



# WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



## Director's Annual Report TO THE COMMUNITY 2023

**Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. -Hebrews 4:13**

In a publicly funded education system, accountability is both an essential concept and an expectation at every level of the organization. Just as students are accountable to their parents and their teachers, our Catholic school board is accountable to the community that supports us.

With last June's introduction of the Ontario Better Schools and Students Outcome Act (Bill 98), the expectation level of that accountability has multiplied, with increased requirements for school boards to be more transparent about their student achievement plans, as well as the specific measurables to demonstrate their goals regarding literacy, numeracy, graduation rates, and mental health initiatives to support students.

We welcomed this new legislation when it was introduced, because we've always placed a premium on both achievement and accountability. In the following pages, you'll see evidence of how we have delivered on our commitment to student achievement and each one of our strategic priorities over the last year.

A key performance indicator used to measure our success is our EQAO results, where our students exceeded provincial expectations in all Reading, Writing and Mathematics categories. While we're pleased with our success, we know we still have plenty of work to do, so we're developing a Student Achievement Plan in keeping with the expectations of Bill 98. Part of that plan will include a Math Achievement Action Plan, a tiered and strategic approach which will ultimately assist our students improve their confidence in mathematical content knowledge and skills. Parents can expect to hear more about our Student Achievement Plan in 2024.

Looking back over the last year, we have many accomplishments that deserve recognition.

Our continued increase in enrollment is exceeding 23,000 JK-12 students, a testament to the fact that more parents are aware of the quality programming our Catholic school board offers. Due to significant interest and growth in our Adult Education program, St. Michael's Adult Catholic High School moved from the former elementary school in the west end to the much larger former Catholic Central High School on Tecumseh Road.

The new St. Anne Catholic Skilled Trades Academy and Learning Centre was opened at the site of the former St. Anne Catholic High School in Tecumseh, and a new 1:1 technology initiative was launched, which will eventually see every student from Grades 5-12 equipped with a Google Chromebook laptop computer.

All of these efforts speak to the ideals of Christian unity and love found in the theme for Catholic Education Week in 2023: "We Are Many, We Are One." Through our united, collective efforts, we are all bringing to life our vision of "Building communities of faith, hope and service."

Sincerely,

**Emelda Byrne**  
Director of Education







## Priority: Our Students

- Students exceeded provincial averages in all eight EQAO categories, achieving results that were among the highest in Southwestern Ontario.
- Continued to review and analyze achievement data, school climate surveys and other data in order to respond to the needs of our learners.
- Provided regulated mental health support throughout the summer months.
- Extended Jack.org mental health chapters from high schools into middle schools and introduced Mental Fitness focus in elementary schools to empower students in identifying and breaking down barriers to positive mental health.
- Continued to work with voluntary student self-identification data 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.
- Responded to the Right to Read Report by aligning board-wide reading programs with a specific focus on structured literacy to support early literacy skill development.
- Supported student achievement in mathematics through the development and implementation of the Math Achievement Action Plan.
- Supported English Language Learners with evidence-based strategies such as small group instruction to further support their language acquisition and comprehension.
- Continued International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs at Assumption College Catholic High School and Middle School, Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School and Middle School and Christ the King French Immersion Catholic Elementary School.
- Continued welcoming students from various countries through our International Education Program.
- Offered in-school and after school tutoring programs for elementary and secondary students with a focus on enhancing skills in Mathematics, Science, English and French.
- Expanded the Summer Learning Program for elementary students. This included support for French Immersion students, English Language Learners and students with special education needs in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills.
- Provided high quality summer employment experiences to over 80 secondary students through the Ministry of Education's Focus on Youth Program.
- Offered experiential summer school travel for credit opportunities in the areas of Careers and Civics and Environmental Science.
- Continued STEM Academy Programs in three high schools and purchased a new Switch Electric Vehicle for one of them (St. Anne) to prepare students for careers of the future in the EV sector.

## Priority: Our Community

- Collaborated with community organizations to further our work in equity and inclusive education.
- Worked together 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) to enhance cultural competency.
- Supported a number of local Catholic charities like the Society of St. Vincent de Paul through a variety of school and board-based initiatives.
- Continued partnership with Ontario Student Nutrition Program and Goodfellows to provide healthy snacks and breakfast for students.
- Partnered with United Way on various projects such as the Ignite Academy, On Track to Success and Backpacks for Students.
- Continued to develop partnerships with community service providers such as Workforce WindsorEssex, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, John McGivney Children's Centre, New Beginnings, Youth Diversion, Children First, Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society (CAS), Regional Children's Centre (RCC), and Maryvale in order to provide additional support for students.
- Supported our newcomers by collaborating with community organizations such as the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc. (NCCE), YMCA, Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County (MCC), and Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor Hub of Opportunities (UHC).
- Continued partnerships with St. Clair College and the University of Windsor to enhance learning opportunities for students.
- Collaborated with the City of Windsor's Manager of Children's Services and licensed child care providers to offer quality child care to our students and families.
- Strengthened existing partnerships and developed new community partnerships to enhance our skilled trades programming by breaking down stereotypes associated with the trades and providing additional Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) opportunities for students.

