



WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

2021

Director's Annual Report TO THE COMMUNITY

“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.”

Dr. James P. Comer

When I began my tenure as Director of Education on August 1, I knew that we had a tremendous amount of work to do to get everyone back on track before schools reopened in September.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, our schools were closed for in-person learning for significant periods of time between January and June of 2021, and although everyone did their absolute best to ensure that our students were supported virtually during this difficult time, we all knew that the best place for them was in our classrooms.

So ever since schools reopened for in-person learning in September, and the vast majority of our students came back to school, our focus has been on Building Relationships.

Whether it's been the relationships our staff have with their students, between each other, with our parish partners, or with our school communities, our singular resolve has been to build upon the foundation of these relationships so that ultimately, we can fulfill our vision of “Building communities of faith, hope and service.”

As a Catholic school community, we work every day on assuring that we support our priorities - our students, our faith, our team, our community, our resources - and over the next few pages, you will see concrete evidence of how we have delivered tangible results for each of them.

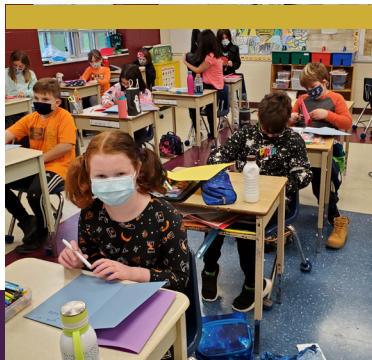
At heart of this commitment to build upon our relationships is a re-engagement strategy that focuses on both academics and mental health. It's an asset-based approach which begins with determining where students are, and then helping them move forward. This is a strategy that speaks directly to our mission of knowing every student, to inspire them to follow the example of Jesus, and to empower them with the knowledge and skills they need to live purposeful, meaningful lives.

As we have seen over the last four months, the pandemic continues to pose significant challenges in our schools, and we expect that will continue in 2022. However, if this experience has taught us anything, it's that our faith and our resolve will always drive us to do our absolute best for our students, our staff and our communities. As Paul said in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, “Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

In closing, I would like to thank everyone throughout our Catholic school board community, no matter their role with us, who has taken to heart our commitment to build relationships and put that concept into practice every day. I look forward to brighter days ahead as we continue to focus on what we “can do” together.

Sincerely,

Emelda Byrne
Director of Education



Priority: Our Students

- Continued to review and analyze achievement data, school climate surveys and other data in order to respond to the needs of our learners.
- Developed models of learning and safety protocols and guidelines to support a safe return to school.
- Provided a virtual learning option for elementary students in a Family of Schools model.
- Created a modified, alternating week schedule for secondary schools, in accordance with Ministry of Education directives.
- Provided a Back to School Transition series to support students and parents returning to face-to-face learning.
- Provided academic, mental health and special education support virtually during the school closure and in-person learning.
- Began the process of voluntary student self-identification data collection to address systemic barriers in order to serve all students in the areas of achievement and well being.
- Provided additional support for self-identified Indigenous students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. One example is tutors for Self-Identified Indigenous students.
- Initiated re-engagement support for Grade 8 and Grade 9 students in targeted schools in support of transitioning to a de-streamed curriculum.
- Expanded support of board-wide reading strategies such as Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS), Lexia and Guided Reading.
- Supported English language learners with evidence-based strategies such as guided reading and small group instruction to further support their language acquisition and comprehension.
- International Baccalaureate (IB) programs continued at Assumption College Catholic High School, Assumption College Catholic Middle School, Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School, Cardinal Carter Catholic Middle School and Christ the King French Immersion Catholic Elementary School.
- Expanded the STEM program in Grades 1-8 through aggregate prep curriculum delivery to 12 additional elementary schools. Continued STEM programming in three of our secondary schools.
- Recognized and celebrated student achievements through virtual graduations, both elementary and secondary.
- Provided and expanded the after school tutoring programs for elementary students. This included the Literacy and Numeracy program for students in Grades 2 and 3 as well as the Get Smart program for students in Grades 7 and 8.
- Provided and expanded virtual summer academic programs for elementary and secondary students. Some of these programs include Summer Learning Program Grades 3-8, Reading Programs for Grade 1 and Secondary students, and Reach Ahead courses for Grade 8 students.

