



REPORT TO THE HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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Presented to: The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board
Date: September 23, 2024
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BOARD HIGHLIGHTS FOR SEPTEMBER

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. September marks the beginning of a new school year and is marked by enthusiasm and commitment on the part of our students, staff, educators and families. We are delighted to highlight some of the activities and opportunities that took place this month across our district.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Back to School Liturgical Celebrations

Many of our schools are hosting September or fall liturgies, Masses and open houses to welcome students, staff and families back to school. These community-building events include opportunities to meet staff, liturgical celebrations, book fairs and more. Each school hosts an opening school Mass or liturgy in September. Staff in all schools are continuing to seek meaningful ways to embed faith into all aspects of our school day and to nurture the goal of faith leadership among students and staff.

International Education Program

The Board welcomed two international students in September from the south of Spain. St. Michael CSS welcomed a Grade 9 student from the southeast part of Spain and she will be part of the school community until December. She is enrolled in four classes and will be trying out for the basketball teams at the school. She is living with a host family in our community, arranged through the board's partnership with Muskoka Languages International (MLI).

Additionally, a second student in Grade 10 is attending St. Anne's CSS and he is planning on staying through the Christmas break with the option of staying until June 2025. This student is living with a host family in Huron County through MLI and hopes to become involved in athletic activities as well.

Both students come to our schools after partnership agreements were signed with two different international recruitment agencies in Spain. To date, the board has thirteen agreements with agencies in Europe, Asia and Australia that are recruiting students.

LEADERSHIP

Leaders Learning Council (LLC)

School and system leaders met online on September 10th for the first virtual LLC of the year. The focus on virtual LLCs is generally policy-related and includes content that is suitable for this format of learning and receiving information. This LLC covered the following topics: Cell phones, enrolment, annual policy and administrative procedure reminders, a Human Resources update, a message about consistent use of Board-vetted and approved learning materials and resources, attendance and the referral process for support, and emergency procedures. Meetings begin and end in prayer.

On September 24, we hosted an in-person LLC in Dublin. In the morning, learning and collaboration surrounding leadership moves to support our Literacy and Mathematics plans was the focus. In the afternoon, our leaders engaged in a student attendance workshop clarifying the roles and responsibilities we all share in improving student attendance. Leaders also met with our school-based resource officers from Huron and Perth OPP. They provided school leaders with information about their roles in our schools. This included sharing information about classroom presentations they can offer our schools throughout the year.

Catholic Curriculum Corporation (CCC)

Our Board plays an active role in the CCC with many members of our Learning Coordination Team and Superintendent Tigani serving on the Board of Representatives, the When Faith Meets Pedagogy (WFMP) Conference Planning Committee, and the 4 Individual Catholic Curriculum Councils (Elementary, Secondary, Faith and ICT). During the month of September members of our system team attended the first in a series of WFMP conference planning meetings and the first board meeting. The Individual Councils will host their first meetings at the beginning of October. The goals of the CCC are to ensure rich opportunities to build, develop and share resources that support, sustain and promote Catholic Education in the province of Ontario. The CCC is an important voice and network of Catholic leaders and educators that ensures high-quality Catholic resources and support. The CCC works in partnership with the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) and other Catholic educational partners provincially. This year's When Faith Meets Pedagogy Conference theme is "Pilgrims of Hope". It will be hosted from October 24-26 in Toronto. A team of delegates from the Board will be in attendance.

Literacy Panel and Roundtable

Members of our Learning Coordination Team and Superintendent of Education attended a literacy-focused professional development opportunity hosted by Nelson on September 19. This event brought together system leaders and specialist educators from various school boards across Ontario with a shared focus on making improvements in literacy and guiding instruction through the effective use of assessment.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Summer Programming and Transition Support

Due to Summer Programming and Transition funding, the Board was able to offer two summer programming opportunities as well as transition support throughout the district. These programs offered in August launched ongoing transition support for students in our elementary and secondary schools.

