



Director's Notes

March/April 2009

An Overview

- The 2008 Annual Report for the District is on our website and is being forwarded in hard copy to the office of your site. We are very appreciative of the participation of all union and association leaders who are featured in this edition.
- As some of you may know, this District continues to take the lead in the annual Dinner Dance for the Guelph Wish Fund for Children. It is a sold out event that occurs on the last Saturday of the March Break. For the past 22 years this event has raised funds for terminally ill or severely ill children in our community as well as those children and families supported by the Children's Foundation of Guelph & Wellington. In many cases these young people are students in our classrooms. Keep them in your prayers and be certain to let your Principal know if there are any children who may qualify for a "wish".
- During this past month, our Board of Trustees approved the School Year Calendar for 2009-2010. This decision followed extensive consultations with all stakeholders in the District. As approved, the instructional program would begin on Tuesday, September 1st and would be followed by instructional days on Wednesday, September 2nd and Thursday, September 3rd. There is a Board designated holiday on Friday, September 4th. Classes would resume the day after Labour Day. We are waiting for the Upper Grand to make a decision. They were part of our discussion process and if they decide to go with another configuration, we may need to modify our decision.
- We continue to work with community partners on many initiatives. One that is upcoming is the annual Right To Life conference in Ottawa at Parliament Hill. We hope to have two bus loads of secondary students participating in this national event.

Catholicity

- The Lenten Series began with the showing of the film "Doubt" at the Bookshelf. It was an excellent catalyst for further dinner table discussions on the movie and its message. The next session in the series is on Wednesday, March 25th at 6:30 a.m. Breakfast is available at 6:00 a.m. The topic is Obama's Audacity of Hope within the Easter context. On March 31st we expect another full house at the annual Seder Meal at Loyola House.
- During the past week we had the opportunity to visit the Student Retreat Centre at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre. We met for the purpose of completing some of the items to be finished before we begin student use. The next Bishop's Dinner in October will be very helpful in allowing us to finance these issues.
- Late last week I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from the six school districts in the Diocese of Hamilton. This was the preparatory meeting for the Diocesan Mass for Catholic Education which is confirmed for Thursday, October 15th in Formosa, Ontario. The host District is the Grey Bruce Catholic District School Board. We hope to have close to 100 representatives at this annual event. Please mark your calendars. The plan is to leave by bus at mid-day.

Student Achievement

- The Director's Annual Report clearly outlines many of the achievements of our students over the past five years. This trend report continues to be of critical importance in determining our results over time. Our responses to the Fraser Report and other external measures are important to note on a year by year basis. Ranking of schools is, in our view, an inappropriate way to determine our results.
- Success is also determined by the engagement to the learning process. If a student is captured in this way, the achievement will increase exponentially. The work that so many of you do to engage students in subject matter or co-curricular activities builds community and a very strong sense of self worth. This affective impact is equally important to all young people in our care. Results based instruction is essential if we are to continue on the improvement path. Some of these results are difficult to quantify but can still be life changing experiences. I urge each of you to remember those in your lives who made a difference. We are challenged to do the same.

Site Improvements

- During the past month we have been engaged in extensive work with the City of Guelph, the Westminster Woods Corporation, BJC Architects and landscaping architects to complete the zoning approval and site plan drawings for St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic School. To date we are on track to open in September of 2010. We remain hopeful that all challenges associated with the timelines can be met.
- We have had the opportunity to meet with the school community at St. Joseph re the interim structure for classes in the coming year. Demolition on the current St. Joseph School will begin this July. We shall continue to work out the logistics with a view to having all in place for final information to the community in late June.

Quality

- We currently have a number of Strategic Planning initiatives in process. Committees on Catholicity, Staffing, Boundaries & Accommodations and Information & Educational Technology are in place. I offer my thanks to all participants whose decisions will have a long-term impact on our work.
- Partnerships with other organizations are critical to the success of our students. This past month we have been actively involved with the Learning Partnership, the University of Guelph, the Children's Museum, the Grand River Conservation Authority, Junior Achievement, the Ignatius Jesuit Board of Directors, Wilfrid Laurier University and the College of Teachers. These are but some of our many partners and we appreciate our association with them.
- Congratulations to the Children's Foundation of Guelph & Wellington for a successful Live Free Day this past month.

Have a good month.

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