



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Learning and Living in Faith*

## Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees  
From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education  
Date: February 5, 2024  
Subject: **April 2024 Professional Activity Day – Proposed Date Change**  
Origin: Jim Wilson, Superintendent of Education – Academic Services

## Recommendation

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by \_\_\_\_\_

“WHEREAS, a total solar eclipse will occur on April 8, 2024; AND

WHEREAS, it is predicted that the full effects of the eclipse will be experienced in the Durham Region between 2:00 pm and 4:30 pm which coincides with student dismissal times; AND

WHEREAS, several boards in the path of the eclipse, including the Durham District School Board have made the decision, for reasons of health and safety of students, to reschedule a Professional Activity Day to coincide with the date of the solar eclipse; AND

WHEREAS, aligning school year calendars with the coterminous board may assist families with children in both boards,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, out of an abundance of caution, the Durham Catholic District School Board approve an amendment to the 2023-2024 school year calendar to reschedule the Professional Activity Day previously scheduled for April 19, 2024 to April 8, 2024.”

## Rationale

### School Year Calendar Approval

Regulation 304 of the Education Act requires school boards to annually submit proposed school year calendars to the Ministry of Education for approval. The

2023/2024 school year calendar for the Durham Catholic District School Board was approved by the Board of Trustees and the Ministry of Education in the Winter/Spring of 2023. Regulation 304 allows school boards to make alterations to the dates of scheduled Professional Activity Days. Any changes to Professional Activity Days will need to be shared with all stakeholder groups, including the Ministry of Education and families as early as possible.

### Solar Eclipse

A total solar eclipse happens when the moon passes between the sun and earth, completely blocking the face of the sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk. These events can pose potential risks and severe damage to eyesight if proper precautions are not taken. Viewing the sun directly during an eclipse can lead to solar retinopathy, permanently damaging the retina's light-sensitive cells.

On April 8, 2024, a total solar eclipse will cross North America, passing over southern Ontario. Durham Region will experience deep partial solar eclipse with the timing of this event presenting a significant concern. The solar eclipse in Durham Region will begin at approximately 2:00 pm and end around 4:30 pm, corresponding with student dismissal times. In addition to the physical risks associated with viewing the solar eclipse directly without proper protection, a period of increased darkness will occur presenting additional challenges for children during dismissal time. This peak period of darkness (referred to as the mid-eclipse) will occur at approximately 3:20 pm.

The following sites include important safety information about solar eclipses:

[Canadian Society of Optometrists: Solar Eclipse Safety, January 2024](#)

[Government of Canada: Canadian Space Agency, Total Solar Eclipse of April 8, 2024](#)

[NASA: 2024 Total Solar Eclipse](#)

## **Information**

Durham Region Health Department understands that there are significant risks associated with unprotected viewing of the solar eclipse and are supportive of the DCDSB's desire to mitigate potential risks.

The predicted timing of the solar eclipse poses some unique challenges as it coincides with dismissal times in the majority of schools. Unprotected observation of the eclipse can potentially result in severe eye damage. With students leaving the school, boarding buses and/or walking home during this time, it will be challenging for staff to properly supervise students, particularly younger children, and prevent them from looking directly at the sun.

On January 23, 2024, regional representatives for the Ministry of Education sent a communication to Directors of Education which stated:

“Out of concern for student safety and well-being, and to mitigate any operational impacts that may be caused by the eclipse, some school boards in regions directly affected by the eclipse had initially submitted school year calendars identifying April 8 as a Professional Activity (PA) Day so that students may remain at home during this event. Where boards had not previously identified this date as a PA Day, some have later chosen to amend their existing calendars and reschedule one of their PA Days to April 8 to align with coterminous boards and transportation requirements. Board decisions related to the school year calendar and managing any operational considerations of the eclipse should consider local needs and priorities.”

As of January 29, 2024, several Ontario school boards, including but not limited to Durham District, Limestone District School Board, Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Halton District School Board, Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, and the Renfrew County District School Board, have amended their school year calendars to reschedule a PA Day to April 8<sup>th</sup> citing safety concerns surrounding the total solar eclipse.

Historically, the Durham Catholic District School Board and Durham District School Board endeavour to align Professional Development Days for both operational reasons and financial efficiencies. While financial responsibility for changes is assumed by the board that initiates the change, operationally, alignment, where possible, is preferable.

As this is a Professional Activity Day and not a Board Designated Holiday or Scheduled School Holiday, April 8, 2024 is a regular working day for school staff.

Approval of the Minister of Education is not required for a change in the date of a professional activity day. In the case of a date change for a PA Day or an examination day, boards must notify parents and the Ministry well in advance of the proposed change and submit this change through the Ontario School year Calendar online application

## **Next Steps**

Should the Board of Trustees approve an amendment to the school year calendar to move the scheduled Professional Activity Day from April 19, 2024, to April 8, 2024, staff will provide notification to the Ministry of Education and immediately launch a communications plan to ensure all parents, guardians, caregivers and staff are advised of the changes.

# APPENDIX 1



Ministry of Education

## School Year Calendar 2023 - 2024

Legend ► **H** - Statutory Holiday    **E** - Scheduled Examination Day    **P** - Professional Activity Day    **B** - Board Designated Holiday    ☐ Half Day

ELEMENTARY - FINAL

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1 <sup>st</sup> Week					2 <sup>nd</sup> Week					3 <sup>rd</sup> Week					4 <sup>th</sup> Week					5 <sup>th</sup> Week				
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
August 2023	0	1	0		1	2	3	4	7	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31	
September 2023	19	0	0					1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
October 2023	20	1	0	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31			
November 2023	21	1	0			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	
December 2023	16	0	0					1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
January 2024	17	1	0	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31		
February 2024	20	0	0				1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	
March 2024	14	0	0					1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29
April 2024	20	1	0	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30			
May 2024	22	0	0			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31
June 2024	18	2	0	3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28					
July 2024	0	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31		
<b>TOTAL</b>	187	7	0	<p><b>Note:</b> The 2023-2024 calendar provides for 195 possible school days between September 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																								



APPENDIX 2



Ministry of Education

School Year Calendar 2023 - 2024

**SECONDARY - FINAL**

Legend ► **H** - Statutory Holiday    **E** - Scheduled Examination Day    **P** - Professional Activity Day    **B** - Board Designated Holiday    Half Day

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1st Week					2nd Week					3rd Week					4th Week					5th Week						
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F		
August 2023	0	1	0		1	2	3	4	<b>H</b>	8	9	10	11	14	15	16	17	18	21	22	23	24	25	28	29	30	31			
September 2023	19	0	0					1	<b>B</b>	<b>H</b>	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29		
October 2023	20	1	0	2	3	4	5	6		<b>H</b>	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31				
November 2023	21	1	0			1	2	3			7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30		
December 2023	16	0	0					1			6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29		
January 2024	13	0	5	1	2	3	4	5	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>								<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	31				
February 2024	19	1	0				1	2			6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29		
March 2024	14	0	0					1			6	7	8	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29		
April 2024	20	1	0	1	2	3	4	5	<b>H</b>		8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30			
May 2024	22	0	0			1	2	3			6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31
June 2024	13	2	5	3	4	5	6	7			10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28					
July 2024	0	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	<b>H</b>		8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31		
<b>TOTAL</b>	177	7	10	<p><b>Note:</b> The 2023-2024 calendar provides for 195 possible school days between September 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																										