

Director's Notes

May 2010

An Overview

Blessings of the Easter Season to you and your families!

As you may understand there are many items that cross my desk daily. One that came to my attention recently was a report from the Terry Fox Foundation that reported on our District's involvement in this annual event.

Some of you may know that one of our Educational Assistants, formerly a student within the District, took the initiative to lead the very first Terry Fox Run in this community. Since then, many of our schools have become involved. In this latest report, it was gratifying to note that every one of our schools participated and collectively raised close to \$30,000 for cancer research in Canada.

Coupled with this is the outstanding contribution that so many of you have made to the Haitian Relief Fund, the development of services for the orphans in Central America, the continuous support of the Guelph/Wellington United Way campaign, the Lethoso campaign in support of aids prevention and clinical assistance, Jessica's Footprint in support of pediatric brain research, in addition to a myriad of other charities in our midst.

Simply put, we make a difference.

Thank you to so many whose time, donations and exceptional initiatives continue to make a contribution to so many.

The work of many of our people in assisting parishes with the sacramental preparation of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation is sincerely appreciated. Many of our students in the intermediate division have received Confirmation and many of our younger students are involved in First Communion preparation and liturgies.

As we move toward the completion of another academic year, you need to know that we appreciate the work to be done in the moving of the St. Joseph students back home to a new building and also in the moves associated with those transitioning to St. Ignatius and St. John Bosco. It may seem like a long way off but the time and energy to complete this work will soon be upon us. Our thanks are extended to custodial staff, and all personnel who will be involved in some way.

Our Korean teacher guests have been with us for a few weeks now. We appreciate the hospitality of so many in making their time with us very productive and enjoyable. We hope to be celebrating with this group during the month of May.

Catholicity

- The Spiritual Development event that will kick off the new school year is on Thursday, September 2 at the River Run Centre for the afternoon. The morning will be spent on sites. The Catholicity Council is working towards an afternoon program that will capture the essence of our work as we

need to put this in the context of the value of Catholic education to our communities. You shall receive an agenda for this event before the closure of classes in June.

- The Bishop's Dinner is scheduled for Thursday October 7. This continues to be a major event in the District and will again support the enhancements at the St. Brigid Villa & Retreat Centre. This is always a sold out venue and we urge you to get your tickets from your principals. You can place an order with them now as they receive the actual tickets at our annual meeting in August.
- Catholic Education Week is from May 2 to May 7. This year's theme is "Catholic Education: Rejoicing in Hope." It continues to be very important to celebrate the gift of publicly funded Catholic Education and this one week allows us the opportunity to do so. More importantly, it is this reality that we need to protect and celebrate all year.
- Each of our sites will be receiving a brochure titled "Ontario's Catholic Schools". There are copies for all parents, staff and faculty at every site. This publication is concise & informative. It speaks to our history, the fact that over 670,000 students are educated in Catholic schools every day in this province, and the value to our work. Some of our students are featured in this work as it is distributed to thousands of Catholic partners across the province.
- Monsignor Dennis Murphy, a very prominent leader in the Catholic education story of this province, will kick-off Catholic Education Week at a Mass and presentation at Lourdes on Monday, May 3.

Student Achievement

- Thanks to everyone who has been a part of the EQAO process this year. As you know, the preparation and execution of this provincial assessment program is complex and demanding - for students as well. We appreciate the time that you take to prepare our young people for this experience. It is not a matter of "teaching to the test" but rather by implementing curriculum outcomes that provides the skills for students to be successful on the assessment and in life applications thereafter.
- The investment in technology to support learning remains an imperative. During the past two years we have invested in the infrastructure to support a variety of electronic devices in all sites. Our strategic plan looks to an immediate future that will allow students to use some of their own devices to learn even more effectively in our classrooms. The infrastructure investments are allowing us to move forward in this plan.
- Thanks to those who have been involved in the training of interactive white boards in many of our schools. These investments will continue in the next year and we believe that changing teaching practices using the white boards will enhance student achievement.
- Finally, we offer our support and thanks to the faculty who are working with our Program Department to offer job imbedded learning for many colleagues. We learn from the expertise of our colleagues and we learn more when we observe any new practice as it is implemented in the classroom. When this occurs we know that the newly learned practice will be applied in many subsequent classroom situations in the District.

Site Improvement

- We welcome back our summer groundskeeping crew who have always offered great service at each of our school & office sites. Paul Keating and Dan Blaskevich will soon be quite visible as they direct our summer students in the tradition of maintaining our many landscapes in the District.
- During the past two years, the City of Guelph has initiated two initiatives to which we are a partner. The Community Energy Plan and the Local Immigration Partnership are both important to the community. Peter Rodway will be representing us on the Community Energy Plan that will continue to implement environmentally conscious initiatives that are inherently creative and good for the long term health of our community. Some of this work will involve training and understanding for our students who will be instrumental in changing practices to protect our environment proactively. Since over 21% of the population of the county and the city consists of people who have newly immigrated

here, we need to collaborate in providing even better services for these folks. Since education is a key imperative for many of these families we are at the table to offer our services and to enhance them in appropriate ways.

- Congratulations to the team at St. James for their work in crafting the program for the 25th Alumnae Weekend in May. As part of the legacy to these events they hope to upgrade the chapel in the school. This is a tremendous concept and the drawings are very good.
- We continue to be on schedule for the opening of St. Joseph and St. Ignatius. If you know of any families moving into either of these new sites please have them contact the respective principals as soon as possible.

Quality

- The staffing process remains complex but is well underway. This year, we have had many people contribute to the success of a very aggressive time line in making the process work effectively. Thanks to everyone for your work.
- The District is being represented at the Annual General Meetings of Catholic Directors, Supervisory Officers and the Catholic Trustees. At each of these annual events you need to know that this District is not only well represented but is often integral to the success of each meeting.
- We have three exceptional Principals who have announced their respective retirements. Cathy Dalicandro, John Candiotta and Peter Ingram have demonstrated exceptional leadership during their tenure with the District. We offer them our thanks for their many contributions to so many in our midst. Their legacy is enduring and profound.

Have a great month.

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