



REPORT TO THE HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Prepared by: Karen Tigani and Tara Boreham, Superintendents of Education
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Submitted by: Chris N. Roehrig, 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, 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, and Managers of activities that take place under their leadership.

DEVELOPMENTS

The spiritual theme we anchor the 2023-24 school year in is “Go Forth!” and it builds upon the Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus which has been guiding our district over the past three years. The Holy Spirit continues to guide our district and lovingly supports us as we cycle through states of encounter, accompaniment and transformation. As we move through the season of Lent and celebrate Holy Week, we are ever grateful for the many gifts of our students, families, staff members, parishes, and communities. Together, we are on a journey marked by prayer, hope, loving acts of charity and the pursuit of justice. We are people of hope and we delight in the many signs of God’s love and joy in our schools and facilities. As people of the resurrection, we live in the knowledge of God’s abundant love and our hope is renewed.

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.

Holy Week 2024

All schools will mark Holy Week with liturgical celebrations and prayers. Many will host special liturgies on Holy Thursday with content that reflects the entire Easter Triduum. These celebrations are highlights within the school year for students, staff and families. They are often student-led with rich dramatic story-telling and musical performances to mark this holiest of feasts in the liturgical year.

Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario Conference

Five staff members participated in the Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario (CARFLEO) conference and retreat held on March 21-22 at the Queen of the Apostles retreat centre in Mississauga. The theme for the conference was “The Most Beautiful Thing God Made is the Family” and featured keynote presentations by Dr. Anne Jamieson, breakout sessions with the writers of the new family life curriculum, and opportunities to collaborate about family life in our schools. 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 and will be stepping into the role of treasurer for the next two years with this dynamic group. We are delighted with the engagement our Board staff has with CARFLEO and note that the timing of this retreat theme is excellent with the release of the new Family Life Education curriculum which will be implemented in the 2024-25 school year.

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.

Human Trafficking Information Night

There were over 100 community members from the Listowel area present at the Human Trafficking Information Night that was hosted at St. Mary’s Catholic School in Listowel on March 6. The evening was planned and led in partnership with OPP and Bridging Gaps Co-Founder, Melanie Knights. Melanie is an Anti-Human Trafficking Trainer, Consultant and Advocate. The school’s administrators were thrilled with the incredible attendance and noted that this brought many parents and caregivers together from the school community and well beyond.

March Break

Our schools were closed during March 11-15 for the March Break. Both secondary schools had student trips to Europe and they had an incredible time exploring language, culture, history, religion and more. We are grateful to the staff, parents/caregivers, and volunteers who made these rich experiential learning experiences possible.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Series: Session 2

Superintendent Ducharme and Executive Manager of Human Relations Angela Hodgson co-hosted session 2 of our Leadership Series for HPCDSB staff on March 5. Their interactive workshop-style event included important topics related to Finances, Facilities and Human Resources. The participants found the content incredibly informative, with many remarking that these are aspects of leadership that they have less experience with as compared to topics related to teaching and learning. We are very excited about the high number of participants in this series and feel that this is an important part of our leadership development and succession planning.

St Jerome's Catholic University Alumni Event

St Jerome's Catholic University invited members of our senior leadership team and school administration to participate in an event where current students and alumni meet so that students can ask questions about future careers. It was an opportunity for us to share the great news about career opportunities in Huron and Perth counties, specifically with our Board. Some of the students are pursuing education while others are in business, social work, religious studies, human resources, and other programs. We have many St. Anne's CSS and St. Michael CSS students who choose to pursue post-secondary education at this and other Catholic universities and colleges. We value this partnership and will continue to remain in contact with St Jerome's. Following the Alumni meet and greet event, there was a Lecture in Catholic Experience by Dr. Jonathan Malesic entitled "Beyond Burnout Culture" that everyone was invited to attend.

Leaders' Learning Council (LLC)

On March 26 we will host a full day LLC at the Catholic Education Centre. Our agenda will include a presentation from Leroy Hibbert, from LUSO London. He will provide an overview of the services available for students, families and staff. Our Mental Health Lead, Kaitie Westbrook, will conduct a consultative process with school and system leaders working in focus groups to inform the Mental Health Strategy. Our Math Team will lead a workshop on the Math Achievement Action Plan with an emphasis on the importance of nurturing a strong sense of conceptual understanding in mathematics. Aspects of the Board's math plan that support the development of this will be explored, paired with unpacking the school level leadership moves that Principals can take to support the board's priorities in math. Lastly, a review of key aspects of enrollment and other updates from Superintendents will occur.

EQAO: Grade 3 & 6

The Math Learning Coordinator began preparations for this year's Primary and Junior EQAO Assessments by meeting with principals to set up testing sessions. She also began training new teachers and provided resources for all Grades 3 and 6 classroom teachers.