St. Anne's Summer Programming - "Welcome to the Nest"

On August 13 and 20, approximately 10 female students who were entering Grade 9 from various elementary schools (Sacred Heart, St. Joe's Clinton, Sacred Heart, St. Boniface, and St. Mary's Goderich) met at St. Anne's for two days of summer programming and transition support. Students took part in a variety of activities to help prepare them for secondary school. Activities included making locker kits and healthy lunches, putting together their pencil cases and binders, looking at their schedules and touring the school to find their classes and where to go for support, and lots of practice using their locks. They also had the opportunity to have a Q&A period with summer staff as well as the Principal of the school, and listen to a presentation by the Board Mental Health & Wellness Coach. Students engaged in many opportunities to help build relationships with peers, and welcomed special guest hair stylists from Lunar Lounge in Blyth who talked about hair care and gave the girls an opportunity to have their hair done.

St. Boniface Summer Programming - "Grade 6/7 Connection Camp Day"

On August 22, approximately 16 male students who were entering Grades 6 and 7 at St. Boniface school met for a full day of engagement and connection. This was an extension of some social skills lessons that took place during the 2023-24 school year. The boys were given an opportunity to come together prior to school entry in order to reconnect. Students engaged in lots of outdoor water play and cooperative games in the gym. They were given opportunities to learn about each other's strengths and what gifts each student brings to the school community through team building activities.

Transition Support

Outside of the two summer programming experiences outlined above, other opportunities for transition support that were offered during the week of August 26 and the month of September included System Special Education Team members supporting school teams with transitions, Educational Assistants entering school buildings early to meet and greet students and help transition students back, and approximately 10 Transition EAs being hired to support in schools during September and the first few weeks of October.

Empower Training

On September 12 and 13, teachers who are new to teaching the Empower Reading Program attended a two-day training session. The Empower Reading program is a tier 3 reading intervention program offered in all of our elementary schools.

Lexia

1000 Lexia Core5 Reading licenses were purchased for students across the system for the 2024-25 school year. Lexia Core5 Reading supports educators in providing differentiated literacy instruction for students of all abilities in grades pre-K-5. The Board purchased Lexia licenses for current Empower students, Empower graduates, as well as all Grade 1 students. Licenses were also purchased for other students who schools identified as benefiting from this intervention. PowerUp licenses were purchased for students in secondary school where requested as well.

DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Chromebook Program

The Huron-Perth 1:1 Chromebook Initiative continues to thrive, extending across both elementary and secondary education within our district. We are committed to ensuring that each student has access to a Chromebook, which supports and enhances their learning experiences. At the start of the year, all Grade 9 students and new secondary students at the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board were provided with a Chromebook, following the completion of the Assumption of Responsibility Agreement in accordance with the Information, Communications Technology Policy 3.2.1.

Learning Management Systems

All classrooms at Huron-Perth Catholic are equipped with a Learning Management System (LMS), including Google Classroom and/or D2L. These platforms provide a flexible and integrated approach to blended learning, complementing traditional classroom instruction and enriching the overall learning experience.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Religion and Family Life

The Religion and Family Life Team, including Religion and Family Life Learning Coordinator Caroline Thuss and Religion, Family Life and Faith Formation Support Teacher Kate Dobson, spent time together planning for implementation of the new Family Life curriculum and Grade 1 resource “Blessed and Beloved”. Starting on September 11, professional learning about the Family Life curriculum, the “Blessed and Beloved” resource and the “Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ” resource for schools has begun with individual visits to each school. As part of the strategic plan, this support will continue throughout the year.

Indigenous Education

Schools across the district recognized Powley Day on September 19th in a variety of activities. Now known as “Powley Day”, September 19 celebrates the anniversary of the landmark Métis rights victory at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Many opportunities were provided for students and staff to participate in Truth and Reconciliation Week from Sept 25-29 including an art activity with Moses Lunham, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation - Art to Inspire Action, literacy activity for elementary schools, and virtual workshop opportunities with The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. The secondary schools had the opportunity to view the exhibit “A National Crime” from the Legacy of Hope Foundation.

Literacy

The Literacy team, led by Learning Coordinator MJ Drager and supported by Literacy Resource Teachers Cathy Buchanan, Karen Kramers, and Teresa Oud, began the year by strategically planning and aligning their goals with the new strategic plan, setting a strong foundation for the year ahead. On September 11, 12, and 17, the Literacy Team delivered professional learning sessions to K-2 educators, providing them with updated training on the Early Reading Screener (Acadience). Following this, on September 23, the team embarked on a comprehensive tour to support K-3 teachers as they screened students for reading difficulties. This tour, which involves

working closely with educators as they implement the screener for the first time, is set to be completed by October 25.

