

YCPIC HIGHLIGHTS

A YEAR IN RETROSPECT



SPRING 2016



Parents Working Together
for Education

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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the YCPIC, I would like to take this opportunity to send greetings and provide an update.

Thanks to the support we get from every member of our school board, schools and all members of our YCPIC (parent members, Principals, Superintendents, Trustees, the Director of Education and the Chair of our Board), we have been able to continuously support parent engagement for student achievement.

Knowing good schools become great schools when parents are engaged in their child's learning. Considering that we got a good start this school year when the Ministry of Education approved our application for the Regional parent reaching out (PRO) grant and School Council PRO grants for many of our schools, our YCPIC team created a timeline map for planned activities to support parent engagement and created four sub-committees which were chaired by parent members of YCPIC.

On October 15, we offered an orientation workshop for newly elected CSC Chairs, Co-Chairs and Secretaries at St. Theresa of Lisieux CHS. More than 50 parents from over 25 schools attended. Next year, we will host more of these workshops so more

parents can attend and take advantage.

On November 15, the 13th Annual CSC Conference was held at St. Joan of Arc CHS featuring keynote speaker Dr. Kenneth Fung, titled **Raising Healthy and Resilient Children and Youth** to help parents understand and support our children's mental health and well-being. We also had Dr. Giuliana Malvestuto-Filice and team follow-up with resources available to parents with our community partners. We had approximately 200 parents attending.

On April 16, **Connected Parenting** with keynote speaker Jennifer Kolari, a child and family therapist, was held at Jean Vanier CHS where she shared insightful strategies and offered advice and solutions for issues families deal with every day. We had a record number of registrations and great attendance. We also hosted our PRO grant workshop for School Councils. Approximately 16 parents attended this workshop.

In addition, parent members of YCPIC were elected to represent our board at OAPCE which is the voice of parents and guardians of children enrolled in the publicly funded Catholic education system in Ontario and we attended the Ministry of Education's annual symposium held in Barrie this year. YCPIC is going to welcome 14 new parent members for the next school year and we are very excited to welcome these new parents. I would like to thank every member of YCPIC for helping in its mission and to our members who are leaving, "Thank You for your contributions to YCPIC over the years".

— *Januario de Souza*

Message from the Director of Education



The York Catholic District School Board is consistently one of the top-ranked school boards in Ontario. One of the most important factors that has contributed to the success of our school system is the high level of parent engagement in our schools.

As the Director of Education, a former administrator and teacher, I have had the pleasure and honour of connecting and collaborating with many parents in support of student achievement. Parents contribute to making our schools places of excellence and the York Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (YCPIC) plays an integral role.

I'd like to thank the members of YCPIC for their unwavering commitment to our students and to parent engagement. The work that you do is outstanding.

At every stage of a student's educational journey, our priority is the success and well-being of the children entrusted to our care. This can only be accomplished through the valued partnership we have with you, their parents.

Together, during the 2015-2016 school year, the Board and YCPIC produced two very successful parent conferences.

Close to 200 parents attended the 13th Annual Catholic School Council Conference on November 21st, 2015. Keynote speaker, Dr. Kenneth Fung, captivated the audience with his presentation on Mental Health and Raising Healthy and Resilient Children and Youth. He provided parents with strategies for supporting good mental health development in their children.

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YCPIC FALL CONFERENCE

13TH ANNUAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL CONFERENCE:

Raising Healthy and Resilient Children and Youth

When today's parents think back to their school years, most will recall happy memories. We were grounded by strong connections to family, friends and our school community. The greatest interference to our studies was too many late nights talking on the family telephone! Yet, in 2016, the most prevalent concern amongst students, and in schools, is anxiety. It's defined as that unpleasant feeling we get when we are scared, nervous, worried, or stressed. One in 5 Canadian children and youth have a mental health issue that interferes with their daily functioning. That's 500,000 Ontario students, and 80% do not receive the help they need! Why is it so prevalent amongst our young people, and how can parents help?

