



Memo

To: OCDSB Principals, Vice-Principals, Elementary and Secondary Office Administrators, Social Work Team, Communications Team, Director's Executive Council, and Education Foundation of Ottawa's Board of Directors
From: Clarissa Arthur, Executive Director
Date: April 3rd, 2020
Subject: Education Foundation of Ottawa's response to COVID-19

Please feel free to share this message with your networks and families.

The Education Foundation of Ottawa is the independent charitable arm of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) and exists to reduce economic barriers to successful learning by leveling the playing field for all students regardless of personal or socioeconomic circumstances.

Earlier this week, we announced the first part of our response plan, which was our commitment to support the Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE) in their effort to distribute **School Breakfast Replacement Kits** to prioritized communities by donating **\$25,000!**

ONFE is working to continually identify additional community partners to expand their program across the city; in the meantime, families are still encouraged to connect with their local community resources for food security. The School Breakfast Replacement Kits are provided free to families, however, if you or someone you know would like to provide a donation to purchase a kit (or more); they are **\$22/each** and will provide **3 weeks of shelf stable food** for a student: https://app.etapestry.com/cart/OttawaNetworkforEducation_1/default/item.hp?ref=1180.0.445604953.

The second part of our response plan, involves utilizing the unique skillset of our valued OCDSB social workers. By including the social workers into our support system, we are able to add an additional level of accountability when it comes to identifying families that need our support the most. The Education Foundation of Ottawa recently acquired a new fund called **Bridges Over Barriers**. The Bridges Over Barriers Fund idea came from Drs. Kwadwo Kyeremanteng and Michael Hartwick, who were inspired by the desire to commemorate their colleague and friend, Dr. Rick Hodder. Dr. Hodder was a Critical Care Physician at The Ottawa Hospital with a deep commitment to the common good.

The Bridges Over Barriers Fund could not have come at a better time!

The fund is meant to utilize the critical lens of the social workers and is established based on the values of equity and the need for early intervention, with a commitment to maintaining the dignity of every individual who is a benefactor of this fund.

The Education Foundation of Ottawa would like to announce that we are going to match donations up to **\$20,000** to support our OCDSB students in crisis. This fund enables OCDSB school social workers to identify needs and barriers that prevent students from accessing what they need. Again, if you or anyone you know would like to donate to the Bridges Over Barriers Fund, please visit:

<https://www.educationfoundationottawa.ca/helping-students-2/bursary/bridges-over-barriers/>.

What type of requests will be processed?

- This fund will support a number of student/family needs. Although families should be directed to community supports for food security, we are aware that some may have additional barriers making it difficult to access community sites. This may mean that some families are unable to leave the house, are without transportation, have specific dietary needs, or have unique needs that fall outside of the typical food security requests. The type of requests processed will be up to the discretion of the social worker and supported by the Education Foundation of Ottawa staff between the amounts of **\$50 - \$150/family**. If there are extenuating circumstances (ie. large families) we will consider increasing the amount of support.

How will this be accomplished?

- Principals, Vice-Principals, and social workers will identify (or have already identified) families who have indicated their need for additional support;
- If necessary, Principals and Vice-Principals will ask the family's permission to connect them with the school social worker;
- The **school social worker** will either contact the family for additional information and/or support, or simply submit a request on behalf of the family to the Education Foundation of Ottawa using a secure form (link provided to OCDSB social workers);
- The Education Foundation staff will process the request by providing support by way of a virtual or hard copy gift card to either Walmart or President's Choice. The family will be able to indicate which support meets their needs and can choose for the card to be mailed or sent to them virtually by email or text;
- The school social workers will have access to a Google sheet managed by Education Foundation of Ottawa staff including the student's initials, social worker's name, the amount provided to the family, and a running tally of funds used and donations received to date.

In addition, you may have noticed that the previously used Google Request for Support Form has been disabled. This is to keep our previous data intact while we worked to develop a more coordinated and effective strategy during this time of crisis.

I cannot possibly express how pleased I am to be able to provide you with this information. I know many of you have had questions and I simply have not had the answers... until now! We will continue to monitor our response plan and make the necessary adjustments as we go.

I know that we are all trying our best to navigate this "temporary" normal and I am confident that as long as we practice empathy and patience, we will see our way through this.

On behalf of the Education Foundation of Ottawa staff and our Board of Directors, we applaud your efforts during these unprecedented times.

With gratitude,



Clarissa Arthur
Executive Director
Education Foundation of Ottawa

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." ~ Margaret Mead

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