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Notebook

Building Community, Creating a Legacy

New initiatives boost wellness, experiential learning and community building

An exciting roster of new and improved initiatives greeted students and staff in September as they began the 2016–2017 school year at Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB). Although the initiatives varied in subject and focus, they shared the Board's theme for this year, which is "making a difference as faith-filled community builders."

The new programs range from promoting well-being and mental health for students and staff to new resources for the Board's First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) program, and exploring the use of technology in music classes.

RCCDSB also is continuing to expand experiential learning options in the Special Education program. Already the Board's high schools offer the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, Specialist High Skills Majors, Cooperative Education and Dual Credit programs.

Mathematics continues to be a focus for RCCDSB with the introduction of new strategies in our classrooms.

The RCCDSB's focus this year continues to align with the Ministry of Education's four main goals to:

- help students and staff achieve academic excellence;
- ensure equity for each individual to reach their full potential;
- promote physical, mental and social well-being; and
- enhance public confidence in public education.

As a faith-based school system, RCCDSB works to guide our students in the way of Jesus, to love one another, respect the dignity of all persons and to protect the environment. That is our legacy. That is how we build strong and healthy communities.



Students at St. Anthony's Catholic School in Chalk River assembled to celebrate both the spirit of Terry Fox and their fundraising success (almost \$4,000 raised) before heading outside to walk or run on September 29.

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.

‘Back to school’ thoughts from our students

St. Andrew’s Catholic School, Killaloe



Jon Klawitter (left): “School is cool! I couldn’t wait to see my friends!”

Casey Bersan (right): “I was very excited to come back to school to learn new things!”

St. John Bosco, Barry’s Bay



From left to right: Karlie Klatt-McCormack, Kya Biskup-Richards, Amelia Dombroskie, Taylor and Madison Simpson

Kya Biskup-Richards: “The best part about being back to school is playing with my friends!”

Madison Simpson: “The best part of being back to school is getting homework. I love homework!”

St. Joseph’s High School, Renfrew



Paige McGuire, Grade 12: “It’s really great to be back. The big excitement for me was the second week—our Spirit Week—it was fun to be able to give all of the new students a taste of St. Joe’s life and show them everything they have to look forward to with their classmates ... I’m really excited about jumping in and enjoying my final year here.”

Counting and number sense matters

While our students’ EQAO results are encouraging—RCCDSB students once again outscored the provincial averages—math remains an area of focus for our Board.

Work to continue improving our students’ math skills in the new school year began in the summertime with all RCCDSB educators being invited to attend a seminar to refresh or increase their understanding collectively of effective math strategies for greater consistency across our system.

“The focus is on giving students effective strategies to learn number sense to 20. We want the facts to become automatic for students, but also to know them with deep understanding. This is necessary learning for all students if they are to be prepared for more challenging mathematics,” says Lynn Denault, RCCDSB K-12 Program Coordinator.

This can be done using simple strategies like doubles ($8 + 8$, $6 + 6$), near doubles ($7 + 6$, $5 + 4$), one more than, two more than ($4 + 2$, $1 + 10$), make 10 ($8 + 5$ so take 2 from the 5, which is now $10 + 3 = 13$). Being able to add 10 to any number (i.e., $10 + 7 = 17$, $44 + 10 = 54$, $832 + 10$; 842) is an important skill.

Educators were also encouraged to count daily with their students, not only by 1s, but by 2s, 5s, 10s, both forward and backwards beginning with different starting points, for example, start at 345 and count backwards by 10s to 265, count by 100s from 1,200 to 2,500, count by fractions like one one-fourth, two one-fourths, three one-fourths, four one-fourths (or one), five one-fourths, and more.



Principal Melissa Carroll-Dubeau, curriculum coordinator Tracy Joyce and a student work on a mathematics diagnostic at Our Lady Of Grace in Westmeath.

Math tips for parents

Involve your child in using numbers daily to solve problems and make everyday decisions. For example:

- “Do we have enough plates and utensils for all the guests coming for the birthday party?”
- “We are doubling this recipe. How much of all the ingredients will we need?”
- “We are fertilizing the lawn. One fertilizer bag covers three square metres. How many will we need?”
- “This store is selling the game you want for 20% off of \$27.00. That store is selling the same game for \$19.99. Where should we shop?”

Father Scott Murray returns to high school

On Tuesday mornings, starting in mid-October, Father Scott Murray is going back to the classroom to co-teach a course with Yvette Bourque, Family Life and Youth Ministry Office, Diocese of Pembroke, and Angela Watson, Teacher and Chaplaincy Leader at Bishop Smith Catholic High School (BSCHS).

Over the course of the year, all Grade 9 students will receive an age-appropriate education in Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body. The program for Grade 9 religion classes takes place once a week over 10 or 11 weeks.

This is the second year for the course at BSCHS and the student response to the first year was very positive.

The aim of the program is to give students an opportunity to view God, their faith, themselves, their bodies and relationships in a new and different way.

"That's a pretty important initiative that was spearheaded by Yvette, and I'm grateful that I've been able to help in implementing it at Bishop Smith Catholic High School," says Father Scott.