Priority: Our Team

- Continued to provide the necessary resources and support to all Board staff upon the closure of schools and upon reopening of schools in the fall.
- Teaching and non-teaching staff provided dedicated continued learning opportunities for students and maintained Board operations throughout the pandemic.
- Facilitated a safe reopening of schools by hiring additional teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, professional/paraprofessional and other support staff to support the Board's elementary and secondary learning models.
- Hired temporary custodial staff to support health and safety protocols by providing enhanced cleaning to all schools.
- Provided professional development to all employees with regards to health and safety measures and procedures including the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Provided mental health and well being, special education, literacy and numeracy, technology and anti-racism and anti-discrimination professional development to educators.
- Introduced Graduation Coach for Black, African and Caribbean programming.
- Provided resources and training to support secondary educators with the implementation of the new Ontario Grade 9 de-streamed math course, introduced by the Ministry of Education.
- The Board's Community Ambassador continued to provide support to our Newcomers as well as provided guidance and support to our ESL Program at Catholic Central High School, ESL Adult Program and Elementary ESL Support Teachers.
- Continued professional development that focused on Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) for educators.
- Indigenous Education professional development that focused on cultural competencies provided to educators at both elementary and secondary.
- Continued to support educators in the use of the Google platform (Google Suite for Education) to facilitate curriculum delivery in all modes of learning for both elementary and secondary.



Priority: Our Faith

- Continued to update the elementary Religion curriculum by introducing Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ in Grade 8.
- Provided in-service training via in-person and virtual for the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) on the role of the Catholic Teacher.
- Introduced Faith Improvement Plans in all elementary and secondary schools.
- Provided in-service training on Faith Improvement Plans to Campus Ministers.
- Established Family of Schools Together in Faith planning committees, including both elementary and secondary representatives as well as parish pastoral team members.
- Celebrated our Together in Faith Day in September 2021 around the theme “Building communities of faith, hope and service.”
- Catholic School Commissioning ceremonies were held virtually at each elementary and secondary school.
- Digital Faith related resources were disseminated to Faith Animators, Campus Ministers and Catholic Studies Department Heads.



Priority: Our Community

- In consultation with the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU), established back to school protocols and procedures to safely reopen schools for staff and students under current pandemic conditions.
- In collaboration with the WECHU, developed a communication protocol to respond to COVID-19 related matters.
- Continued collaborating with community organizations to further our work in equity and inclusive education, specifically in the area of anti-racism.
- Continued partnerships with Family Fuse and Black Women of Forward Action in addressing systemic barriers for Black students and families.
- Continued collaboration with local and provincial Indigenous communities and organizations including Grandmother's Voices, Point Pelee National Park: Parks Canada, John R. Park Homestead, Métis Nation of Ontario, and Caldwell First Nation (Elders).
- Continued partnership with United Way on various projects such as On Track to Success, Summer Eats, Backpacks for Students, and the School Nutrition Lunch Program.
- Continued to develop partnerships with community service providers such as John McGivney, New Beginnings, Children's Aid Society (CAS), Regional Children's Centre (RCC), and Maryvale.
- Continued to collaborate with community organizations to support our Newcomers, such as Newcomer Centre of Canadian Excellence (NCCE), YMCA, and Multicultural Centre (MCC).
- Continued partnership with St. Clair College and the University of Windsor with student practicums and curricular supports.
- Continued partnership with the City of Windsor's Children's Services and licensed child care providers to offer quality child care to our students and families.

Priority: Our Resources

- Purchased and reallocated technological resources such as chromebooks, iPads, webcams, internet connectivity for staff and students to facilitate virtual and in-school learning.
- Procured critical personal protective equipment and supplies to ensure the safe return of students to school and staff to the workplace.
- Developed a \$273M compliant budget for 2021-22 that supports student success and faith formation.
- Ended the 2020-21 fiscal year with a \$3.6M in-year surplus, bringing the accumulated surplus to \$26M.
- Increased stakeholder participation in the 2021-22 budget development process with 2,883 more responses to the budget consultation survey than what was received in the prior year.
- Continued construction for the new Catholic Central High School with plans for the doors to open to our students and staff in September of 2022.
- Undertook numerous construction and renovation projects utilizing approximately \$16.5M of Ministry of Education funding in 2020-21.
- Utilized approximately 6.5M in Federal and Provincial COVID Resilience Funding to improve ventilation, upgrade electrical services, improve building controls, purchase four new portable classrooms and install water bottle filling stations in our schools.
- Implemented energy savings initiatives through the installation of LED lighting in facilities, resulting in reduced utility costs.
- Procured approximately 1,000 portable HEPA filtration units to help ensure a safe learning environment in areas that currently lack mechanical ventilation.
- Increased the run time of all HVAC units throughout the WECDSD. Moved to MERV 13 filters, the highest rated filters our systems can accommodate, and increased the frequency of filter changes to achieve compliance with all provincial recommendations.