## Priority: Our Resources

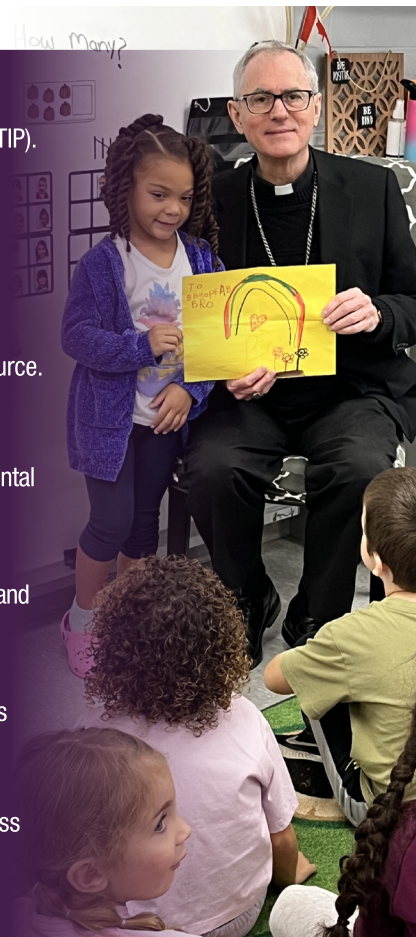
- Expanded security measures on the Board's network for both staff and students to create a more secure learning environment.
- Expanded the board's multi-disciplinary mental health team in order to support student well being.
- Established a 1:1 Chromebook initiative in Grades 8 and 9 to ensure equitable access to technology.
- Developed a \$295.8M compliant budget for 2023-24 that supports student success and faith formation.
- Ended the 2022-23 fiscal year with a \$317K in-year surplus, bringing the accumulated surplus to \$31.4M.
- Celebrated the opening of the new building for Catholic Central High School in January.
- Expanded skilled trades opportunities and programming for students at the St. Anne Catholic Skilled Trades Academy and Learning Centre.
- Undertook numerous construction and renovation projects utilizing approximately \$20M of Ministry of Education funding in 2022-23.
- Maintained the use of MERV 13 filters, the highest rated filters our HVAC systems can accommodate, and increased the frequency of filter changes to achieve compliance with all provincial recommendations.
- Developed and implemented plans to revitalize spaces within our schools to accommodate for increased enrollment.

## Priority: Our Team

- Hired teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, professional/paraprofessional and other support staff to support student needs and respond to increased enrollment.
- Hired additional system teachers to provide support to elementary students in the areas of literacy, numeracy and special education.
- Engaged senior and school administrators in professional development in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights.
- Facilitated by the Equity Diversity Inclusion Advisor, the Equity Action Plan was introduced to all board staff on Together in Faith Day.
- Provided professional development to educators in the areas of mental health and well being, special education, literacy, numeracy, assessment and evaluation, anti-racism and anti-discrimination.
- Continued to support staff and students in Grades 7 through 9 with the implementation of the de-streamed Grade 9 curriculum.
- Continued to provide support to our newcomer families through our Manager of Newcomer Services and our English as a Second Language support team.
- Engaged in the recruitment process for hiring an Indigenous Success Coach.
- Provided Indigenous Education professional development that focused on cultural competencies to administrators and educators at both elementary and secondary panels.
- Introduced workforce census 2023 to establish an understanding of the WECDSB staff complement.
- Implemented a cybersecurity and phishing awareness program for staff.