Mental Health & Wellness

Mental health and wellness are essential to the success of our students. The RCCDSB is working to improve the mental health and well-being of our students through several new initiatives this fall.

We continue to build capacity around mental health throughout the school system with the help of our partners in the community. This fall, RCCDSB teachers had the opportunity to attend a workshop, 'Trauma Informed Classroom' offered by the Phoenix Centre trauma team.

Efforts are ongoing to promote mental health and wellness and available resources for our students. Events so far this fall include:

Spearheaded by Tammy Peplinskie, School and Attendance Counsellor, and Sandy Brannan, Safe Schools Coordinator, the day was designed to increase Resilience, Empathy, Acceptance, Community and Hope among the students who are transitioning to the high schools. The goal was to support students' transition to high school by building relationships and making students aware of the resources that are available in RCCDSB schools and in their community.

With the assistance of Rick Klatt, Outdoor Education and Student Engagement Teacher, the team prepared a day filled with leadership activities, games and

discussions. Students from Grade 11 were invited to attend and act as peer mentors for the Grade 8 students.

According to one participant, "It was a great day! The ropes activity was awesome and, actually, the discussions were really good, too."

Organizers were thrilled with the turnout and felt they were able to 'reach' many students. "It was a wonderful way to support our students in their academic, spiritual and emotional growth and to embody the 'warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy' that is so important in our schools," summed up Sandy Brannan.

AMPLIFY

This fall, 30 RCCDSB Grade 10 and 11 students attended AMPLIFY at Wilderness Tours. The event featured a speaker from CHEO as well as leadership activities. The focus was on connecting youth to their community, amplifying their voice and really giving back to the community by joining student groups and helping make a difference in Renfrew County.



Reach Out 2016

This fall, our Board and Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre welcomed Grade 8 students from Bishop Smith Catholic High School and St. Joseph's High School to "REACH Out 2016".

Extra measures for vulnerable students

Two new resources have been added to our 'safety net' to support vulnerable students, reports Rebecca Paulsen, RCCDSB Mental Health and Wellness Lead.

The RCCDSB now has access to Urgent Care from CHEO, which allows us to call and receive appointments with medical experts for students who meet the criteria

dependent on the needs of the student. In addition, the Renfrew County Community Mental Health Centre has agreed to support school students age 12 and up with their mobile crisis unit.

"This is a wonderful supportive addition for all students in Renfrew County," Paulsen said.

FNMI 2016–17

Our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) program has added some new initiatives this fall to ensure that students have access to the resources and opportunities to help them achieve success, well-being and improved outcomes.

- Elders for each of the family of schools in our Board
- “Champion” teacher for each of the family of schools to help promote FNMI education in the curriculum and assist the Board FNMI Lead
- Resources purchased for schools in consultation with Lead and Champion teacher
- Partnership with Algonquin Cultural Centre so that students and teachers can access programs offered

We continue to provide:

- dedicated space in our high schools for resources and technology for students
- a dedicated Board lead position (funded by the Ministry of Education)
- data analysis for closing the gaps in literacy and math through EQAO, Math and OSSLT teaching.



Children’s pow wow at Pikwakanagan Aboriginal Day. Several RCCDSB students attended.



Final results from drum making.



Drummers from St. James at Stewartville Hydro Station demonstrating skills.

Music and dance go high tech

In the third year of a CODE (Council of Ontario Directors of Education) project to build capacity, student learning and achievement, itinerant music and dance specialist teachers are exploring the use of technology in the creative process.

Chrome books, iPads and interactive software programs can support student learning when used to demonstrate target skills, and to give precise and descriptive feedback to shape students’ performance and skills.

As an example, students may record themselves playing and listen back to self-assess their skills.

“Students who wouldn’t normally share will, because they feel more confident with the feedback they have received using the technology,” Teacher Terence O’Grady says of the benefits.

The CODE project follows a knowledge exchange process where the teachers share their expertise and fluency with assessment in the creative process using technology with one another.



Grade eight students use the iPad to help tune their ukeleles before playing.

“It’s helpful,” said Ava. Classmate Amy expanded, “When you have the iPad, you know how it should sound — unlike the manual tuner that you can’t hear.”

EQAO assessment evolves to online format

New in the 2016–17 school year, students have the opportunity to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) online. This is the first step of a project to eventually move all EQAO assessments from paper and pencil to electronic.

Students at Bishop Smith Catholic School in Pembroke and St. Joseph's High School in Renfrew had a 'test run' on October 5 to learn the functions and tools of the program before the first official assessment day on October 20. The test uses Chrome books with teachers acting as proctors in each room, pushing the test out to students.

Although there are some logistical challenges for staff to organize 164 students on Chrome books at once, students are familiar with Chrome books in the classroom, and the program itself has a number of helpful tools to aid students.

Students who are successful on the October online test can count the results and do not have to write again on the regularly scheduled test day in March. "It's a 'free attempt'," says Tina Noel.

Students who do need to write in March can choose between the written and online version.

"I think it is a lot better than writing everything out by hand. I also liked that since we are so used to technology, it is easier and faster to do it online".

