



The Catholic Monitor

October 2006

Director's Message



As we prepare for Thanksgiving, it is time to count our blessings for the many gifts we share. Already so much has been accomplished in our system. Nowhere is our

commitment to student achievement more evident than in the recently released provincial standardized test results. Results show our students are—once again—among the tops in the province.

Our Vision is clearly guiding us. It emphasizes collaborative relationships as the key to student success. I congratulate all the partners—teachers, parents, administrators and staff—for your obvious focus on student achievement.

Our themes for 2006-2007 are:

1. *Learning Communities of Faith*
 2. *Quality Learning By All*
 3. *Safe, Positive and Caring Schools*
- We will continue to realize our Vision and contribute to student achievement.

I look forward to another positive and productive year together.

Susan LaRosa

Susan LaRosa
Director of Education

Thanksgiving Prayer

God of compassion and holiness,
We praise you and thank you for the gifts that
you have given our children.

May we teach them to have grateful hearts
through our own example. May they know that:

- if we want thanks, we give thanks;
- if we want forgiveness, we grant forgiveness;
- if we want respect, we give respect;
- if we want fairness, we act fairly;

if we want compassion, we act compassionately.
God of love, Touch us with hope and joy.

May we help our children become discerning
believers. May they be loving companions on our
own journeys of faith.

From: YCDSB's Prayers for Children, 2006-07

Teacher wins Governor General's award

Grade 7/8 teacher Antony Caruso of Aurora's Holy Spirit CES is the winner of a prestigious 2006 Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History, one of only six recipients across Canada. Caruso received the award from Governor General Michaëlle Jean in Ottawa on Sept. 28. He had a private luncheon with the Governor General, a tour of Rideau Hall, a reception on Parliament Hill and formal recognition in the House of Commons.

The award comes with a cash prize of \$2,500 for the teacher and \$1,000 for the school.

Caruso encourages his students to experience history firsthand, alleviating the perception that history is boring. During a popular unit on the Red River Rebellion of 1869, students act as spies for Sir John A. Macdonald, uncovering



Holy Spirit teacher Antony Caruso has students, including Braden Pettigrew, participate in historical role play during history class.

information on Louis Riel. Holy Spirit principal Frances Bagley describes Caruso as a dynamic teacher who brings each lesson to life. "The students are fully engaged in the learning experience and are able to articulate and apply the knowledge they gain through this type of interaction," says Bagley.

York Catholic schools tops in provincial testing

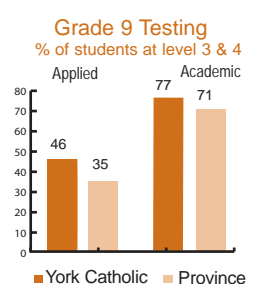
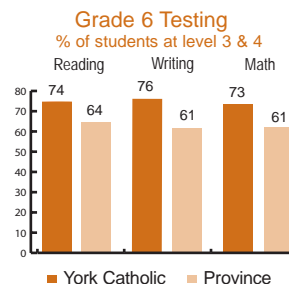
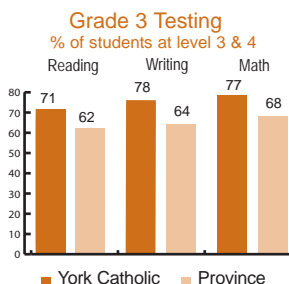
Once again, Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) standardized test results show Grade 3 and 6 York Catholic students are well ahead in the province and tops in the GTA. In Grade 9 tests, York Catholic students improved in both the Academic and Applied programming areas.

Highlights include:

- In Grade 3, YCDSB students show improvement over the previous year of five per cent in each of the Reading, Writing and Math categories.
- In Grade 6, YCDSB students also show continued high achievement and improvements of up to five per cent.
- Students in our system are already exceeding the Ministry's goal of 75 per cent of all students meeting provincial standards in many areas.

- English as a Second Language and Special Education students are also showing gains in many areas.
- In Grade 9 Academic Math, we are well ahead of provincial results and are also showing steady gains. In Grade 9 Applied Math, YCDSB students show significant gains and surpass provincial averages.