Senior Basketball Tournament

Both the Huron and the Perth Grade 7 and 8 basketball tournaments were a huge success this year. The Perth Senior Basketball tournament was held at St. Michael on March 19. The Huron Senior Basketball tournament was held at St. Anne's and St. Joseph's in Clinton on March 20. A special thank you to the coaches at every school who invested so much of their time guiding and supporting the student athletes. The convenors of both events coordinated the days so that students were engaged, challenged and had fun!

Greg Cook Memorial Elementary Hockey Tournament March 11 and 12

Once again this year, the St. Michael CSS girls' hockey team hosted a 4-on-4 hockey tournament in Stratford during the March Break. The event hosted boys and girls from Grades 3 to 8 for a fun-filled hockey experience. Participants receive information about water safety in honour and memory of a former St. Michael CSS student whom the tournament is named after. High school students volunteer and assist at this tournament, many getting community service hours toward their graduation requirements.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

On March 18th our monthly SEAC meeting took place. Each month community agencies have an opportunity to share updates and our school board is able to share a few information items with SEAC members. For the March meeting, we focused on our work surrounding Transitions. We informed the committee about our early years JK entry transition process. We then discussed our Transition to Secondary Working Group and the great work happening to streamline our process of transitioning students with Special Education needs from Grade 8 to 9. Lastly we discussed our partnership with Facile Perth and the importance of careful and creative thinking around transitioning secondary students with Special Education needs to the world of post-secondary education, work, volunteer, or participant in community.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mathematics

The Math Team continues to support the teaching and learning of mathematics across our educational system through the Math Achievement Action Plan (MAAP). This plan is structured around three primary objectives: ensuring fidelity to the curriculum, advancing educators' mathematical content knowledge, and providing support systems to meet the needs of all students. To achieve these goals, we have devised comprehensive implementation strategies at the board, school, and classroom levels. Our team members actively participate in Ministry meetings related to the MAAP, including strategic planning sessions and specialized math content knowledge learning series. We maintain close collaborations with partners such as EQAO, MathUP, Making Math Moments, and Knowledgehook, utilizing their expertise to gather and analyze data crucial for monitoring the plan's key performance indicators (KPIs). The Math Lead submitted a progress report on our MAAP to the Ministry at the end of March. Our Math Facilitators play a pivotal role in supporting targeted student groups at priority schools, identified both by the ministry and the Board. By fostering conceptual understanding and operational fluency, they assist students in demonstrating numerical reasoning. Additionally, they provide invaluable guidance to both new and experienced teachers across the system upon request. The Math Team began their latest round of strategic support by helping students review math curriculum in Grades 3 and 6, prior to EQAO testing. This tour involved supporting teachers with the use of formative assessment to inform small group instruction.

Literacy: Early Reading Screening Update

We are pleased to confirm that our Literacy Team has completed training for all SK-1, Grade 1, Grade 1-2, Grade 2 and Grade 3-4 teachers in the Acadience Early Reading Screening tools to date. Each teacher was trained on the purpose of the screener and received specific training for the subtests that are administered in the grade(s) that they teach. The training was very well received and we are pleased with the very positive and enthusiastic response of our educators as we make these important shifts in various aspects of reading instruction. At this stage, we are planning sessions for teachers in Grades 4, 5 and 6-7 as well as Literacy support for Grade 7 and Grade 8 teachers in the upcoming months. To assist in this work, we are delighted to welcome 2 additional Literacy Resource Teachers (LRTs) to our Literacy Team: Kristan Denham and Stephanie Shore. They join Cathy Buchanan and Karen Kramers in the ongoing work to support the new early reading screening plan, the new language curriculum implementation, and the recommendations in the Right to Read Report. In addition to the reading intervention and primary reading support that our LRTs provide, we will be offering targeted support in Junior and Intermediate classrooms. Our focus will be on identified curriculum expectations that

warrant reinforcement based on EQAO results, and offering resources and coaching in areas that are known gaps for our students based on the new language curriculum such as morphology. Our plan also includes having all elementary teachers trained in Acadience before the summer break.

Multilingual Learners (MLL) Support

We welcomed 2 teachers to the system support team this month, following the March Break. Mary Katherine Simmons and Katherine Miller will work as a team for the remainder of this school year to further develop and implement our Board's support for students who are multilingual learners. We continue to welcome many newcomers to our schools, many who are learning English as a second language. This continues to be an area of learning for our educators and we recognize the need to grow our collective capacity through shared knowledge and experience in this area. These MLL Support Teachers will visit each school with students who are identified as MLL to learn more about their individual needs and will use this information to develop our shared bank of board resources and develop more comprehensive guidelines for school staff. This boost in professional learning and support is oriented toward ensuring that our schools continue to be welcoming, well prepared, and responsive to the needs of all students and families in our community and that we develop a boardwide awareness and more consistent approach. These teachers will engage in some professional development and collaboration with others who engage in MLL leadership to enhance their ability to support others.