—Alyssa Berger, Grade 10 Bishop Smith Catholic High School



"I like the online version better than pencil and paper because it is more natural with so much technology in our lives."

—Chantal Simms, Grade 10 Bishop Smith Catholic High School

Cassandra Farrell and Chantal Simms try out the OSSLT test at Bishop Smith Catholic High School.

Expanding experiential learning for secondary students

High school students have a number of options to choose from when it comes to experiential learning, including Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM), and the Cooperative Education and Dual Credit programs. All of these programs have proven invaluable for allowing students to test career possibilities and gain some hands-on experience.

Work is ongoing to expand experiential learning options for students in the Special Education program with the help of the businesses in the community.

"We're working with our community partners to expand the program, with experiential learning opportunities geared to students who have unique needs," said Tina Noel, Student Services, BSCHS.

Students learn the life skills required at school that are required for the experiential learning placement in the community.



BSCHS student Austin enjoys his experiential learning opportunity.



Message from the Director

Welcome to the 2016–2017 school year! I sincerely hope that each and every one of you has a wonderful experience in our community of schools this year.

RCCDSB's theme this year, which comes from our Vision Statement, is "make a difference as faith-filled community builders." "Faith-filled" reflects our commitment as a Catholic school system to guide our students in the way of Jesus, to love one another as ourselves, to respect the dignity of others, to share our belief in God, promote social justice, and to preserve and protect the world around us.

"Community builders" refers to building safe, secure communities in which we can thrive as responsible citizens. We are committed to supporting one another, and to promoting healthy and sustainable activities that improve our world for future generations.

And, perhaps, most important of all, this year's theme begins with the words "make a difference." We can do this in so many ways, from a simple act of kindness to a classmate to making a friend in the playground, to speaking up for justice or joining a fundraising campaign.

As we begin this school year, I offer you all my best wishes. God bless you all!



Michele Arbour



Message from the Diocese

During the first days of September we celebrated a Mass to inaugurate the beginning of the new academic year. As the students were arriving, one very young and enthusiastic child exclaimed, "Wow, this is my first time in a church." The sense of awe and wonder in this eager little boy reminded me that young people have a great capacity to discover and know God. The grandeur of our buildings, the sense of reverence in the liturgy, and the sensory experience of worship all have the ability to stir something within us to know and love God more. The excitement of this little boy also should rub off on those of us who are a little older, and perhaps much more casual and familiar with the things of God. With the frantic rush of life, I have to ask myself *do I still approach God with awe and joy?* This active and intentional relationship with Christ and his Church requires commitment and the forming of good habits (as individuals and families). A few weeks after hearing this exclamation from this young student I came across a sign that said: "A lack of church programs and entertainment is not why our youth are leaving the church. Our youth need to have a relationship with Christ, and that begins at home. Until we focus on fixing that, all the entertainment in the world won't keep them." Do I know Jesus enough to introduce someone else to him? Take the time this coming Sunday to rekindle your awe and joy.



Reverend G. Ryan Holly



Message from the Chair

On behalf of my fellow trustees, I extend a warm, heartfelt welcome to all students and staff as we begin a new school year at Renfrew County Catholic District School Board.

The front-page title of this issue of Notebook "community building" is very appropriate, not only because it reflects our Board's theme this year. It also reminds us of our past, present and future goals. The religious sisters who first taught school in this region laid the foundation for our Catholic school system. The priests and early members of our Catholic parishes built our schools, and the many families who supported Catholic education strengthened our numbers and continued our growth. That is part of our legacy.

We continue to build on that legacy today, which we trust will continue for generations. But community-building does not depend on physical structures or numbers alone. It depends on the contributions that we make to society as a whole, how we care for and help one another, and how we perform our responsibilities as citizens of the world.

Our Board's goal is to help our students become responsible adults who contribute and flourish in our society. With the help of our teachers, principals and other staff, our parents, our clergy, our parishes and the members of our broader communities, we work to support our young people as they grow and learn.

Together, we can build strong, healthy and sustainable communities. That will be our legacy.



**Bob Michaud
Chair**



Message from the PIC Chair

On behalf of the PIC committee, I would like to welcome parents and guardians back to the new school year!

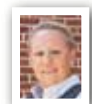
Although learning does not come to a complete halt over the summer months the RCCDSB hosts Summer Learning for our students around the county to enhance literacy and numeracy. Our educators work hard to gain valuable skills and knowledge to help support our children's achievements and well-being.

As we all settle back in to our routines and schedules our schools are already abuzz with learning, school activities, sports and events. We as parents, educators and students have already made such a valuable and meaningful connection with our parishes and our communities.

As our committee gears up for a new year and sets our goals and priorities we are committed to support parents and guardians with tools and resources.

You will have recently received our Parent to Parent newsletter, and in this publication, there is a very short survey that can be filled out and handed back to your principal. We would greatly appreciate your input/guidance or comments so that we can plan future endeavours that will meet your needs.

We are always open to your feedback and suggestions, so please don't hesitate to contact us at hmitchellpower@rccdsb.edu.on.ca



**Have a great year!
The Parent Involvement Committee**