## Priority: Our Faith

- Provided in-service training on the role of the Catholic Teacher to educators in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).
- Created pastoral plans for all elementary and secondary schools that nurture the relationship of family, parish and school and develop a shared faith journey for our students.
- Celebrated our Together in Faith Day in September 2023 that embraced the board's mission statement: "In keeping with the virtues of our Catholic faith, we are called to know every student, to inspire them to follow the example of Jesus, and empower them with the knowledge and skills they need to live purposeful, meaningful lives."
- Provided professional development to teachers on the new Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ, Grade 1-7 digital resource.
- Partnered with the Development & Peace Organization to bring in their D&P Schools Program which is supported by our Diocese. This program helps our Catholic schools engage social and global justice issues through the lens of their faith. Inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the program encourages school communities to nurture three fundamental and interconnected relationships: to God, to each other, and to the natural world.
- Partnered with Assumption University to provide faith related professional development to teachers.
- Hosted a Student Senate Faith Day for secondary school student council members, led by Student Trustees that highlighted and celebrated our Catholic faith.
- Provided retreats to all Grade 7 students with a focus on faith and mental wellness.
- Engaged in the spirit of a local Synodal process to strengthen our Catholic partnerships with local Catholic parishes within the Windsor Essex Deaneries and other Catholic organizations in order to support faith development and formation opportunities for students and staff.
- Celebrated and honoured students displaying exemplary Catholic Virtues through the annual Our Journey to Holiness Director's Awards.





# 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 **23,166** students. The Board employs **1,384** full time equivalent elementary and secondary teachers as well as **1,036** support staff, which includes principals, vice-principals, occasional teachers, educational assistants, psychologists, mental health workers, 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 said that expectations are made to be exceeded, and I can confidently submit that 2023 was a year of surpassing our projections in many ways.

One of the most important priorities for our Board of Trustees is to be prudent, wise and responsible stewards of our resources, while ensuring that we are providing outstanding learning experiences for our students.

We accomplish that by working with our administration and ensuring that we deliver an annual budget that is shaped by our student-centered priorities, as well as our commitment to meet the needs of our staff and our community.

According to our recent year-end financial variance report, we concluded the 2022-23 fiscal year with an in-year surplus of about \$317K. Considering our annual budget for the year included \$282M in expenditures, to come that close to our projections and still remain in the black is a truly remarkable accomplishment, and one which demonstrates we've been very efficient about directing the vast majority of our resources to supporting student achievement and faith formation.

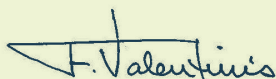
Part of the reason we were able to strike such a balance may be attributed to the fact that we saw an increase in revenue of \$8.4M, primarily thanks to a significant spike in our enrollment numbers. Over the last year, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of newcomers in our schools, as well as new local students who are attracted to the wide variety of innovative programs that we continue to offer.

Between our Construction Academies, our STEM Academies and our new St. Anne Skilled Trades Academy and Learning Centre, our well-established International Baccalaureate programs and our Sports Academies, as well as our ESL and other specialized programs, we're attracting hundreds of new students, reaching enrollment levels that haven't been seen in decades, and surpassing budget projections.

Speaking of exceeding expectations, our students exceeded provincial expectations in all eight EQAO Reading, Writing and Mathematics categories.

While we're very happy with all of the forward progress we've made over the last year, we've never been a group to rest on our laurels, and we'll continue to hold ourselves to a higher standard as we continually strive to improve at every level of our organization.

Your involvement and support are invaluable to our community. We appreciate your engagement, input, and collaboration as we work together to build a brighter future for our students.



**Fulvio Valentinis**  
Chair, Board of Trustees



## Board Trustees 2022-2026

### FRONT ROW FROM LEFT:

Lisa Soulliere (Essex County – Area 3)  
Fulvio Valentinis (City of Windsor – Wards 1 & 10)  
Mary DiMenna (Essex County – Area 2)  
Mary Heath (Essex County – Area 4)

### BACK ROW FROM LEFT:

Bernie Mastromattei (City of Windsor – Wards 3 & 4)  
Joe Iacono (City of Windsor – Wards 2 & 9)  
Jason Lazarus (City of Windsor – Wards 5 & 8)  
Kim Bouchard (City of Windsor - Wards 6 & 7)  
Frank DiTomasso (Essex County – Area 1)  
Rev. Larry Brunet, Board Chaplain

Wedad Alkhaliel (Catholic Student Trustee 2023-2024)  
Anthony Hoang (Catholic Student Trustee 2023-2024)

## Senior Administration

Emelda Byrne, Director of Education  
Penny King, Executive Superintendent of Business  
Melissa Farrand, Executive Superintendent of Education / Student Achievement K-12  
John Ulicny, Executive Superintendent of Education / Human Resources  
Steven Bellaire, Superintendent of Education / Student Achievement K-12  
Kelly-Ann Bull, Superintendent of Education / Student Achievement K-12  
Rosemary Lo Faso, Superintendent of Human Resources / Education  
Colleen Norris, Superintendent of Human Resources  
LeeAnn Poisson, Superintendent of Education / Student Achievement K-12  
Joumana Tawil, Superintendent of Education / Student Achievement K-12