Indigenous Education

We are working toward engaging a new Indigenous Student Support Advisor, to work closely with students in our system who identify as Indigenous. This Student Support Advisor will support our students in learning about their culture, helping plan their desired pathways in collaboration with the guidance departments at each secondary school, and work with all staff in our steps toward the calls to truth and reconciliation. This person will also do outreach in our elementary schools and work with the Indigenous Education team to provide learning experiences that help create positive outcomes for all students.

Secondary and Elementary Teacher Collaboration

After March Break, English teachers met at St. Michael CSS with several Grade 8 teachers to continue their work on developing consistency in some writing skills. Using anchor texts and examples of student work, our teachers continue to highlight areas of strength and identify opportunities for growth. These efforts support the transition from elementary to a new destreamed secondary Grade 9 English program and also supports literacy skills across all subject areas.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMS IN SECONDARY

Electrical Board Elementary Visits

Grade 8 classrooms at Holy Name and Precious Blood learned basic electrical skills on March 8. Our students were exposed to the electrical trade thanks to the Board and Conestoga College's Electricians in the Classroom program.

Trades and Technology "TNT" Day March 18

TNT Day is an initiative Conestoga hosts for Grade 7 and 8 girls. This hands-on event introduced young women to programs in engineering, technology and the trades.

OYAP Level 1 Update

2 students from St. Anne's CSS started their OYAP Level 1 Programs at Conestoga College on March 4. One student is participating in Plumbing at the Reuters campus, the other is involved in the Truck and Coach Program at the Guelph campus. They join the 2 St. Anne's CSS students who have already started their OYAP Level 1 Electrical Program.

Co-op Integration Day

On March 6, SHSM students currently in cooperative education placements returned to St. Anne's CSS for their co-op Integration Day. Students are focusing on completing their SHSM Sector-Partnered Experience.

Grade 10 Class Visits

We continue to visit Grade 10 classes and connect with students to discuss opportunities in the 7 different SHSM Programs offered at St. Anne's CSS: Agriculture, Arts & Culture, Business, Construction, Environment, Health & Wellness and Sports.

Band Workshops at St. Michael CSS

Secondary Music Teacher, Mr. Tom Garrick organized Advanced Training in technique and reach-ahead opportunities for band members and SHSM students on March 1. He had various local artists come in to do specific instrument training.

Pesticide Safety Training

The University of Guelph led training at St. Michael CSS on pesticide use for Agriculture SHSM students on March 4.

Elevated Platform and Confined Space Training

OYAP and SHSM students from both secondary schools travelled to the LiUNA Training Centre in Walkerton for Elevated Platform and Confined Space Training during the week of March 19-26.

GPS and Hydraulics Training

St. Michael CSS students participating in Agriculture, Environment and Transportation SHSM participated in GPS and Hydraulics Training at Stratford Farm Equipment on March 20.

Envirothon Training

Students at St. Michael CSS have been preparing for the Envirothon Competition, a unique environmentally-themed academic competition that immerses students in hands-on learning and discovery. Through this program, Forests Ontario offers budding environmental leaders a chance to explore education and career paths in the natural sciences and network with potential mentors.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Professional Development

Our HPCDSB Mental Health Lead and Mental Health and Wellness Coaches engaged in a 2-day Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) training and learned new evidence-based counselling skills and measurement based-care knowledge to help inform our mental health work with students throughout HPCDSB. ACT aims to help students develop new skills so that they can move towards a life of meaning and purpose rather than moving away from a life of pain. This pilot project is a unique opportunity that only a handful of other school boards

participated in as a means to engage in an opportunity to help inform the development of counselling protocol for school boards across Ontario.

HPCDSB Mental Health and Wellness Team: Caregiver Lunch and Learn:

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board and Avon Maitland District School Board hosted monthly lunch & learn sessions for caregivers and staff. Each session, facilitated by community partners, offers a concise 30-minute virtual discussion on children's mental health and well-being topics. In March, Dieticians Amy MacDonald and Shannon Edmonstone from Huron Perth Public Health Unit presented: Developing a Positive Relationship with Food and Body for caregivers.

Social Work Week and National Social Work Month:

March 4 to 10, 2024 was Social Work Week in Ontario, and across Canada, March is National Social Work Month. This March, highlighted how Social Work Opens Doors for people across Ontario as the theme in celebrating this essential work. As a school board, we proudly recognize the invaluable contributions of social workers to our communities. From March 4 to 10, 2024, we celebrated Social Work Week in Ontario, coinciding with National Social Work Month across Canada. This March was a poignant reminder of how Social Work Opens Doors for individuals across Ontario. Social workers play a crucial role in our schools, providing vital support to students, families, and staff members. Their dedication and expertise contribute to the well-being of our school communities, helping to address a wide range of challenges and ensuring that our students have access to the resources they need to thrive.

MAINTENANCE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

Grass Cutting Tender Extension

The Board completed a RFT for grass cutting services in 2023. The tender was for a one-year period with the option of extending the contract for a period of three years in one-year increments. All of the existing contractors will have their contracts renewed in March of 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

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