

Notebook

RCCDSB students learn to be leaders in green technology and environmental stewardship

Students in the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board are turning green—with energy—and learning how to save the planet. The students are involved in green technology projects that put into practice a key element of the RCCDSB's vision statement, that is, to "claim our role as global stewards cherishing the environment and all life in it."

Solar arrays—large panels that collect solar energy—have been installed on the roofs of Bishop Smith Catholic High School in Pembroke, St. Joseph's High School in Renfrew, Our Lady of Lourdes in Pembroke and Our Lady of Sorrows in Petawawa. The

four solar projects are designed to produce a maximum total power of 32,000 watts. By producing energy from sunshine, the projects help to reduce the production of 12 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, which in turn reduces global warming.

"On a sunny day, we produce enough power to operate 200 computers," says Wayne Campbell, who, along with his wife Carol, is a science consultant for the Board.

"Our school community continues to show leadership when it comes to the health of our planet," Campbell says. "This

exciting initiative not only reduces our dependency on electricity from coal-fired plants, but it also provides us with working solar laboratories, giving us a unique opportunity to engage our students in this exciting green technology."

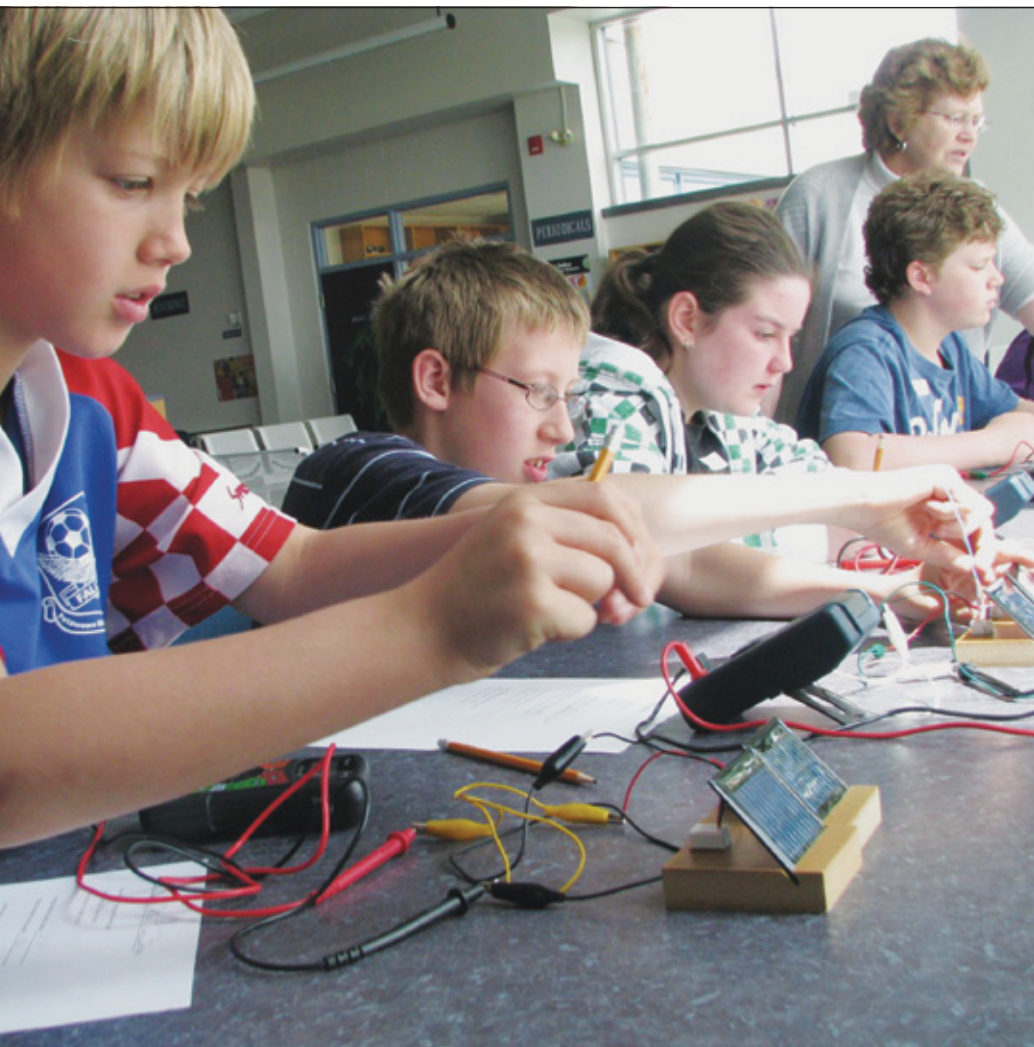
Campbell explains that "live, online data that flow from the solar arrays are available to all schools and provide new opportunities for analyzing and studying photovoltaic installations and the impact they have on reducing greenhouse gases."