Multilingual Learners (MLL)

Katherine Miller, our MLL Support Teacher, has begun providing invaluable support to our multilingual learners across all elementary and secondary schools. Katherine has already conducted numerous initial STEP assessments with our newcomer students and has updated their records in both our digital platform, Clevr, and OSRs. Currently, we have 159 MLL students from Grades 1-12, representing 18 different languages and 30 countries.

Mathematics

The Math Team, led by Learning Coordinator Christine Dale and supported by Math Facilitators Hailey Cook, Megan Lunn, and Curtis Meyers, began the school year with a tour to all of our elementary schools. On this tour, we highlighted the important features of our new [Math Scope and Sequence](#) lesson plans, which encompass our vision for the teaching and learning of mathematics in our system as described in the new strategic plan. Each lesson will span two instructional days, providing students with both collaborative problem solving and purposeful practice. This plan outlines steps to enhance mathematics teaching and learning by improving resource use and pedagogical practices. By adhering closely to the Ontario Math curriculum and using our core resources (MathUP Classroom and Knowledgehook) to build a strong Tier 1, we will boost math content knowledge for teaching and student achievement. Our first action of the strategic plan has been writing lessons for the Scope and Sequence, which will provide nearly 600 Math lessons for Grades 1-8, incorporating [High-Impact Instructional Practices](#) and the [Effective Math Block](#). To achieve this, we developed 240 lessons this summer. We made these lessons available to teachers in September 2024 and complete all lessons by March 2025.

French as a Second Language (FSL)

Our system support FSL teacher, Sandra O'Neil, has been actively engaged throughout September, meeting with new FSL teachers to provide guidance on planning and assessment in French. The FSL team is also working on developing future professional development opportunities for our Core French and French Immersion teachers.

Secondary e-Learning

This semester our secondary schools are offering several e-Learning courses including Grade 12 Economics, Grade 12 Religion, Grade 12 Science, Grade 12 English, and Grade 11 Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology. These courses are taught by qualified teachers of the Board and provide our students with flexibility in their studies. Through our partnership with Catholic Virtual Ontario, these courses also allow our students access to hundreds of potential course offerings from across the province. We are currently welcoming almost 50 students from over a dozen Catholic school boards into our Board-delivered e-Learning classes which allows for this exchange and gives our students access to a wide array of courses offered online.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAMS IN SECONDARY

Canada's Outdoor Farm Show – Woodstock

On September 12, 2024 SHSM students from both secondary schools were once again able to attend this event. SHSM Agriculture students networked with industry professionals and learned more about current innovations in the sector. Students in the Health and Wellness SHSM looked at the nutritional aspects of the agricultural community.

Conestoga College Trades Trip

St. Anne's CSS students had a great opportunity to visit various trade programs at the Guelph and Reuters Campus on September 17, 2024

D2L Web Page

St. Michael CSS released a new technological skills landing page on D2L. This site will support students both already enrolled, and those interested in technological education and SHSM. The site includes information on all training and certifications being offered. Dual credit and OYAP programs are also highlighted.

SHSM Certifications and Training

- **First Aid/CPR Training** SHSM students at both St. Michael CSS and St. Anne's CSS had the opportunity to receive their First Aid/CPR certification in early September. This is mandatory training for SHSM students and an important addition to their skill building activities is a requirement to earn a SHSM designation on the OSSD.
- **Working At Heights Training** On September 9 & 10 St. Anne's CSS SHSM students and on September 11 & 12, 2024 St. Michael CSS SHSM Construction, SHSM Agriculture and SHSM arts and culture students participated in Working at Heights training. This certification is highly valued by employers and looks great on a resume.
- **Elevated Work Platform Training** St. Michael CSS SHSM Construction and SHSM Agriculture students participated in Elevated Work Platform training in London on September 19 and 20. This training was held at the LiUNA Training facility in London.

Technical Training Group (TTG) OYAP Level 1 Welding Program

TTG is offering a new OYAP Level 1 Welding Program which runs on every Friday throughout the school year.

- Students registered in this program require a Registered Training Agreement (RTA) and are registered in 4-credit co-op during Semester 2.
- 2 St. Anne's CSS students have enrolled and are looking forward to beginning their studies.