The Future: The Board Improvement Plan Report indicates that by 2007 we aim to exceed the provincial target (75 per cent by 2008) in almost every area: Grade 3, 6 and 9. The Board will focus on four main goal areas:
Goal #1: Catholic Faith Formation
Goal #2: Literacy Skill Development
Goal #3: Numeracy Skill Development
Goal #4: Catholic Learning Community





... Tracking Our Schools ...

From running to stomping feet—students getting active

Visitors might find it odd to see students doing jumping jacks beside their desks, but it's now a common sight, as schools implement Daily Physical Activity (DPA). The Ministry of Education requires that schools provide 20 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day. Teachers schedule DPA in one 20 minute block or two 10 minute blocks on days when there is no gym class. At Holy Spirit CES in Aurora, Grade 7 teacher Mary Anne Dakin and Grade 7/8 teacher Antony Caruso have chosen to have their students do a daily run/walk during last period. They have marked off a safe, one kilometre course that students may run or walk from three to six times, depending on their abilities. At the end of each kilometre, students receive a popsicle stick. Later, they will count their popsicle sticks to see how far they could have gone if they travelled across Canada. Grade 7 student Natalie Martino admits she had a few reservations at the start. "I thought it was going to be hard. It really, really surprised me. It's easier than I expected." She is now a big fan of DPA. "I really like it. It forces you to be competitive against yourself." Classmate Chelsea Parker agrees. "It's fun. It's a good way to get exercise." Dakin says the students love running. "It's amazing. They



Holy Spirit teacher Mary Anne Dakin hands out popsicle sticks every time students complete a lap—it's all part of the newly required DPA in Ontario classrooms.



are getting in shape," she says, adding that the benefits go beyond fitness. "When they are healthy and physically fit,

it affects their work habits. They sleep better and perform better in the classroom."

YCDSB Physical Education consultant Sandee Fennell agrees. "Studies show that students who participate in physical activity each day have improved memory, concentration, communication, problem-solving and leadership abilities."

For more information, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca or www.paguide.com.

LEFT: In Lois Lalonde's Grade 4 class at Holy Spirit CES students make the sounds of thunder with their feet, mimic lightening with their arms and make the motions of rainfall with their fingers.

Teacher back from Harry Potter convention in Las Vegas

St. Michael CA teacher-librarian Deanna Lombardi is back from a summer trip to Las Vegas with a gift for her Grade 5 students. While she didn't win the jackpot, she does have a wealth of information for her young *Harry Potter* enthusiasts. Lombardi joined academics from several countries at a *Harry*

Potter convention called Lumos 2006. She uses J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books in her novel studies and says they are also among the most popular in the school library. She looks forward to sharing her *Harry Potter* knowledge with her students. She plans to attend next year's conference in Toronto.

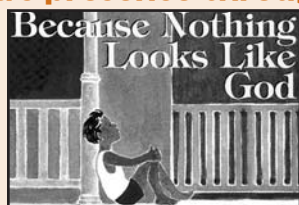


Pictured in St. Robert's new science labs are: science dept. head Paul Lahoud; student council pres. Stephanie Chow, student Daniel Ohanian, and principal Dan Zaroski.

Being aware of God's presence through real-life examples

By Patrick Collins
Religious Education
Coordinator

This gentle book is designed to be the beginning of a continuing conversation between adults and children about the world of God. Addressing the kind of religious questions that small children have but are often unable to put into words, the book suggests ways for children to be aware of God's presence in their world. With real life examples of happiness and sadness, authors Lawrence and Karen Kushner help

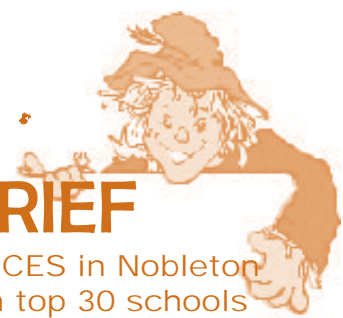


children to form a spiritual framework that will last a lifetime. This reassuring book invites parents and children to explore together the questions we all have about God—"Where is God?", and "How does God make things happen?". It is an empowering reminder that we can be a part of God's work in the world, no matter what our age.

