

Notebook



Song and dance inspire creativity

Part of our Music Program Improvement Plan this school year focuses on the creative process through music and dance.

“The creative process involves inspiration, imagination, planning, experimentation, practising, revising, performing and evaluation,” says Elizabeth Burchat, Principal of School Effectiveness.

Six Itinerant Elementary Music Specialists—Jessica Belanger, T.J. O’Grady, Stephan Grasmuck, Joseph Platt, Jennifer Elgar and Janice Beauvais—see students in every grade once a week for 40 minutes.

Jessica Belanger’s favourite part of teaching music is watching her students grow.

“I watch them grow as musicians—from struggling to find their singing voice to singing beautifully in harmony with others, and finding the courage to even sing solos; from squeaking on the recorder to confidently playing ‘Ode to Joy’ and strumming and singing away on the ukulele.”



Belanger says students like music because it’s fun to sound great and create beautiful sounds with voice or instruments, and striving for greatness is fun.

“I think that challenge, that drive, is what keeps them hungry and motivated for music class. Performing in public and knowing that the product they will offer is good is rewarding for them and gives them a sense of accomplishment and pride.”



Message from the Director

Just as the arrival of spring brings new hope and new life, this issue of Notebook is brimming with new and innovative programs that RCCDSB has introduced to provide creative learning opportunities for our students.

From music to sports to Lego robots, our students use a variety of ways to develop critical-thinking and problem-

solving skills, as well as widening their knowledge and academic maturity. At RCCDSB, we understand that our students are individuals with unique learning needs and abilities. By offering a broad range of creative and innovative learning opportunities, we strive to provide a supportive learning environment for each student to achieve her or his personal best.

As a Catholic education system, we also encourage our students to grow in their faith through the teachings of Jesus Christ. As well, we encourage our students

to perform community and social justice activities to develop citizenship skills, and provide opportunities to learn about post-secondary institutions after they graduate.

At RCCDSB, we understand that the ways and methods of learning are endless. And, by using programs that involve creativity and innovation, we hope to pass on that knowledge to our students—in a world of life-long learning.



Michele Arbour
RCCDSB Director of Education

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.

High school hockey program scores credits and praise

The hockey program at both RCCDSB high schools ranks high in the standings with students and staff.

St. Joseph's High School in Renfrew recently completed its fourth year running the Hockey Canada Skills Academy.

"This is a unique opportunity for students to develop their technical hockey skills and improve their physical fitness levels while earning high school credits," says St. Joseph instructor Stacey McGregor.

The Bishop Hockey Program was such a phenomenal experience and I wish I could take it next year. I am definitely going to remember this program for the rest of my life.

—Jaiden Smith

He explains that players are often grouped by abilities and receive differentiated instruction depending on their skill set and readiness. Off-ice activities target improving the students' overall athleticism. Students work to increase their flexibility, core strength, explosiveness, foot speed and cardiovascular endurance. The program offers a wide range of benefits to members. For some, it may give players the boost required to play at a higher level the following season, for others, it is a wonderful opportunity to form special bonds and make lasting friendships with classmates who share a passion for the sport of hockey.

Bishop Smith Catholic High School implemented the program in fall 2015.

This program shaped my health and fitness for the better. I am eating right, exercising and am a better person in the community.

—Liam Campbell



"We were very excited to have the opportunity to enhance a student-player's confidence, individual playing skills, self-esteem and opportunities in both academics and athletics," says on-ice instructor Tyson Holly, adding, "The commitment, dedication and hard work by the students/athletes was inspiring!"

Off-ice instructor Leslie Spencer agrees the level of student engagement was rewarding.

"It was a privilege to work with the students and see them develop strength, endurance, focus and skill throughout the semester."



Message from the Chair

Creativity and Innovations is the title of this issue of Notebook, and I think it is also an appropriate description of our Board's priorities for the 2015–2016 school year.

Our Board, of course, is committed to aligning our educational system with the Ministry of Education's goals to increase student achievement, ensure equity, promote well-being and enhance public confidence in our schools. Our own goals

include Christian maturity, life-long learning and sustainability of the world we live in.