Examples of solar learning projects offered last year are:

- the Science Lighthouse program, a hands-on solar energy lab for Grades 1 to 8. Using digital meters and solar panels, students investigated the components of a solar energy system;
- renewable energy workshops for Grade 11 physics students at Bishop Smith. Students constructed miniature solar trackers that follow the sun to maximize the energy output of a solar module.

"Environmental stewardship is an important component of RCCDSB's vision for our students," says Director of Education Michele Arbour. "Activities like the solar projects and the use of technology to reduce paper and resources help our students to develop environmental awareness and healthy life skills. These projects encourage leadership, build knowledge and engage our students through active participation."

Find more information about RCCDSB's solar projects at <http://www.rccdsb.edu.on.ca/>



Students representing schools from all regions of Renfrew County take part in an Advanced Learners Solar Energy Workshop at Bishop Smith Catholic High School. In this part of the workshop they use digital meters to measure the current produced by miniature solar modules.



A message from the Director of Education



As the new school year begins at Renfrew County Catholic School Board, it is an ideal time to reflect on our goals as a faith-based education system.

At RCCDSB, we aim to provide a healthy, nurturing, secure and respectful environment for all of our students and staff to learn and develop to their full potential within the Catholic faith.

One of the goals outlined in our board's vision statement is "to claim our role as global stewards cherishing the environment and all life in it."

The stories in this issue of **Notebook** describe some of the ways in which RCCDSB students and staff are engaged in both personal and environmental stewardship programs and projects.

These include solar projects at four of our schools, healthy eating programs, specialist high skills majors in health and wellness and paperless environments.

We can be proud of all of these programs. We have accomplished a lot and we are on the right course for future success.

I wish you all a healthy and happy year in this great world of ours. God bless!

Michele Arbour
Director of Education



Chair's message



It is my great pleasure to welcome all students, parents and staff at the beginning of this new school year, particularly those who are new to our Renfrew County Catholic school community.

Our corporate motto is "Schools to believe in" and we strive to ensure that in a Christ-centred environment, the academic success of each of our students is characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy.

One of the responsibilities of the board of trustees is to ensure student success. We are very proud of the accomplishments of all our students. In the provincial Education Quality and Accountability testing, our students continue to do very well. This can be attributed to the commitment of our leadership team, our principals, classroom teachers and educational assistants, as well as our students and their parents who work so very hard to ensure that each student reaches their potential.

Your board of trustees continues to strive to ensure that the valuable tax dollars entrusted to our care for the education of our children are spent in the most effective and efficient manner.

In closing I wish all of you the best in this new school year. God bless each of you.

Bob Schreader
Chairman, Renfrew County Catholic District School Board



Message from the Diocese: And God Saw That It Was Good...



One of the great advantages of the summer holidays is having the time to enjoy the beautiful part of the world that we call home. The warmer weather affords us the opportunity to be outside and soak in the beauty that is around us.

This beauty can also awaken within ourselves an awe and an awareness of the bountiful gifts of God. The awe comes from recognizing that God our Father is the creator of all that is good. When we recognize and appreciate that which surrounds us, we should be drawn into a spirit of thankfulness and praise. At the same time, we know that as beautiful as creation is, God has created us as persons to be stewards, to choose wisely and do our best to care for the world around us. Remember, God created humans differently than the rest of creation—He gave us bodies and souls to be in relationships with Him and, in turn, to care for the world around us.

Pope Benedict has spoken of the need to be responsible stewards of the Earth. Last year, he said, "*young people cannot be asked to respect the environment if they are not helped, within families and society as a whole, to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment, but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others (World Day of Peace, 2010)*".

I hope you enjoyed the relaxing days of summer and gave thanks to God who has entrusted us with the beauty that surrounds us.

Father Ryan Holly



Parent Involvement Committee



I am amazed when I read about all of the wonderful activities in which our schools take part—in and out of the classrooms. It was especially heart-warming to see the community outreach initiatives during Catholic Education Week last May, and hear stories of schools working together to support many worthy causes.

I encourage you to visit the Board website to view some of these initiatives that show the true spirit of our RCCDSB family.

In the same way that the schools support their local communities, the Parent Involvement Committee provides extra support and guidance through healthy, environmentally conscious projects.

Grants like the Speak Up Project funding help support student initiatives and academic achievement, giving students an opportunity to speak up about the relevant issues at their schools.

