different ways I can show my learning?
- What are my next steps in learning?
- How can I improve?
- How can I contribute to the school and classroom community?
- What can I do when I am stuck?

Family Connections

In Your Language of Choice

This could look like....

- Support your child in asking questions, setting goals and finishing tasks.
- Bake together and talk about measurement and planning.
- Compare shopping prices and talk about budgeting.
- Talk positively about math.
- Encourage journaling or writing or telling short stories.
- Read together for enjoyment.
- Discuss fairness, kindness and respect.
- Play games together that involve turn taking and problem solving.

Questions Families Can Ask Educators

- How can I help my child explore different interests and strengths?
- How can I help my child to reflect on their learning and set goals?
- Can you tell me more about EQAO and how my child is being prepared for this experience? How can I help?
- How can I build my child's confidence in learning?

Collaboration

Communication

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Digital Literacy

Grades 7 to 10

Demonstrating Critical Thinking Skills

Essential Life Skills

I can...

- Contribute ideas, listen actively and work through conflicts across various settings, showing respect for different perspectives.
- Design innovative presentations, reports, or multimedia projects using digital tools.
- Identify my strengths and next steps.
- Set personal, academic or career goals and plans to achieve them.
- Manage time effectively by prioritizing assignments and responsibilities.
- Use technology and tools responsibly to plan, research, and communicate my ideas.
- Understand appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Advocate for myself and others respectfully.
- Explore pathways and career options through ***myBlueprint***.
- Reflect on the impact of my actions.

Literacy Milestone

I can...

- Read and respond to increasingly complex texts.
- Understand and analyze texts from various sources, question sources, explain my perspective, potential bias, the author's intent.
- Express and support my ideas clearly.
- Think critically about different viewpoints: communicate and write about complex ideas and real-world issues.
- Research and defend an opinion on a topic of interest and engage in respectful dialogue.
- Create persuasive arguments about topics that matter to me.

Application

I can...

- Watch documentaries or read articles and discuss purpose and message.
- Critically analyze advertisements or media.
- Compare product reviews.
- Present my thinking in a variety of ways (podcast, digital story, multi-media).

System Benchmarks

Grade 9 Numeracy assessment, Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT),
16 credits by age 16

Transferable Skills:

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Self-Directed Learning

Numeracy Milestones

I can...

- Use algebra and spacial reasoning to solve problems.
- Perform operations with fractions, decimals and integers.
- Solve linear equations and interpret graphs in real-world contexts.
- Connect statistics and probability in real life.
- Explore trigonometric concepts in practical applications.
- Explain my reasoning and reflect on my strategies.

Application

I can...

- Plan a budget and savings plan using real costs.
- Compare sports statistics or weather patterns; analyzing data trends and making predictions.
- Use trigonometry to calculate heights or distances.
- Manage personal budgets, including saving for goals.

Questions Students Can Ask Educators

- Can I share my learning in a different way?
- Are there other ways I could access this learning?
- What is ***30 Credits My Way***? Can we explore my options together?
- How can I positively contribute to my school and community?

Family Connections

In Your Language of Choice

This could look like...

- Watch or listen to educational shows, podcasts or documentaries.
- Discuss goals, choices and career possibilities.
- Compare prices for purchases.
- Discuss the basics of money.
- Talk about your child's ideas, values and current events.
- Compare news articles or media coverage.
- Explore ***myBlueprint*** together.
- Establish a consistent study time and place.

Questions Families Can Ask Educators

- What opportunities are available for my child to explore career opportunities?
- How can I support my child to be an independent and reflective learner?
- What is ***30 Credits My Way***?
- How does the ***Grade 9 EQAO Math Test*** and the OSSLT impact my child?
- What summer school opportunities exist?
- How and when does my child need to complete their volunteer hours?

Collaboration

Communication

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Digital Literacy

Grades 11 to 12

Advancing Learning for Future Readiness

Essential Life Skills

I can...

- Take initiative in leading independent or team-based projects.
- Take responsibility.
- Use professional tools to create portfolios, resumes and presentations.
- Actively engaged in my learning.
- Apply problem-solving in real-world contexts.
- Understand ethical use of AI and digital tools and platforms.
- Manage multiple deadlines.
- Choose courses and experiences that support my future goals.
- Confidently and respectfully express my needs and goals and seek support when needed.
- Make ethical decisions and consider the impact of my actions.
- Set long-term goals and make a plan to achieve them.

Literacy Milestone

I can...

- Express my ideas in a way that affirms and inspires others.
- Understand and evaluate advanced texts, preparing for life after secondary school.
- Participate in discussions that involve evidence and critical thinking and diverse view points.
- Create various projects for an intended audience.
- Apply learning to real-world scenarios and connect skills to future goals.

Application

I can...