Ultimately though, we are committed to providing our students with the tools they need to learn and grow, as well as to achieve their personal best within a safe, respectful, caring school environment.

Another priority this year is the celebration of our Year of Mercy, as declared by His Excellency, Pope Francis. Throughout the year, in all facets of our Board, we are working to share and promote unconditional love and forgiveness, following the example of Jesus. The gift of unconditional love helps us to understand

each person's needs and abilities, and to accept each person's individuality and value.

My fellow trustees and I are very grateful for the efforts made by our Board's administration and staff to engage our students through all of these programs throughout the year. Also, I must thank our parents, clergy, partners and community members who support our students and provide learning opportunities to help them build a strong and healthy future together.



Bob Michaud

Robotics in the classroom

Imagine that you not only built a robot using Lego, but also connected it to your computer and then programmed it to kick a ball...

Students in the robotics program, recently piloted in RCCDSB schools, create and program moving robotic models all while enhancing their creativity and problem-solving abilities. The project-based activities also helped to build science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) knowledge.

The Lego® WeDo® kit for junior students, funded by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), was piloted at Holy Name Catholic School in Scott Lafreniere's grade 2/3 class. Mr. Lafreniere says his students really enjoyed it. "It was a great way to touch on some 21st century learning skills with a mix of hands-on activities in the actual construction of the robots balanced with some coding to make the robots run—all geared towards primary-aged kids."

"I liked that you can make moving robots out of Lego. It was neat that you could make different kinds of robots like a moving bird and a soccer kicking leg."

—Ethan

"I thought the Lego robots were very cool. I learned about using the computer to program the robot's movements and thought it was neat to build the robot kicking leg and getting it to kick the ball."

—Zachary



In the background: Ethan, foreground Zachary.



Grade 10 student Ezra Fisher.

Students at Bishop Smith Catholic High School (BSCHS) in Damien Solar's grade 10 science class piloted the Lego® MindStorms® EV3 robotic platform, which offers a challenging, sophisticated robotic program for intermediate students.

RCCDSB students say 'oui' to French

Core French instruction is provided to every student from kindergarten to grade 8 across the RCCDSB for 40 minutes each day. To meet a growing demand for increased French instruction, the RCCDSB has piloted Extended French in five elementary schools—Our Lady of Sorrows, Petawawa,

St. Francis of Assisi, Petawawa, Our Lady of Lourdes, Pembroke, Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew, and St. Joseph's, Arnprior.

Students in the primary grades spend 25% of the day learning subject matter from physical education to social science in French.

The Board is also planning an Extended French pilot program at Bishop Smith Catholic High School for the 2016–17 school year.

"One really positive outcome is that the value of French has increased as a whole in school and in communities," notes Principal lead Amy Sicoli, adding that it is common to hear French spoken in the hallways.

Sicoli and a team of teachers administer funds from the Ministry of Education allotted to French instruction. The funds are used to support school trips with an FSL component, French job fairs, concerts in French, professional development for teachers, and technical support.

The Core French program, Extended French and special activities are all aimed at "building oral language skills and confidence in speaking French," says Sicoli.



The DI challenge reaches the next level

The decision to participate in Destination Imagination was just the beginning for a group of grade 8 students at Bishop Smith Catholic High School (BSCHS). Next they brainstormed to come up with an idea for the category they chose—Service Learning / Project Outreach®. They had to find a solution for a real community need that they identified. The outcome is a new Facebook page called Ottawa Valley Helping Hands: Helping Everyone Serve Our Communities Better. The premise is that their page will assist organizations searching for volunteers and help students find the volunteer hours that are required for graduation.

It has been a good experience for the five students, who meet every day on their lunch and apply their 21st century learning skills to solve the challenge.

Teacher Julie Summers notes the team's hard work and says, "It takes a particular skill set—critical thinking, and collaboration."

"It's really fun to work with a group and do something like this that will not only affect us, but a lot of other people too," says team member Faith.

"We all have to work together to get it done," agrees teammate Sierra.