School Board Profile

wecdsb.on.ca

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board operates 32 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 8 secondary schools, as well as an adult education program that provides quality Catholic education to 20,353 students. The Board employs 1233 full time equivalent elementary and secondary teachers as well as 893 support staff, which includes principals, vice-principals, educational assistants, psychologists, psychotherapists, child and youth workers, early childhood educators, sign language interpreters, speech pathologists, IT technicians, campus ministers, school office support, custodial and maintenance staff, as well as board office administration and other professional staff.

The Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan along with the Board's Mission, Priorities and Goals can be found at the following link: <https://wecdsb.on.ca/about>

Message from the Chair

It's been often said that smooth seas don't necessarily make for skillful sailors.

I can say with a tremendous amount of confidence that as we navigated our way through the last year, which was clearly characterized by some extraordinarily rough waters, we developed plenty of new skill sets as a Catholic education community which helped us continue to meet and exceed the expectations of our students and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present numerous challenges which forced schools throughout Ontario to transition to online learning for a considerable portion of the second half of the 2020-21 school year, so we knew when schools reopened in September, that we had a lot of work to do.

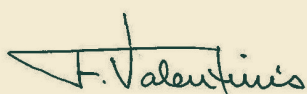
Thanks to Emelda Byrne, our new Director of Education, and her team of exceptional administrators, we implemented a re-engagement strategy, an asset-based approach to help understand where students were in regards to academics and their mental health after lengthy periods of virtual learning, and then get them back on track. As Trustees, we are confident that this strategy is working for the benefit of our students.

Since taking over the helm on August 1, Emelda Byrne has consistently demonstrated her strengths as a natural leader, and she should be commended for her ability to steer her very capable team with her calm demeanor, her knowledge and wealth of experience, and her ever-reliable instincts. An essential component of her success so far can be directly attributed to her focus on building relationships, something that she puts into practice every day with our staff, our students, our families, our parish partners, our Trustees and our community.

Prior to Emelda's start as Director of Education, we had the pleasure of working with former Director Terry Lyons who retired at the end of July. On behalf of all our Trustees, I would like to express my gratitude to Terry for his tireless commitment to Catholic education in Windsor-Essex.

On behalf of my fellow Trustees, I want to express my sincere gratitude to our senior team, our school administrators, our educators and all of our support staff who have gone above and beyond during extraordinarily challenging circumstances so that our students and our families could depend on the exceptional educational standards to which they have become accustomed to with our school board.

Challenges provide teachable moments, how you respond determines what you might learn from them. I look forward to the challenges ahead and remain confident that we will continue to learn from them together as a Catholic education community.



Fulvio Valentinis
Chair, Board of Trustees



Rev. Larry Brunet
Board Chaplain

Board Trustees 2018-2022

FRONT ROW FROM LEFT:

Mary DiMenna (Essex County – Area 2)
Lisa Soulliere (Essex County – Area 3)
Mary Heath (Essex County – Area 4)
Kim Bouchard (City of Windsor - Wards 6 & 7)

BACK ROW FROM LEFT:

Fred Alexander (City of Windsor – Wards 5 & 8)
Bernie Mastromattei (City of Windsor – Wards 3 & 4)
Fulvio Valentinis (City of Windsor – Wards 1 & 10)
Frank DiTomasso (Essex County – Area 1)
Tony Polifroni (City of Windsor – Wards 2 & 9)

Jada Malott (Catholic Student Trustee 2021-2022)
Gina Touma (Catholic Student Trustee 2021-2022)

Senior Administration

Emelda Byrne, Director of Education
Penny King, Executive Superintendent of Business
Melissa Farrand, Executive Superintendent of Student Achievement K-12
John Ulicny, Executive Superintendent of Education / Human Resources
Kelly-Ann Bull, Superintendent of Student Achievement K-12
Joseph Ibrahim, Superintendent of Human Resources / Education
Rosemary Lo Faso, Superintendent of Student Achievement K-12
Colleen Norris, Superintendent of Human Resources
Joumana Tawil, Superintendent of Student Achievement K-12
Terry Lyons, Director of Education (Retired July 2021)