Switching to eco-friendly solar panels has been a reality at four of our schools, thanks to funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Resource and Innovation.

The PIC has discussed implementation of PPM Bill 150 and alternatives to the traditional hot lunches of hot dogs and pizza. This will be a focus for parents, teachers, principals and board representatives as the school bells ring this fall. There is already a healthy shift from candies and treats as rewards to fun activities in a number of schools.

If you would like more information regarding the PIC, please call me at 613-623-9892, or send an e-mail to hmittchellpower@rccdsb.edu.on.ca. Our PIC meetings are open to all parents.

I look forward to new endeavours with the PIC this fall.

Hazel Power
Chair

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.

Fresh, nutritious foods keep students engaged in the classroom

Snacking the healthy way is the only way at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Renfrew.

With the help of Educational Assistant staff members, OLF students have two nutritious snacks provided to them every day.

A selection of fruits and vegetables, crackers, cheese, pitas, bagels, wraps, sandwiches and dips like hummus and guacamole are brought around to classrooms first thing in the morning and later in the afternoon.

The students are encouraged to try everything, says one of the healthy snack program coordinators, Tricia McIntyre. To her surprise, after a few times, students who initially didn't like certain foods are actually enjoying it.

"They see their friends eating it, so they try it too," she notes.

Principal Jeannie Armstrong is a passionate advocate for the healthy food choices, particularly when it comes to fueling the young minds of her students. She partnered with dietitian Carolyn Froats-Emond from the Renfrew County District Health Unit and used the Nutrition Tools for Schools as a framework for a healthier OLF.

The school began by offering one healthy snack and last year expanded to having a morning and afternoon treat of fruits, veggies and whole grains.

Armstrong commends the dedication of McIntyre, and her snack program pals Sharon McGrath and Michelle Eady. "I couldn't do this if I didn't have the leadership of EAs willing to take this on."

Funding from the Breakfast for Learning and Student Nutrition programming provides a budget of \$250 each week for the snack program.

Armstrong says the new food guidelines of the Healthy Schools Policy that come into effect this school year will not be cause for concern at her school.

"We've been moving towards this for a couple years now," she says about the guidelines for having 10 special event food days at school. Even at school dances, they decided to make up baggies of crackers and cheese, have apples for sale and whip up some fruit smoothies instead of serving the usual chips, chocolate and pop.

A local pizzeria has worked with the school to offer slices of pie with a whole wheat crust, low-sodium pizza sauce and low-fat cheese.

"Some of the students had a hard time adjusting at first, but now everyone eats it and loves it."



Students at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Renfrew enjoy a healthy snack.

Another catering company has come on board to supply the school with chicken Caesar wraps in a whole wheat wrap served with a side of carrot and celery sticks. In the winter months, OLF had warm bowls of soup on the menu.

"It's not really as difficult as it first appears," states Armstrong. Our goal is to teach habits, beliefs and provide healthier food choices that will last a lifetime."

"Actually," observes McIntyre, "some of the staff have commented that the whole school seems more engaged and focused, and we believe nutrition may play a part at our school."

The benefits of good food choices, not dieting, can be easily applied to home life. One suggestion is for parents to include their children in meal choices or, if they're a little older, allow them to have a hand in preparing the food.

McIntyre says don't be afraid to take your child grocery shopping with you because most often it's the lure of the colourful fruits that they are filling up your cart with over the preservative-laden products. And with all of the local fresh produce, there's definitely no lack of healthy choices.

Healthy snack suggestions

From the Renfrew County and District Health Unit:

- Fresh fruit kabobs with vanilla yogurt for dipping
- Whole grain crackers and lower-fat cheese cubes
- Air popped popcorn and fresh fruit
- Whole grain muffins and fresh orange wedges
- Fresh vegetable stick skeleton with "brain" dip



From St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School:

- We try to highlight a few sayings that remind students to choose healthy snacks:
 - choose *God-given snacks* (healthy, *natural food* snacks versus prepared snacks)
 - food grown on a plant is healthier than food prepared in a plant/factory
 - foods from the outside aisles of the grocery store tend to be healthier than prepared, packaged snacks on the inside aisles

- We try to encourage students to eat healthy morning snacks that give lots of energy (fruit, vegetables, cheese, crackers)

- *always* snacks: fruits, vegetables, yogurt, milk, whole grain foods
- *never* snacks: those high in salt, sugar or fat (e.g., chips, cookies, prepared donuts and packaged snacks)



From the Healthy Snack Program at Cathedral Catholic School:

- Try to include two food groups from Canada's Food Guide for snacks (e.g., bananas, apples, oranges, and cut up celery, carrots, peppers all served with crackers).