The Helping Hands team: Ella, Alex, Faith, Hannah and Sierra.

While they've already surpassed their goal of 100 likes on their Facebook page, the group hopes to go all the way to the global competition in Knoxville, Tennessee.

A second mixed grade 9/10 team from BSCHS, named "The Kids In The Hall", competed in the Fine Arts category on March 5. Both teams advanced to the provincial tournament in Toronto on April 3.

Physical Literacy

Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.

—International Physical Literacy Association, May 2014

Statistics show that only 9% of Canadian children aged 5 to 17 get the recommended 60 minutes of activity each day. The Physical Literacy program aims to encourage children to engage in physical activities.

To that end, Rick Klatt, RCCDSB Outdoor Education and Student Engagement Resource Teacher, is developing resources,

equipment and activities for teachers across the RCCDSB to help grow the physical education program.

The program will help to build confidence, enhance physical abilities, develop an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of an active lifestyle, and promote lifelong engagement in physical activities.

"We're developing skills that will be useful over a lifetime," says Klatt.

Sample activities and resources include:

- ice fishing (St. Joseph's, Calabogie)
- winter carnival activities (St. Michael's, Douglas)
- wood play manipulatives for playgrounds

Delving deeper into technology

Although it is not part of the curriculum, grade 4/5 students in teacher Rob Townsend's class at Cathedral Catholic School are participating in computer coding activities during their extra class time.

"It's a good way to keep students engaged when their work is finished," says Mr. Townsend, explaining that programming is another aspect of computer literacy.

The program also provides an opportunity for students to explore their interest in a computer science-related career.

A key aspect of the program is that students employ problem-solving, math and geometry skills in order to manipulate blocks of code and ensure that characters or elements of the game are performing properly. "The challenge is fixing problems," says Townsend.

Students can create art, make a video or build their own game apps choosing a popular theme such as Minecraft, Frozen or Star Wars.

Grade 5 student Ethan, in his second year of coding, is creating an artist app and says, "It makes you think a lot, like how to draw something."



The program also provides short video clips featuring celebrities who provide instructions.

Once their app is complete, students can download it onto home computers, iPads or other devices and play.

High school students double up on credits

Grade 11 and 12 students at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke, and St. Joseph's High School, Renfrew, can earn dual credits—high school and college—through Algonquin College. Beyond credits, the program has a lot to offer students as they plan for their futures.

“Dual Credit is a great opportunity for students to gain a better understanding of the field of study as well as the college academic environment. Research shows that students need and want to have an experiential learning opportunity in a post-secondary environment prior to making a commitment to an area of study and Dual Credit is just that. The program bridges the gap between future studies and what their career will look and feel like in some cases,” states Jodi Bucholtz, Marketing & Event Planning Officer / Professor, Algonquin College.

Some of the courses are congregated—all high school students, while others may be integrated—high school students take open seats in courses with college students.



Courses such as Child Development and Addictions prepare students for careers in health care, education or social work, says Tina Noel, BSCHS Student Services, noting there is no tuition fee and transportation is provided by the School to College Work Initiative (SCWI). “It’s a really good program that gives students a taste of the world beyond high school,” adds Noel.

Real world experiences

Winter safety and survival are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the hands-on “Navigating Winter” program developed by Algonquin College. During a full week of outdoor activities at the picturesque Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre (SWOEC), students participate in activities such as starting a fire from scratch to boil water for sumac tea, building a quinzee shelter, constructing a wood duck box, and making bannock.

“We love coming here.”

Grade 6 students Lexi and Kayla, St. Michael's Catholic School, at SWOEC.



Rick Klatt, RCCDSB Outdoor Education, says these activities generate other benefits. Experiential learning inspires creativity, reflection and problem solving, accelerates learning and improves attitudes towards learning.

“It’s another style of learning that allows some students who are in their element to shine. Students develop an appreciation for winter, and you can really see what they learn over the week. All of their senses are involved in the experience,” notes Klatt.

Activities are related to the curriculum as well—e.g., life science, biodiversity—with follow-up activities in the classroom.