This book is available in hardcover from Joseph's Inspirational Services for \$20. (416-291-1772). It is also available online at www.amazon.ca.

Students at St. Robert Catholic High School were pleased to find many improvements to the school's facilities this year. The YCDSB's oldest high school is now home to 10 renovated science classrooms, three improved teacher work areas, two art rooms, two state-of-the-art darkrooms and a kiln room. The school also boasts a newly re-surfaced track. The science classrooms have more workstations, allowing students to work in smaller groups and get more hands-on experience.

... Tracking Our Schools ...



St. Jerome CES has brilliant new wall



Visitors to St. Jerome CES in Aurora will undoubtedly notice the richly coloured wall of individually painted tiles that graces the front hall. What may not be immediately obvious is the amount of time, care and collaboration that went into creating the wall, which commemorates the school's opening. Last year, each of the school's staff and students painted a tile with an image representing knowledge, faith or courage. Parent volunteers and teachers arranged the 500 tiles on the wall this past summer.

ABOVE: Grade 2 student Kelcie Dominic stands in front of St. Jerome's tile wall, a collaborative effort of students, staff and parents.



Schools from across the region participated in the 26th annual Terry Fox run throughout September. Every year our schools raise thousands of dollars in support of cancer research. ABOVE: At St. Justin Martyr CES in Unionville students watched a Terry Fox tribute video and proclaimed 'We are Terry Fox!' Students wore red and white and collected toonies to support Terry's dream.



During a Grade 9 trip to Muskoka Woods in Rosseau, St. Augustine CHS students experienced the outdoors. The highlight was when Taylor McKinnon, a student with Cerebral Palsy and Asperger's Syndrome experienced the thrill of flying on a "zip line".

IN BRIEF

St. Mary CES in Nobleton named in top 30 schools

St. Mary CES in Nobleton was recently named one of the top 30 schools in Canada by *Today's Parent* magazine. The school was recognized in the area of special needs. St. Mary was nominated by Rose Kimber, who says that the school community went out of their way to accommodate the needs of her son Arik, who has autism. Kimber credits principal Joyce Lowerison for preparing students and parents to accept Arik's service dog Gus into the school.

Schools receive resource book for religious studies

The YCDSB's Elementary Religious Education Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the Religious Education Department, have released a new resource, *Carved in the Palm of God's Hand: A Guideline for Building Positive Home-School-Parish Relationships in Elementary Schools*. The document was created through consultation with teachers, principals, parents, trustees, superintendents and pastors. In-servicing will be provided to principals and school councils.

OLA bell choir has a sweet sound of its own



Our Lady of the Annunciation CES has a most unique choir that is already receiving rave reviews from the arts community. It all began three years ago when educational assistant Margaret Johnson wanted to do something different from just a vocal choir.

She was instrumental in acquiring the bells. Students from Grades 4-8 practice during lunch. OLA made their debut at the 2006 Music Alive Festival and won gold in their category.

PICTURED L-R: Bell choir members Julia Avolio, Grade 4; Adryan Eves-Aldridge, Grade 8; and Karolyn Mackowiak, Grade 6, practice a new song.

St. Brigid Peace Garden



Bright fall colours of gold, burgundy and rust decorated the garden at St. Brigid CES in Stouffville for the unveiling of their Peace Garden on September 28. Pictured above: Emma Boswick (SK), Steven Fiorino (JK), principal Jo-Ann Donnelly, Board Chair Elizabeth Crowe and Father Lorenzo Salandanan who blessed the Peace Garden.

Perfect marks for YCDSB's top 2005/06 scholar

The YCDSB's top Ontario Scholar for 2005/06 is Sindu Govindapillai, a Grade 12 graduate of St. Robert CHS. Sindu achieved a remarkable average of 100 per cent in her top six Grade 12 courses. She graduated from St. Robert's challenging International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. Sindu's IB score of 45 out of 45 possible points

puts her among less than 100 IB students worldwide. Cardinal Carter CHS Grade 12 student Sean Devlin had the second highest average, graduating with 98.71 per cent. St. Elizabeth CHS student Mushriq Al-Jazrawe placed third with 97.3 per cent. St. Theresa of Lisieux CHS student Michael Chan graduated fourth with a 97.29 per cent.