- Advocate and research global issues I care about and create multimedia presentations.
- Build a digital portfolio, resume, presentation or podcast that reflects my experience and learning identity.
- Create proposals based on individual goals, plans and community initiatives.

System Benchmarks

Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC), Certificate of Accomplishment (COA)

Transferable Skills:

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Self-Directed Learning

Numeracy Milestones

I can...

- Solve quadratic equations and apply advanced trigonometry
- Use statistics to analyze data and make predictions and informed decisions.
- Develop mathematical reasoning to evaluate solutions for complex problems.
- Solve multi-step problems using logical reasoning and appropriate tools.

Application

I can...

- Plan travel routes and calculate total distances and costs.
- Analyze graphs and data in news articles or polls related to the environment or social issues.
- Apply financial literacy skills.

Questions Students Can Ask Educators

- What skills do I need to develop to support my future goals?
- Are there opportunities within ***30 Credits My Way*** I could explore?
- How will this learning apply in the real world?

Family Connections

In Your Language of Choice

This could look like...

- Build a savings plan for future goals.
- Help with life skills—budgeting, job application or decision making.
- Discuss community or global events.
- Watch and talk about current events.
- Explore post graduation opportunities together.
- Encourage leadership, community service of identity-affirming experiences.

Questions Families Can Ask Educators

- What skills does my child need to develop to prepare them for life after secondary school?
- What scholarships or grants are available?
- What supports are available to assist my child transitioning to life after secondary school?
- How can I help my child with critical thinking, independence and confidence?

Collaboration

Communication

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Digital Literacy

I Am Ready.



I have grown. I have learned. I have discovered what I can do.

I remember stepping into this journey, full of wonder and eager to explore. I learned through play, through problem-solving and connection. I asked questions, took risks, made mistakes and tried again. I learned from my educators, my family, my community and from the world around me.

Now, I am at the threshold of something new. My journey has been uniquely mine, shaped by my strengths, my challenges and the experiences that have made me who I am. My path is meaningful.

I am skilled—I bring value in my own way—through my creativity, my ideas, my ability to work with others and problem-solving. I know how to listen, how to advocate for what I need and how to contribute in ways that matter to me.

I am prepared—I have a pathway that aligns with who I am. I know that success isn't just one thing—it's what I define it to be.

I am strong—I know that my way of learning and navigating the world is valid. I use the tools and supports that work for me, without apology. I am part of a community that values who I am, just as I am.

I am a lifelong learner, a leader, a contributor—I will keep growing, discovering and finding new ways to be part of the world around me.

I am crossing a stage—I am entering the world, ready to take my place, to make an impact and to continue becoming the person I am meant to be.

I am ready for my future. I am me.

Additional Resources

Learning for All:
A K–12 guide that supports personalized, precise, and universally designed learning for all students.

Growing Success:
Ontario's policy for assessment, evaluation, and reporting of student achievement.

DDSB Assessment and Evaluation Quick Reference Guide:
A DDSB tool to support consistent, equitable, and effective assessment practices.

High Impact Math Strategies:
A set of research-based strategies to support effective mathematics instruction.

Effective Early Literacy Instruction:
Strategies and practices to build strong foundational literacy skills in early learners.

Creating Pathways to Success:
Ontario's career/life planning policy for K–12 students.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL):
School Mental Health Ontario: Social Emotional Learning: Evidence-informed resources to support student mental health and SEL.

Developmental Assets Framework (Search Institute):
A research-based model of 40 positive supports and strengths for healthy youth development.

Parent Guide to Report Cards:
A Ministry of Education resource to help families understand student report cards.

Right to Read Inquiry Report (OHRC):
Recommendations for evidence-based, equitable reading instruction in Ontario schools.

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:
Services and supports for children, youth, and families across Ontario.

Ontario Curriculum Documents:
Official Ministry documents outlining learning expectations by subject and grade.

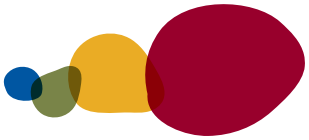
Special Education in the Durham District School Board:
Many Paths to Success: An overview of DDSB's special education programs and supports, highlighting varied pathways for student growth and achievement.

Transition to Work Program (DDSB):
A DDSB initiative supporting students with special needs to develop workplace skills and plan for post-secondary employment.

Indigenous Education Policy:
Board-approved policies outlining the DDSB's commitment to Indigenous Rights.

DDSB Equity and Anti-Oppression Policy:
Board-approved policy outlining DDSB's commitment to human rights, equity, and culturally responsive practices.

Supports and Resources for Families and Youth:
Comprehensive collection of programs, tips and external community support in areas like academic help, mental health and digital safety.



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Milestones for Success Feedback Survey

DDSB
Durham District School Board

Milestones for Success:

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