Customized education

Benefits of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Health and Wellness program at Bishop Smith Catholic High School are twofold. Grade 11 and 12 students can explore health care career choices, develop skills and earn valuable certifications.

Carol Plue, lead teacher of the program, says the course “provides a good way for students to see what their interests are and helps them to decide if they want to pursue a health care career.”

During the unit on careers, guest speakers from a variety of occupations—x-ray technicians, paramedics, RN students, mental health caseworkers and others—share information with the class.

Field trips also provide valuable career insights. A day spent at Algonquin College allows students to rotate through sessions about college programs such as nursing, personal support worker and police foundations. Other excursions include a tour of Miramichi Lodge and participation in a class at the Best Western Fitness Centre.

Through the program, students earn a mix of mandatory and optional certifications including CPR, standard first aid, conflict resolution, service excellence, safe food

handling, proper hand washing, suicide awareness, and medical terminology to name a few.

The other major benefit of this SHSM is the focus on healthy living and activities to share knowledge with the school and community.

Students learn about healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco, alcohol and drug use, and the possible outcomes of poor choices such as heart disease and obesity. They discuss harmful toxins and pollution in the environment related to health issues.

Grade 12 students realize the importance of organ donation, “the gift of life,” and design posters to put up throughout the school to raise awareness with their peers.

A healthy walking program at the school, in connection with the Ottawa Heart Institute, was tied into the SHSM Health and Wellness program to promote the value of walking to students and the community.

Students also set up a booth and prepare materials for the Art and Tech Show evenings at BSCHS to educate parents and guests about blood pressure targets and



Grade 11 SHSM Health and Wellness students Robyn Dyer, Seryca David, Natalie Lariviere and Aundrea Mitchell, with teacher Carol Plue.

lifestyle changes to help them to achieve them. The students wear white medical coats, teach normal blood pressure levels, and perform blood pressure readings.

The program offers students a customized learning opportunity to build on their interests and prepare for careers in the health care field. The students, in turn, make a positive impact on the health and awareness of friends, family and the community around them.

Leading the environmental way

The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board is setting an example as a steward of the environment by developing environmentally sound practices to minimize its ecological footprint.

By expanding the use of information technology, providing email access for all staff and using electronic transfer payments, the board has been able to greatly reduce the amount of paper used and the amount of waste generated.

RCCDSB Chair Bob Schreader comments, “Through our leadership in living an environmentally responsible lifestyle, that part of the Board’s Vision Statement that speaks to our commitment to our role as global stewards, we are exploring how we can move to a paperless meeting environment for both Board and Committee meetings.”

Eco-friendly products top the board’s list when purchasing supplies—product and supplier choices are made with Energy Star ratings and recycled alternatives in mind. Wasteful, excessive packaging is avoided when possible.

Solar energy installations at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, St. Joseph’s Catholic High School, Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School, and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School demonstrate our commitment to environmental leadership, as well as energy audits and retrofits in many of our schools.

Energy conservation that is practised and encouraged throughout the board offices and school buildings can be carried out at home, too. This includes turning off lights when leaving a room, using sleep mode on computers, replacing regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, and checking that settings on heating or air conditioning aren’t too high or too low.

Healing circles build mental health and wellness

Restorative Practices Network of Renfrew County (RePNET) is a collaborative of counsellors, youth workers and teachers from local organizations including Family and Children’s Services, Columbus House, the Phoenix Centre for Children and Families and both Renfrew County school boards.

RePNET’s most recent training session in June 2011 focused on a restorative framework and repeated earlier healing circle training. The circle provides a way to build relationships with children and youth.

Cheryl Spotswood, RCCDSB Safe Schools Coordinator, is trained in restorative practices and works with other RCCDSB teachers leading circles in their classrooms. Healing circles can address playground issues such as bullying or exclusion, disrespectful language, or off-task behaviours. The overall result is a reduction of these behaviours, and less time spent addressing them leaves more time for literacy and numeracy activities.

Enhancing social and emotional literacy by encouraging participants to discuss their feelings and fears is another outcome of the circle. Students learn to recognize their emotions, as well as how to meditate.

In some situations, the goal of the circle is to heal harmed relationships by bringing together those who have caused harm with those who have been harmed in a safe place to voice their feelings.

Even RCCDSB staff have benefitted from a healing circle to build more connections and improve communications. The circle provides a safe environment for everyone to speak. Spotswood emphasizes that the circle is a place for building connections, saying, “The healing circle offers collective conversation and a fair process and everyone is engaged.”