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We are pleased to accept articles and photos about activities occurring throughout our system. We reserve the right to edit and determine which material is appropriate.

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New student trustee



The YCDSB's newest student trustee is St. Joan of Arc CHS student Kristine Soufian, 16, who began her two-year term in September. Nominated by her principal for her school and community involvement,

Kristine welcomes the opportunity to speak on behalf of all students.

"I'm just one person who wants to make a difference in the world," she says. And, she is already doing so—she has volunteered with the Canadian Cancer Society for 12 years, having started at four with her grandmother. She is on her school's chaplaincy council and has choreographed/instructed dancing for a school liturgy. In July, she will travel to Kenya in Africa to help build a school. She is most proud of her French, Polish and Iranian heritage. Kristine encourages students of all backgrounds to consider the role of student trustee. Her favourite subject is religion and she plans to be a teacher one day.

Education Minister visits the YCDSB



(L-R) YCDSB's Carol Cotton, vice-chair, Susan LaRosa, Director of Education, and Elizabeth Crowe, Chair, pose with then Education Minister Sandra Papatello on Sept. 5 during her visit to the CEC.

YCDSB and York Regional Police update protocol to clarify roles

On September 8, Director of Education Susan LaRosa and Chair of the Board Elizabeth Crowe were on hand for the signing of a new Police/School Protocol. The document updates protocol between York Regional Police and the Catholic and public school boards. It defines the working relationship and appropriate responses to incidents where police involvement is requested or required by schools. It is designed to encourage a positive working relationship between police and members of the school communities. "Both York Region school boards are fortunate to have such an excellent working relationship with our local police force," said Crowe. "Representatives from York Regional Police are always willing to actively participate in Board committees and events—to assist in developing our young people's understanding of good citizenship."

Message from the Chair ELIZABETH CROWE



Beginning this school year, we welcomed new Student Trustee Kristine Soufian for a two-year term. The Grade 11 student from St. Joan of Arc CHS joins Melissa Kostanecki.

While we filed a compliant budget with the Ministry for this school year, we still have funding concerns to support information technology, transportation and special education.

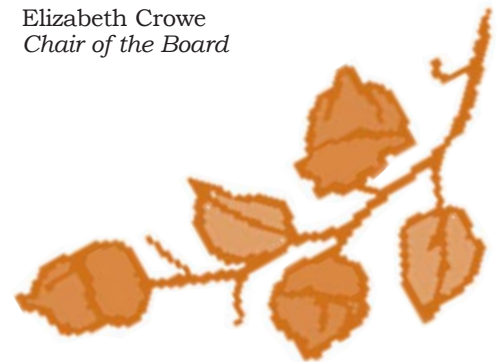
On the first day of school, we met with then Minister of Education, Sandra Papatello, and we emphasized the need for funding flexibility—and said that we've proven that we strategically use funding to positively impact student achievement. Although we are tightening our belts, it's our intent not to impact schools. With the ongoing commitment of educators and parents, great things will continue to take place in our schools and classrooms every-day.

The recent cabinet shuffle resulted in the appointment of a new Education Minister, Kathleen Wynne. We look forward to working with the new Minister, and we are hopeful that her experience in education will benefit all of us.

We are always looking at new ways to involve parents in their child's education. This year we are holding the 6th annual Catholic School Council Conference for parent council members on November 4. As well, our Board will establish an interim Parent Involvement Committee that will develop the procedure on how parents will be selected in subsequent years. More details on this will follow.

I pray that you and your families have a successful school year.

Elizabeth Crowe
Chair of the Board



Sharing ideas on PA day



On our Sept. 22 system-wide PA Day, staff gathered at their schools to share ideas on our three key focuses for this school year: continuing to grow as learning communities of faith; emphasizing quality learning by all, which means engaging all learners regardless of strengths and needs; and creating safe and caring schools. Web-based report card training was also provided to teachers.

OUR VISION

We are a Catholic Learning Community of collaborative partners called to serve one another by being committed to and accountable for quality learning by all, with Jesus as our inspiration.