



## REPORT TO THE HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Prepared by: Tara Boreham and Sean McDade, Superintendents of Education  
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Submitted by: Karen Tigani, Director of Education and Secretary

# BOARD HIGHLIGHTS FOR MARCH

Public Session

## BACKGROUND

Many activities take place every month throughout the district to ensure that our students have rich, faith-filled, inclusive learning opportunities that support their learning and fulfill the goals of the Strategic Plan. The Board Highlights list many of the activities that take place in the month prior to the board meeting, with contributions from Superintendents of Education, Learning Coordinators, the Mental Health Lead, the OYAP Project Lead, and Managers of activities that take place under their leadership.

## DEVELOPMENTS

The spiritual theme anchoring our new Strategic Plan is “On Fire With The Spirit: Awaken! Illuminate! Rejoice!” Inspired by the Holy Spirit and enlivened by the Pentecost story, we go forward into a new year full of faith, hope, love and joy. We are excited about the incredible learning and growth that propels us forward as we journey together throughout the school year. March marks the beginning of a new liturgical season. As we engage in Lent 2025, we are reminded of the opportunity to reflect and renew. At all times, learning is ideally marked by reflection, renewal as well as enthusiasm and commitment on the part of our students, staff, educators and families to continue to improve. We are delighted to highlight some of the activities and opportunities that took place this month across our district.

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## ***CATHOLIC EDUCATION***

### **Lenten Activities in Schools**

School communities have been engaging in the Lenten practices of fasting, prayer and almsgiving throughout the season of Lent. Students and staff have made a concerted effort to support charitable and prayer efforts directed toward peace in our world. Lenten prayer and sacramental experiences in our schools have included the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Stations of the Cross, musical performances and more. The staff at the Catholic Education Centre joined with the St. Columban/St. Patrick’s school communities for their Ash Wednesday Mass and those who could not attend, were offered the opportunity to receive ashes at a prayer service led by Religion and Family Life Learning Coordinator, Caroline Thuss.

School and system leaders all received a copy of “The Path to Hope,” a daily devotional for Lent that helps prepare our hearts for Easter through a deep dive into God’s Word that is filled with hope. This will help our leaders flame the fires of the Holy Spirit within them throughout the season of Lent.

### **Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario Conference**

Four staff members participated in the Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario (CARFLEO) conference and retreat held on March 24-25 at the Queen of the Apostles retreat centre in Mississauga.

The theme for the conference was “Pilgrims of Hope: Walking in Faith-Walking in Hope-Walking in Love” and featured keynote presentations by Barb McMorrow, Retired Director of Education, PVNCCDSB, Dr. Anne Jamieson, Executive Director, Institute for Catholic Education and Monsignor Con O’Mahoney, Vicar for Education, Diocese of Hamilton. His Excellency, Bishop Lonsinger celebrated Mass with the attendees. The opportunity for Christian mediation and a variety of forms of prayer were also available to attendees. Religion and Family Life coordinator, Caroline Thuss, helped plan this conference as part of her role on the executive committee of CARFLEO. We are delighted with the engagement our Board staff has with CARFLEO.

### **Development and Peace Schools (D & P Schools)**

As part of our commitment to D & P Schools, every school in Huron-Perth Catholic DSB received a kit to take part in the “Major Mustard Seed Challenge” throughout Lent. The students are excited about this experience and it is a wonderful way to engage students in a tangible sign of God’s love in their midst while also making important curriculum connections. Schools were also asked to participate in the Share Lent Campaign as part of this Lenten Challenge.

### **Senior Basketball Tournaments**

The Huron and Perth Grade 7/8 Basketball tournaments were a huge success again this year. The Perth Senior Basketball Tournament took place at St. Michael, while the Huron Senior Basketball Tournament was hosted at St. Anne’s and St. Joseph’s, Clinton - both on March 25. A special thank you to all the coaches for dedicating their time and effort to supporting student athletes. The convenors did an excellent job organizing the events, ensuring students were engaged, challenged, and had fun throughout the day.

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## ***LEADERSHIP***

### **Leaders’ Learning Council (LLC)**

On March 25, principals participated in a focused day of learning on our Math Strategy, led by Learning Coordinator Christine Dale. With an emphasis on system and provincial math goals, particularly in Grades 3 and 6 - principals co-created “look-fors” for math walkabouts, refined pre- and post-visit reflections, and explored strategies to deepen debriefs with teachers.