Dual Credit Programs Update

- Registration is ongoing for Lambton dual credit courses which begin September 26. The most popular dual credit courses so far are Criminology, Hairstyling and Baking.
- Registration is ongoing for a number of great dual credit opportunities through Conestoga College which will take place at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School: Intro to Electrical, Foods and Plumbing courses.
- Dual credit courses continue to be very popular with students given that they are a 2-for-one learning and credit earning opportunity. Students can earn one high school credit and one college credit at the same time while gaining valuable transferable skills.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mental Health and Wellness Team: Summer Work

Throughout the summer months, our school Social Workers worked to develop Tier 1 and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) resources for dissemination over this school year as we seek to expand SEL and Tier 1 activities across the District. In partnership with our Religion and Family Life Coordinator, we began developing a Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board version of the [School Mental Health Ontario Wayfinder](#), which will incorporate mental health lessons with

Liturgical Seasons and Catholic Curriculum.

Our team also worked on a new mental health and wellness webpage that will continue to be developed. The webpage will include a specific section for Social Emotional Learning resources for educators, students, and caregivers. Throughout the summer, we supported students on mental health caseload via virtual counselling services. We also had Social Work staff offer our Wellness Line again to ensure our students and their families had access to support and resources as needed.

Mental Health PD Learning with Dr. Richard Zayed:

On September 3, the Mental Health and Wellness Team facilitated a seminar session provided by Dr. Zayed, a clinical psychologist specializing in trauma, attachment and relationships, who provided the district with invaluable learning about *Supporting Students Through Relationships*. This seminar focused on key factors which can enhance relationships in school environments, and offered some concrete tips to create and optimize relationships with students. It also reviews factors that impact and/or enhance our capacity to offer optimized relationships to students. This seminar was an important start to our school year as Huron-Perth Catholic DSB seeks to center relationships to ensure we are fostering a sense of belonging and holistic support for their growth and development.

Attendance and School Engagement:

Our Attendance Counsellor actively connected with students and their families in late August, helping facilitate a smooth transition back to school for those who faced attendance challenges last year. On September 10 and 24 the Attendance Counsellor met with Administrators to review our updated referral process and emphasized the critical role that consistent attendance plays in student success. These workshops empowered our leaders with essential information about the referral process and clarified the roles and responsibilities we all share in improving student attendance. The Mental Health Team has also created an [attendance newsletter for caregivers](#) that administrators have been encouraged to share with their school community. As part of our Board Strategic Plan and Mental Health and Addiction Roadmap, we have embarked on a research project with Dr. Michelle Searle and Dr. Kirkpatrick to better understand our Board's current work in attendance and to develop Tier 1 attendance resources and materials to be shared throughout the District.

Partnership for Virtual Caregiver Series: Parenting with Confidence Webinar

The "**Parenting With Confidence**" webinar series was run in collaboration with our Mental Health and Wellness Team (MHWT) and Avon Maitland District School Board's MHWT. This series featured psychologist Dr. Jennifer McTaggart, and MSW clinical specialist, Zeb Demaiter. The first session was facilitated on September 10 and provided caregivers with learning and new ways of understanding their youth's emotions and mental health. The session also provided tips and ideas about how caregivers can attend to their youth's needs to support safety and their well-being.

Part Two occurred on September 24. This session further equipped caregivers by teaching them how to set effective boundaries with less frustration and worry.

School Service Advisory Council (SSAC) Symposium:

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board's and Avon Maitland District School Board's Mental Health Leads worked in collaboration with Stop Violence Against Women (VAW), and hosted the 2024 School Services Advisory Committee (SSAC) Symposium on September 16. The theme, "Recognize, Respond, Refer: A School-Based Approach to Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)," highlighted prevention, early intervention, and support strategies within school communities. This is an important topic as incidents of Gender Based Violence have been on a steady incline since 2020.

Co-chaired by both Mental Health Leads, the SSAC includes 25 community agencies dedicated to supporting students. This year's symposium built on previous work, emphasizing trauma-informed responses, consent, and referral pathways for students impacted by GBV. Attendees connected, learned, and strengthened their capacity to better support students facing gender-based violence.

MAINTENANCE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

Joint Health and Safety Committee

The Joint Health and Safety Committee met on September 18. Topics discussed included the following:

- Monthly inspections (updated)
- Annual inspections and geographical area update
- JHSC access to online reporting tool
- Annual workplace Risk Assessments
- Incident Reporting (updated)
- Naloxone (new)
- First Aid training

RECOMMENDATION

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