Shelley Tigges’ grade 6 class from St. Michael’s Catholic School in Douglas was the first to test the new program.

“It provides a good balance of cross-curricular learning,” observed Tigges, adding that her students enjoyed all the activities and “The team building just carried over to class.”



Message from the PIC Chair

It’s hard to believe that the end of another school year is fast approaching.

There are so many wonderful things going on within our schools and amazing partnerships formed with their parishes and within their communities.

The RCCDSB Parent Involvement Committee has partnered with the Renfrew County Parenting Network to

host evening parent workshops. The theme of the workshops is Journey from Worries to Wellness.

The two remaining dates and locations are:

- April 27: St. Andrew’s CES in Killaloe at 6 p.m.
- May 12: St. Francis of Assisi CES in Petawawa at 6 p.m.

These Parent information sessions have been made possible by the Parent Reaching Out grant program through the Ministry of Education.

If you would like more information, please visit the Phoenix Centre website to view the evening agenda. Registration is required, so please hurry! Don’t miss out.

If you would like any information regarding the Parent Involvement Committee or how to get involved in your school, please contact Hazel Power at hmitchellpower@rccdsb.edu.on.ca



Hazel Power
PIC Chair

Learning outside the traditional classroom



Students at Bishop Smith Catholic High School and St. Joseph's High School are offered the options of grade 12 religion (two levels) and grade 12 philosophy online. There are many benefits to e-Learning.

"It gives students flexibility in their timetable and allows them to work their schedule around life," says Teacher Rebecca Clouthier, adding that she has the ability to track students' progress online and is always available to students to answer questions or concerns.

Taylor, a grade 11 student taking grade 12 religion, says online discussion allows for peer input and opinion. "There's still the same sense of community as in a classroom."

Other eLearning advantages include:

- helps to prepare for college/university and digital citizenship
- builds time management skills
- allows students to work independently at their own pace
- can work from any location (library, home, etc.)

Students don't have to own a computer or device, they can work on computers in the school library or use a supplied Chrome book.

Doors of Mercy

It is estimated that in December 2015, more than 10,000 holy doors were opened around the world!

Designated Holy Doors of Mercy in the Diocese of Pembroke include St. Columbkille Cathedral, Pembroke, St. Anne Church, Mattawa, St. Peter Church, Fort Coulonge, St. Hedwig Church, Barry's Bay and Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew.

"Going through the Holy Door is the sign of our faith in the Lord Jesus, who didn't come to judge us, but to save us," said Pope Francis.



Grade 7 confirmation candidates with Bishop Michael Mulhall at the opening of the Holy Doors of Mercy at St. Columbkille Cathedral, in Pembroke on December 8, 2015.



Message from the Diocese

How are your New Year's resolutions going? By this time of the year, those resolutions seem like distant memories for most of us. Changing something major in our lives requires effort, determination and moving from what has become comfortable. If faced with a health issue that is preventable, often a scare or an admonition from our doctor will set us on the course of a lifestyle change. But what about changes in our spiritual lives?

Some people have dramatic conversions, such as experienced by St. Paul on the road to Damascus, but the truth is that our lives are very ordinary. In the spiritual life we are constantly in need of changing ourselves—to be more like Christ. The Year of Mercy is the gracious invitation that has been given to kickstart real spiritual change in our lives, first by experiencing the Lord's mercy personally. Once we recognize how gracious and merciful God is with ourselves, we are opened up to seeing others with more merciful eyes. In his very first Angelus address, Pope Francis reminded us that God never gives up on us; he said, "*God understands us. He waits for*

us. He doesn't get tired of forgiving us, if we repent and go to him with a truly open heart." This is the time when we need to truly evaluate our need for spiritual change. Am I faithful to God? Do I see the teachings of Christ and His Church as the good news that I need? Do I make the Sacraments the foundation of our family life? Do I seek the forgiveness from Christ so that I may grow closer to him and be more merciful to others? These are the questions we need to ask, not just in Lent, but for life.



Fr. Ryan Holly