On November 21st, 2015, our YCDSB 13th Annual Parent Conference focused on the issue of mental health in our children and youth. Our Keynote Speaker, Dr. Kenneth Fung, U of T. Associate Professor and Staff Psychiatrist at Toronto Western Hospital, explained that mental health "is the springboard of thinking, communicating, learning, emotional growth, resiliency and "self-esteem". Clearly, we need to address the mental health of our young people in order for them to be successful in school and in life.

Dr. Fung shared many tips for parents to set the foundation for their children's mental health and wellbeing. He suggested that we establish "balanced living" within our families, where we take the time for reflection and relaxation. Balanced thinking is essential to role model for our children, as it shows them how to look at the world in a hopeful, optimistic way. Our connection to friends and family is essential, as it develops a solid "emotional quotient" which is a stronger indicator of future success than IQ. Finding ways to contribute to your community is a must, as it brings a sense of accomplishment, self-worth and social cohesiveness. Most importantly, parents must support their own mental health in order to support that of their child.

Dr. Giuliana Malvestuto-Filice, and Dr. Andrew Wong, also presented at our conference, highlighting the connection between thoughts, feelings, and actions that can either help, or magnify, anxiety. Helping children learn to challenge their negative thoughts, and subsequent negative feelings and actions, is a powerful strategy for breaking the anxiety cycle. By providing children with a



Patricia Preston (Director of Education), Dr. Kenneth Fung, and Januario de Sousa (YCPIC Chair)



Dr. Giuliana Malvestuto-Filice & Dr. Andrew Wong



Mental Health




"the successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity;

from early childhood until late life, mental health is the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience, and self-esteem."



A Report of the Singapore Council On Mental Health

Components of Mental Health

- Thinking 
- Feeling 
- Behaviours 
- Self-esteem, Self-efficacy
- Relationship with others
 - Attachment
 - Communication
- Work/Activities
 - Goals / Purpose
 - Problem Solving
- Flexibility and Resilience



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relaxed home environment, predictability, time to process change and opportunities to problem solve, parents can support their child's anxiety management. Parents are encouraged not to argue/debate with their children, but take a time out instead. Withdrawing privileges, labeling and judging are not effective strategies, and will only jeopardize the communication and intensify the anxiety. As parents, our connection to our children is the most powerful tool we have to propel them towards a successful, happy life.

Our York Catholic District School Board is committed to supporting our students' mental wellbeing, and has established a Mental Health Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Details and resources can be found on our website at www.ycdsb.ca/mental-health/default.htm. As our Director, Patricia Preston stated at our Conference, "our Faith is entwined with good Mental Health". This, together with our strong school/parent partnership, will support our children as they manoeuvre through life's challenges, grounded in solid mental wellbeing.
have.

— D. Psaila

YCPIC SPRING CONFERENCE

Connected Parenting



Connected Parenting with Jennifer Kolari

Parenting is the most important job we will ever have. It can be joyful, rewarding, and even exhilarating. Ironically, it can also be frustrating, confusing, and emotionally draining at times. Despite our best



intentions, all parents will have some difficult episodes with their children at some point. Whether it's an argument about curfew, a power struggle over homework, or an outburst over a missing pair of jeans, parents can be left completely baffled, wondering what is going wrong to evoke such havoc in the family.

When a conflict arises between a parent and child, it's tempting for the parent to overrule in order to reach a resolution. How often does that work? Most parents would say rarely, and in fact, the "pull rank" response tends to make the conflict escalate. Yet, the solution to such issues rests in the strong connection we have with our child. That connection is the basis for resolving conflict, and for raising happy, resilient children.

On April 16th, our YCPIC sponsored a Parent Forum entitled "Connected Parenting" to help parents learn a technique to manage difficult episodes. Our guest speaker, Jennifer Kolari, gave an informative, comical presentation to demonstrate the technique of mirroring as a means to de-escalate troublesome episodes. The technique is grounded in empathy, and requires ruthless compassion in order to focus on showing unrelenting understanding of what the other person is feeling.

