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Three Renfrew County Catholic schools are recognized as “schools of distinction”

Three Catholic schools in Renfrew County were honoured as “schools of distinction” at the Garfield Weston Awards in Toronto this spring.

John XXIII Catholic School in Arnprior and Cathedral Catholic School in Pembroke received honours in the category of “Improvement in Academics” while Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Renfrew received its award in the “Determination in Academic Achievement” category.

The awards are based on schools’ standings in the Fraser Institute report card, which considers standardized testing results and community demographics.

The Improvement in Academics awards are presented to the schools that demonstrate the fastest and most consistent academic improvement over five years. The Determination in Academic Achievement awards are presented to schools that ensure their students succeed regardless of the extra challenges they may face.

Principal Jeannie Armstrong says there are a number of factors that make Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School a great place to learn.

“First is a close connection between home, school and parish,” she says.

Next on her list are the professional learning communities that have been developed by staff to support and mentor each other in different teaching approaches.

State-of-the-art technology such as netbooks, wireless internet and Smartboards in every classroom, daily healthy snacks for everyone, and the new Playground Activity Leaders program for students in grades 4 to 7 have also made a difference.

“In summary, we provide an engaging, supportive and nurturing environment for all students,” says Armstrong.

Principal Sondra Keatley also credits the staff at John XXIII Catholic School for its designation as a School of Distinction.

“Credit goes to the dedicated teaching staff for the great work they do, especially in the areas of literacy and math,” she says.

Last year the school focused on different forms of writing. This year, the focus is on higher order thinking skills, especially making connections in reading and writing.

At Cathedral Catholic School in Pembroke, the techniques for success have included scheduling large blocks of uninterrupted learning time for all grades,

making full use of SmartBoard technology in every classroom, and encouraging staff to share their knowledge through professional learning networks.

“At Cathedral we value a welcoming church, school and home environment that celebrates partnerships in education and recognizes parents and guardians as our students’ first teachers,” says Principal Alfie Sicoli.

He explains that the emphasis is on “a philosophy of caring that directs all teaching towards nurturing individual skills and abilities based on each student’s best potential.”



The John XXIII Catholic school community in Arnprior celebrated their designation as a “School of Distinction” with a pizza party this spring.

A message from the Director of Education

In the world of education, June is a time for celebration. Students of all ages are preparing for the transition from one grade to another. Some will be changing schools. Others will be leaving our schools for the last time, and moving on to a new set of adventures elsewhere.

Our schedules are filled with ceremonies and parties. There are formals and semi-formals, athletic banquets and graduation ceremonies. There are school trips, field days, pizza parties and all kinds of special educational activities in and out of the classroom.

It is such an exciting time!

In the few precious days remaining in this school year, I invite you to take a few minutes to reflect on the

accomplishments we are sharing through this final edition of *Notebook* for the 2008–2009 school year. This is just a small sample of the many good things that are happening in our “*Schools To Believe In!*”

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a restful and enjoyable summer. To those staff and students who are moving on to other opportunities, please know that our prayers and good wishes go with you. To those who will be returning next fall, I look forward to another year full of unknown opportunities and new chances to succeed!