To support implementation, Superintendents Sean McDade and Tara Boreham, along with Christine Dale, will visit every school over the next six weeks. Principals will also serve as “problem of practice” partners in other schools, refining their approach to monitoring, feedback, and celebrating successes. As part of this initiative, they will have the opportunity to observe another school during a system visit, fostering cross-school collaboration and shared learning.

The day also included time for prayer, a Privacy and Cybersecurity presentation, and a School Climate Update focused on distribution and process. It was a meaningful day of learning, reflection, and strategic planning, reinforcing our shared commitment to excellence in school leadership.

### **International Education**

February allowed all of the Board’s international students to be involved in outdoor activities with their homestay families. Almost all of the students experienced shovelling snow at their homes

for the very first time. Additionally, many of the students used the warmer weather in the last week of the month to build a snowman. All of the students reported that they were so excited to do this and send pictures back to their families.

All five students from Brazil learned about remote learning through Google Classroom and Brightspace. Both pieces of computer software are new learning tools that have been introduced to them. In addition to a more rigorous curriculum, students are accessing support through the Board's Multi-Language Teacher, Katherine Miller, who is meeting with the students every two weeks in addition to working with the teachers who support these students.

On February 24 two visiting agents from Valencia, Spain were provided a tour of both highschoools as well as at the Catholic Education Centre. The day-long tour provided the agents an opportunity to see the school, its students and staff working during a regular day. This type of tour is very important to new agencies as they look at sending international students to our district. The visiting agents were very complimentary of the school district, its facilities and its staff and they have committed to working with the Board in the future.

Principal Grace attended major recruiting events at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and Osaka, Japan in the third week of March. The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board was showcased to various agents from across Asia, including Japan and South Korea as well as many students and their families as they start planning for the child's visit to Canada for September 2025 or September 2026. Additionally, meetings were held with a school in Yokohama, Japan who are looking at sending Grade 10 students to the district within the next 18 months. The Japanese school has committed to visit our district in October 2025 and the visit will determine how suitable St. Anne's and St. Michael are as destinations for their students.

Two new International student recruitment agencies from Belgium and Spain have signed non-exclusive contracts with the Board in the last month. As a result, there are now twenty six agencies that are signed that allow these agencies from across Europe, Asia, Australia, the United States of America and South America to recruit students for Huron-Perth Catholic DSB.

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## ***SPECIAL EDUCATION***

### **Special Education Resource Teacher Meeting - March 5**

During March we welcomed Special Education Resource Teachers to the Catholic Education Centre for a full day of learning and collaboration. Content throughout the day focused on key areas of our strategic plan. The first session was about Executive Functioning and Universal Supports which is essential to understand when implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support. The second was the first session of our new book study with our Math Coordinator, "Rethinking Disability and Mathematics". This book study comes right after we finished our first book study with our Literacy Coordinator, "The Next Steps in Literacy Instruction". During the afternoon we focused on EQAO and targeted intervention at tiers 1, 2, and 3 in order to improve Student Achievement for all learners. Other teachers who are involved in intervention work joined us for the afternoon. Teachers were able to collaborate and engage in rich learning led by members of our Learning Coordination Team. The afternoon was a direct follow up from our February LLC where principals began to lay the foundation for this work.

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## **DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT LEARNING**

### **STEM Workshops for Grades 9-12 Students**

Huron-Perth Catholic DSB has built and continues to have a strong partnership with the University of Waterloo's Engineering Outreach program. This collaboration has allowed the Huron-Perth Catholic DSB ICT Learning Coordinator to play an active role in shaping workshops and programming for students in Grades 9-12, ensuring alignment with the Ontario Curriculum. Through our involvement, we have helped refine content that connects real-world engineering applications to student learning. A key focus of these workshops is the integration of digital tools that enhance coding skills, equipping students with hands-on experience in programming, computational thinking, and problem-solving. Both St. Anne's and St. Michael have classes participating in these workshops. This initiative strengthens our commitment to providing innovative learning opportunities that prepare students for future pathways in STEM. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of this partnership in our classrooms.