Jennifer Kolari demonstrated the Mirroring technique and broke it down into the **CALM** components as follows:

CONNECT – Give your undivided attention, using eye contact, body and voice to match the urgency of the message your child is trying to give you.

AFFECT – Make your response match the "affect" or outward display of emotions that your child is expressing.

LISTEN – Really listen. Paraphrase, clarify, summarize and wonder out loud to let your child know that you really have heard.

MIRROR – The above three components will result in mirroring, which creates a moment of deep connection between you and your child.

Each of the 175 parents who attended our Forum was given a copy of one of Jennifer Kolari's books, which are entitled "Connected Parenting" and "You're Ruining My Life". Our Parent Forum was made possible by the Ministry of Education's Regional Parents Reaching Out Grant, and YCPIC graciously acknowledges their support.

— Donna Psaila



OAPCE 77th ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM

May 6-7, 2016

Different Gifts, One Voice:

"Living our Virtues in a Virtual World"



L to R: Teresa Ciaravella-Trustee, Maurizio Ruberto, Carol Cotton-Chair of the Board, Jeremy D'Souza, Gail Yeung, Mary Giardina, and Elizabeth Crowe-Trustee

The 77th Annual Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education was held in Toronto, May 6-7, 2016, hosted by the TCDSB CPIC at Madonna Catholic High School and Montecassino Hotel & Event Venue in Downsview.

Following the all-day Conference attended by parents/delegates from all across the province of Ontario, the delegates were blessed to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist by His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Collins of the Archdiocese of Toronto. The mass was followed by the Awards Dinner.

— *Jeremy D'Souza*

Message from the Director of Education

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On April 16th, 2016, 272 parents welcomed Author, and Child and Family Therapist, Jennifer Kolari who shared insightful strategies for strengthening the parent-child bond, stopping power struggles, and lowering anxiety by creating positive change.

Both conferences served to engage parents and encourage their involvement in supporting ongoing student achievement.

Two of the Strategic Commitments in our Multi-year Strategic Plan are the *Continuous Improvement of Student Achievement* and *Engaging Our Communities*. The learning opportunities that the Board provides to develop critical thinking, inspire creativity, and promote well-being, along with the daily efforts of our Catholic School Councils and engagement initiatives like the parent conferences, all intrinsically connect to support those Strategic Commitments.

Jennifer Kolari wrote, "Unconditional love and positive reinforcement breed positive attitudes."

At York Catholic, we believe that as parents, it is your unconditional love and strong family connections that provide balance in your children's lives and set them on a path to success. You are your children's first and most important teachers. They are watching and they are learning about the value and importance of education from the example that you set by being involved in their education.

It is my pleasure to congratulate the York Catholic Parent Involvement Committee on another outstanding year.



YCPIC MEMBERS—2015-16



From left to right, front row:

Patricia Preston—Director of Education, Carol Cotton—Chair of the Board, Jeremy de Souza, Januario de Souza—Chair YCPIC, Rosanna Soda, Diana Corsi, Donna Psaila

From left to right, back row:

Meeta Kirkham, Danny Scenna—Treasurer, Marion Menezes, Yolanda Lobo—Vice-Chair, Emanuela Polin-De Luca, Ida Di Tacchio, Maurizio Ruberto, Jimmy Au-Yeung, Mary Giardina

Absent from photo:

Diane Scaini, Jennifer Wigston, Maria Siciliano, Marisa Snider, Rosa Micieli, Teresa Ambroz, Nancy Di Nardo—Superintendent, Olga Ferro—Principal, Maria Marchese—Trustee, Teresa Ciaravella—Trustee

YCPIC HIGHLIGHTS CONTRIBUTIONS: *Emanuela Polin-De Luca (Editor), Januario de Souza, Patricia Preston, Donna Psaila & Jeremy D'Souza*