**Best regards,
Michele Arbour
Director of Education**

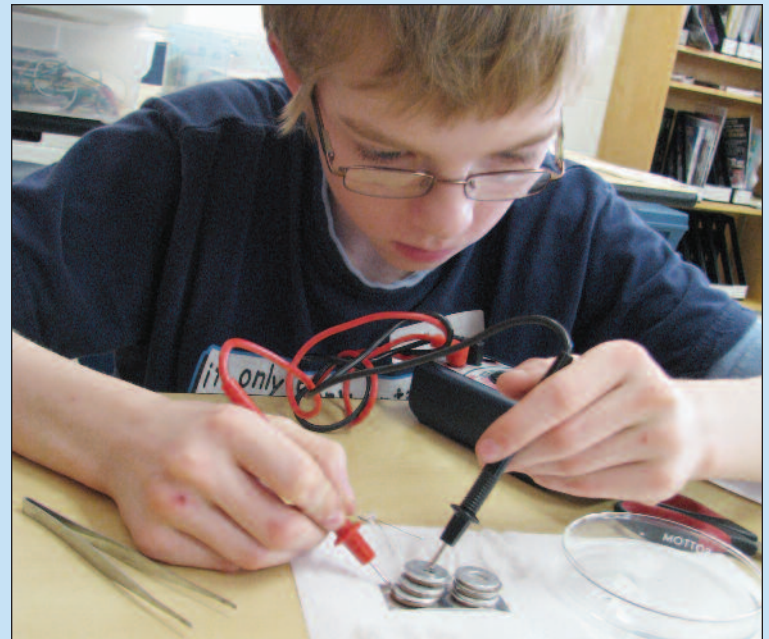
Notes of honour

News of new honours for our teachers, support staff, administrators and students seem to be a daily occurrence. Here are just a few of the accomplishments announced this spring:

- Julie Moon, a teacher at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, received a Baillie Award for excellence in secondary school teaching from Queen’s University. The award was established as a means for students graduating from the university to honour high school teachers who had a positive and formative influence that set them on a course of higher learning. Moon was nominated by Kathleen Blake, a former Bishop student who is graduating from Queen’s this year.
- Bishop Smith Catholic High School won the regional Envirothon competition, earning them a place in the provincial competition against 17 other regional winners.
- For the first time since 2005, St. Joseph’s Catholic High School captured the region’s junior Reach for the Top title. The championship team, coached by Teacher Dave Rowat, included Jen Hall, Myles Songolo, Joel Beimers, Devric Devereaux and Ernie Lycett.
- Rebecca Sandrelli, a grade 10 student at Bishop Smith Catholic High School in Pembroke, came home with the gold medal in intermediate environmental innovation from the 2010 Canada-Wide Science Fair in Peterborough. Along with the gold medal she received a cash prize of \$1,500, and offers of a \$4,000 entrance scholarship to the University of Western Ontario and a \$10,000 scholarship for any university in Canada. Her project explored the use of plants to filter pharmaceuticals out of waste water.

Advanced Learners program

More than 100 Catholic elementary students from 14 different schools participated in an advanced learners program at Bishop Smith Catholic High School this spring. They made good use of the school’s facilities, including the Hila computer lab, Smartboards, high-speed streaming video on the internet and the school’s new science labs.



Our Mission Statement

Inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past, we are an inclusive Catholic educational community called to express our mission as Church to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future.

Religious education resource teacher receives provincial honour

Religious Education and Family Life Resource Teacher Tony Cosentino was recognized this spring as a provincial leader in his field.

Cosentino was presented with the Archbishop Philip Pocock Award for outstanding contributions in the field of Catholic religious education.

He received the provincial honour at a special ceremony in Toronto on May 13.

"This is an award I share with my peers," he says. "I have been inspired and encouraged, and I've learned from so many other people. Part of them is in this award as well."

Michele Arbour, Director of Education for the RCCDSB, says Cosentino's collaborative approach and dedication to quality religious education make him an ideal recipient of the distinction.

"Tony has created materials that have been used throughout North America," Arbour says. "He inspires all of us in Renfrew County with his calm, steady Catholic presence, and that inspiration has created positive ripples far and wide."

The Archbishop Philip Pocock Award is presented on an annual basis to recognize a Catholic school religious educator who demonstrates excellence in their care and commitment to engaging and supporting student learning in religious education and faith formation. Criteria for the award include knowledge and demonstration of best practices in religious education and faith formation, innovations in the practice of religious education and faith formation, ongoing

contributions beyond the classroom, leadership in initiating and sustaining new opportunities in Catholic education, and continuous updating and improving of personal practice as a religious educator.

Cosentino says his professional focus is on making a difference through his day-to-day work.

"Seeds are being planted, that's what's most important to me," he says. "I'd like to see the faith of every student and staff member involved with our Catholic school system come alive."