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## **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Mathematics**

During the month of March, the Math Team, consisting of three Math Facilitators and one Math Learning Coordinator, continued to support the teaching and learning of mathematics in all of our elementary schools. The focus continued to be providing Grade 3 and 6 students with ample experience responding to selected-response questions. The Math Team worked alongside teachers in Grades 3 and 6 classes to prepare students for EQAO testing by using the [High Impact Instructional Practice](#) of "Teaching About Problem Solving" using recently released EQAO math questions. Problem-solving is an essential skill that enables students to think critically, overcome obstacles, and build independent reasoning. The released EQAO questions offer a chance to review the curriculum and teach students effective strategies for solving math problems. By teaching the problem-solving process, we help students make their thinking more intentional and clear. This encourages them to engage in "think alouds" and "self-talk," helpful strategies they can use when facing new challenges. When we teach problem-solving, we support students in understanding the value of productive struggle, learning from mistakes, and building flexible reasoning. Effective instruction in this area prompts students to reflect on their thought processes, making unconscious strategies more visible and accessible. Math Facilitators model this approach by explicitly sharing their own thinking with students and teachers, creating opportunities for discussion as students develop strong mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. The Math Team also continued their support of math in other grades as requested and by continuing other routines, such as "Do the Math" intervention.

### **Early Reading Screening - Middle of the Year**

The System Literacy Team has successfully completed the second round of screening across the district, assessing all students from Senior Kindergarten to Grade 2. This screening serves as an early indicator of future reading success and provides valuable insights into students' strengths and areas for growth. To support targeted instruction, Literacy Coordinator MJ Drager and Special Education Coordinator Jessica Langan are collaborating with each school team, including the principal, Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), and classroom teacher, to review the data and determine appropriate next steps for all students. The collected data will be analyzed at the district level to identify trends and specific needs across schools and grade levels, informing future planning and resource allocation.

### **Literacy EQAO Preparation**

Preparation for the upcoming EQAO assessments in Literacy is well underway. All Grade 3 and Grade 6 teachers have participated in a full day of professional learning focused for part of the day on the new Literacy curriculum. This training has equipped educators with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively support student readiness for EQAO testing. In addition to this professional learning, the System Literacy Team has developed supplementary practice resources to provide students with additional opportunities to engage with test-aligned questions and reading passages. These resources aim to enhance familiarity with the assessment format and further support student success. Literacy Resource Teachers are providing additional support by modelling these lessons for educators.

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## ***EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMS IN SECONDARY***

### **Certification & Safety Training**

- **Working at Heights Training**

In March, St. Michael Secondary School successfully hosted two additional Working at Heights training sessions for SHSM students. These sessions provided essential skills for students pursuing careers in construction and other industries requiring fall protection.

- **CPR/First Aid Certification**

A total of 30 SHSM students at SMCSS, completed their mandatory CPR/First Aid Certification, ensuring they are prepared to respond to emergency situations in a professional and effective manner.

- **Elevated Work Platform and Confined Space Safety Training**

On March 4, 12 St. Anne's SHSM students participated in Power Elevated Work Platform Training and Confined Space Safety Training at LiUNA Local 1059 and Carpenters Union Local 1946 in London. This initiative allows students to gain specialized training while reducing transportation costs. These certifications are valuable additions to their resumes, particularly for students pursuing careers in construction and agriculture.

### **Specialized Learning & Field Trips**

- **Black Hair Styling Event**

As part of Black History Month, St. Michael Catholic Secondary School hosted a specialized Black Hair Styling Event. Former student and professional barber, Melissa Dolton, volunteered her time to share her expertise in barbering, with a particular focus on fades and maintaining black hair texture. Melissa, who has extensive experience working in a Toronto barbershop, demonstrated a fade haircut on a St. Michael CSS student and discussed techniques for braiding and extensions. Students from both St. Michael CSS and St. Anne's CSS were invited to participate in this unique learning opportunity, fostering inclusivity and cultural awareness.

- **Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) – Mental Health Event**

Both SACSS and SMCSS female students participated in the Women in Skilled Trades (WIST) event held at St. Joseph's Parish on March 27. The students had the opportunity to engage with women working in various skilled trades, learning about career pathways and experiences. In the afternoon, participants attended a Mental Health Certification

course, facilitated by a local community partner, reinforcing the importance of mental wellness in the trades.

- **Respect in Sport - Activity Leader Program**

SHSM Sport students completed their Respect in Sport Coaching Certification, an essential program to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to foster respectful and safe environments in sports settings.

