



York Catholic Parent Involvement Committee



YCPIC HIGHLIGHTS

Parents working together
for Education

Spring 2015

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Message from the Chair *(Januario de Souza)*

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

We all know that good schools become great schools when parents are engaged in their child's learning. It was great to see this school year start off with a record number of schools receiving parent reaching out (PRO) grants & our School Board having a special presentation by Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski in September. Sr. Angela Ann discussed Catholic Identity in a Digital World, and showcased the Seven Habits for Navigating through Cyber Sea.

In October, in partnership with our Board, YCPIC held a workshop for Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-chairs. This workshop was well attended and it was great to see participants from various elementary and high

Inside this issue...

Message from the Chair	1
YCDSB Schools Thrive Thanks to Parent Engagement	1
(...continued)	2
Helping Your Children handle stress	2
YCPIC Team	2

schools actively collaborate and help each other as we try to make our schools great schools for our children.

In partnership with our Board, YCPIC held the 12th Annual Catholic School Conference at St. Augustine's Catholic High School in November. This was the first time where we included technology in our program, electronic devices were welcome, and we had a live interactive conference with twitter & web feeds. This year's keynote speaker was Jesse Brown and the theme was "Digital Literacy". Post conference we had 6 well attended workshops where parents had the opportunity to bring forward their suggestions.

Members of the YCPIC also attended People for Education's 18th Annual Conference, participated with on the Board's Mental Health Steering Committee & Integrated Accessibility Standards Committee.

What do we have planned for the rest of the school year? To start, we will have a workshop to help school councils with Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants, members of YCPIC will be attending Ministry of Education's 6th Annual PIC Symposium in Toronto, and we will be accepting applications for new YCPIC members! If you are interested in becoming a YCPIC member, please apply by visiting our board website at http://www.ycdsb.ca/parents_students/CSC-YCPIC/Membership.htm before April 1, 2015.

Message from the Director of Education



As Director of Education of the York Catholic District School Board, I am honoured to work with our York Catholic Parent Involvement Commitment (YCPIC) members. Our YCPIC members are dedicated and supportive parents who are enthusiastically engaged in their children's education. This level of parent engagement contributes to positive relationships among our parent community and our school and Board staff. Together with our parents, we strive to teach students from K-12 the skills and attitudes they need to be hopeful, optimistic, resilient, responsible, and to make positive choices.

Increasingly, we are hearing from our parents about the subject of child and youth mental health. Parents are interested in knowing what our Board is doing to support their children to overcome challenges or difficult situations.

The York Catholic District School Board is strongly committed to promoting mental well-being in all of our students. We strive to create learning environments that promote positive mental health for everyone, through a holistic, inclusive approach, where all students can feel a sense of belonging in a safe and caring school community.

The Board's Mental Health Steering and Advisory Committee is actively working to raise awareness about positive mental health by addressing the challenge of stigma, providing resources that enhance mental health literacy, and working with community partners and health experts. We also offer

Message from the Director of Education (continued)

special workshops and presentations for both students and parents, many of which, have been made possible through the support of our Catholic School Councils.

I encourage you to visit the mental health section of our website, <http://www.ycdsb.ca/mental-health> to learn more about child and youth mental health and well-being. This website also features excellent resources and tips. By working together and keeping the lines of communications open, parents, schools, and parishes can help children and youth develop into faith-filled, resilient individuals who have the confidence to succeed!

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the members of the York Catholic Parent Involvement Committee. Your dedication and commitment to our parents throughout the year is very much appreciated. Most notably, I thank you for your organization of this year's 12th Annual Parent Council Conference, which was a highlight for the York Catholic District School Board. Over 150 parents, administrators, trustees and senior team members participated. This year, Digital Expert and Journalist, Jesse Brown was the keynote speaker and he delivered a powerful presentation about technology, the importance of developing good digital citizenship, and how parents should engage online with their children. For the first time, we offered an opportunity for parents to share their feedback "live", via Twitter and the online application called *Today's Meet*. We are looking forward to continuing our work with YCPIC, and to cohosting more special events in the future. Thank you for your dedicated service.

Sincerely,

Patricia Preston
Director of Education

Stay connected! For the latest news and updates follow us on Twitter @YCSDB

Helping Your Children Handle Stress (Donna Psaila)

STRESS!!!!. It's become a household word, and is a real life experience for adults and children alike. Even though stress is a necessary part of life, Canadian families are facing more of it than ever before. Experts estimate that children's stress has increased 45% over the last 30 years. Parents have good reason to be concerned, as unmanaged stress can have a dramatic effect on children's learning and social development. It interferes with attention, memory and organization, altering the course of brain development. It compromises health both short and long term. In fact, an estimated 75 to 95 percent of trips to the physician are stress-related! Yet, if stress is an inevitable part of life, can we help our children manage it successfully?

The good news is that we can indeed teach our children successful stress management. The Psychology Foundation of Canada suggests that parents start with the basics which include:

- ◆ helping children feel connected
- ◆ providing a stable and happy home environment,
- ◆ modelling effective stress management, and
- ◆ comforting children when they are overloaded with stress.

It may not be easy to tell when your child is stressed. Physical symptoms such as tummy aches and headaches, or behavioural signs such as irritability or anger are a few of over 100 different signs and symptoms of stress. So, where does a parent begin?

First, it is important that parents be aware of their own stress and how it is affecting those around them. Learning how to manage your own stress and modelling healthy stress management techniques will provide a solid foundation for your child. Devoting time to connect and listen to your child not only better your understanding of his/her perspective, it gives a clear message of your unconditional love.

Specific strategies to help kids cope include the following:

- ◆ Help kids talk it through. Encourage positive self-talk and optimism.
- ◆ Set an example. Talk out loud when you encounter a stressful situation so your child can see you manage it successfully.
- ◆ Teach relaxation. Breathing deeply while concentrating on the breaths forces the brain to process something other than the stressor.
- ◆ Choose a calm, relaxed time to inquire about your child's stress.
- ◆ Try not to overload kids with activities. Everyone needs some quiet time built in to their schedule

Helping your child be more resistant to stress is one of the most powerful lessons you can offer as a parent. When we help children take control of their stress, they begin to build coping skills that will last a lifetime. For more information, see www.psychologyfoundation.org

The YCPIC Members for the 2014-2015 school year:

Januario de Souza - Chair, Diana Corsi - Vice-Chair, Yolanda Lobo - Secretary, Danny Scenna - Treasurer, Gary Chan, Paula Irwin, Mary Giardina, Agatha Fallone Cretaro, Rosa Micieli, Marisa Snider, Diane Scaini, Maurizio Ruberto, Gail Cheung, Meeta Kirkham, Christina Melick, Donna Psaila, Maria Siciliano, Emanuela Polin-De Luca, Ida Di Tacchio, Maria Le, Rose Scaccia, Rosanna Soda, Veronica Reis, Carol Cotton-Trustee, Teresa Ciaravella - Trustee, Nancy Di Nardo - Superintendent, Marlene Mogado-Turste, Olga Ferro - Principal, Patricia Preston - Director of Education