Cosentino has been working with the RCCDSB since 1996. From 1996 to 1999 he served as pastoral animator for the Catholic school board at Madawaska Valley District High School. In 1999 he assumed his current position as Religious Education and Family Life Resource Teacher.

He has worked on a wide range of projects over the years, including co-writing "A Place of Honour", a Catholic educator's resource for working with students at risk, and developing an RCCDSB website with a multitude of resources for religious education and family life programs as well as adult faith development materials and school prayers for all occasions and circumstances.

Cosentino was a member of the development team for the Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative's curriculum support for Catholic schools, and he led the writing team that recently developed "Our Language, Our Story", a Catholic character development resource for Catholic schools that has been launched at the provincial level.

Justin Trudeau shares his passion for engaging youth



Justin Trudeau spoke as part of the annual general meeting for the Phoenix Centre for Children and Families in Renfrew on Thursday, June 10. Above, he is with students from Bishop Smith Catholic High School.

Mr. Trudeau, in an engaging style, made an impassioned plea for everyone to treat young people not simply as the citizens of tomorrow but rather as vibrant contributors to society, whatever age they currently might be. He noted that in doing so, the result would be a more robust Canadian community in which all felt they had a voice.



Renfrew student named to provincial Student Advisory Council

Kailyn Friske, a grade 7 student at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Renfrew, has been invited to share her ideas at the provincial level over the next year.

She received word earlier this spring that she has been appointed to the Ontario Minister of Education's Student Advisory Council.

Speaking up and exhibiting leadership qualities in her school community are not new concepts for the soft-spoken, active student. She has served as a student representative on school council, a leader in the PALS (Playground Activity Leaders) program, and she helps out regularly with kindergarten classes.

As a participant in the 60-member provincial Student Advisory Council, Friske will join fellow student leaders in grades 7 through 12 from English, French, public and Catholic school boards across the province. The group works closely with the Ministry of Education to voice their opinions on how to make Ontario schools the best in the world.

"I thought it would be a lot of fun," Friske says about her motivation to apply for the position. She also hopes to learn more about how the education system works.

"It's an opportunity for me to get my voice heard, and I really like to be involved with these kinds of things," she adds.

"Kailyn's been actively involved in all aspects of school life," says Our Lady of Fatima Principal Jeannie Armstrong, who strongly encouraged Friske to apply. The principal wasn't surprised to hear that the Renfrew pupil was one of the 60 chosen from more than 300 applicants for the council.

"She's such a well-rounded student," she says.

Friske's introduction to the council happened last month in Toronto, when she met with the other delegates to brainstorm ideas and share advice from a student's perspective with Minister of Education Leona Dombrowsky.



For the 12-year-old Renfrew girl, it was refreshing to meet up with so many other students with the same interests and goals, and then have the opportunity to express their thoughts to the Minister.

Appointees serve one year on the council and are allocated funds in the form of a "Speak Up" grant to help their school develop team-building and student-focused programs.

With assistance from Armstrong, Friske has been investigating how to enhance student engagement at Our Lady of Fatima.

"She's very keen about getting the students involved and getting their perspective on how to make school life better," comments Armstrong.

Developing a school spirit committee is high on Friske's radar, along with working closely with the newly created Green Team Garden Club.

Friske will actually be heading to St. Joseph's Catholic High School in the fall, and she is looking forward to working with her new principal and fellow students to find new school culture opportunities there.

"Her goal is to get her concepts off the ground so that students here will be able to take over for next year," says Armstrong. "She's going to look for ways to apply those same ideas at the high school level."

In the meantime, Friske is preparing for a trip to Orillia at the end of August to attend a Minister's Student Advisory Committee leadership camp. She will make a presentation at the camp about her plans for her "Speak Up" project.

While she's looking forward to her official duties, Friske is also quite excited about reconnecting with some of the people she met in Toronto.

"I did make a couple of new friends at the last meeting," she concludes with a smile.