### **Dual Credit Program**

- **Dual Credit Aesthetics Course**

Several students from SMCSS began a Dual Credit Aesthetics course in partnership with Fanshawe College. The course is being held at the Reach Centre in Clinton, providing students with hands-on training and the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits.

#### **Other Dual Credit Opportunities**

In addition to the Aesthetics program, multiple SHSM students continued to participate in various dual credit courses at other colleges, enhancing their skills and career readiness.

- **Lambton College:** Five SACSS students are attending Lambton College every Thursday, participating in various dual credit courses, including:
  - Intro to HVAC
  - Plumbing Techniques
  - Intro to Residential Electrical
  - Arboriculture and Chainsaw Practices
  - The Great Outdoors
  - Bakeshop
- **Conestoga College:** One SACSS student attends Conestoga College every Friday, taking courses in:
  - Cabinet Making
  - Security Guard Licensing

Upon successful completion of these courses, students will earn both high school and college credits, providing them with a head start in their respective fields.

### **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)**

- **OYAP Level 1 Update**
  - Electrical: One student is scheduled to begin the OYAP Level 1 Electrical program at Conestoga College on March 24.
  - Welding: Another student is scheduled to start the OYAP Level 1 Welding program at Lambton College in April.

These students will graduate with their Level 1 trade certifications, offering a significant advantage as they pursue careers in skilled trades.

### **SHSM Certifications – March 2025**

St. Anne's CSS will deliver several in-house SHSM Certifications during March, including:

- Customer Service
- Coding (Developed by a St. Michael's graduate)
- Leadership Skills
- Ethical Considerations
- Grower Pesticide Safety Course (Scheduled for April)

These certifications enhance students' skills and qualifications, preparing them for future educational and career opportunities.

### **Grade 10 Class Presentations**

SHSM representatives visited Grade 10 classrooms to discuss course selection for the upcoming year. Students are being introduced to the seven SHSM programs available at St. Anne's, including:

- Agriculture
- Arts & Culture
- Business
- Construction
- Health & Wellness
- Non-Profit
- Education & Childcare
- Sports

Both St. Michael and St. Anne's Catholic Secondary Schools continue to provide valuable opportunities for students through SHSM and Experiential Learning programs. The recent activities, including certifications, dual credits, and specialized training, underscore our commitment to equipping students with the practical skills necessary for success in their post-secondary education and future careers.

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## ***MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING***

### **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Week:**

March 3 - 8, 2025 was Social Emotional Learning Week and the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board K-12 classrooms spent SEL Week engaging in a variety of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities. Our Board believes that fostering emotional intelligence and well-being is crucial for the growth of the whole student and contributes to academic achievement. To support this initiative, the Mental Health and Wellness Team (MHWT) created a 'Grab and Go' resource to support educators in celebrating Social Emotional Learning Week in their classrooms!

Additionally, in our elementary panel, the MHWT provided Social Emotional Learning (SEL) presentations to 10 classrooms. Approximately 220 students participated in these classroom SEL opportunities. The topics ranged from recognizing and understanding emotions, managing stress, coping, social awareness and respecting differences, and relationship skills.

### **Huron-Perth Catholic DSB Mental Health and Addictions Scan:**

This month the Mental Health Team completed the Board Mental Health and Addictions Scan for School Mental Health Ontario's review and support. This Board Scan provides a strategic pathway to advance our vision for school mental health in Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board while also better understanding the provincial landscape. Through the insights gathered, School Mental Health Ontario provides us with information, resources and support to help us develop our annual. This process is instrumental in refining the Board's action plan and informing Mental Health and Addictions initiatives and decision-making at the district level.

### **Social Work Week: Recognizing our School Social Workers**

Annually, Social Workers were celebrated throughout the month of March. From March 3 - 9, 2025, Social Work Week was observed in Ontario and across Canada. Both occasions provided important opportunities to recognize the dedication, hard work, and incredible accomplishments of our Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board Social Workers.

The 2025 campaign theme, "Wherever You Are, #SoAreWe," highlighted the availability and versatility of the social work profession, emphasizing its critical role in addressing the growing and universal problem of access to care. During this week and every week, we recognized how blessed we were to have our School-Based Social Workers - Anne, Lindsay, Nicki, Laura, Natalie, and Sally as well as our Mental Health Lead, Kaitie Westbrook.

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#### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board receives the Board Highlights for March for information.
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