

# ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWS

Kids Win  
when Parents  
Get Involved!  
St. Francis de Sales School  
613.283.6101

## Message from the Chair

Wow! Only a few short weeks and another school year will be behind us, and what a year it has been! We have seen some big changes in our community with the closing of Rideau Regional and Hershey, and now we are preparing for some big changes to happen to our schools. It seems that the initial shock reaction is over, and now we have all settled in to wait for whatever comes next. Like most families, our family will be affected by the restructuring of St. Francis and St. James. Next year, my oldest child will stay at St. Francis and my youngest child will move to St. James. My initial reaction was both disappointment and panic. I love the school the way it is and I admire the excellent staff. I didn't want my youngest to have to change schools, and knowing how anxious she tends to be, I knew that she would be upset. How can I stop her from having to switch schools? The truth is our children are resilient. All of our primary students are making the switch, so although they will be in new surroundings, they will still have their friends with them. If you have a child, or children, that will be moving to St. James next year and they are having a hard time with it, there are some things you can try. On a weekend, take your child to St. James to walk around the school, play in the yard, and try out the swings. Getting him or her comfortable with being there is half the battle. Make a play date of it and bring your child's best friend so they will get the idea of seeing their friends there as well. During the school week, contact Jennifer Perkin, the principal of St. James at 613-283-1848 to arrange a mutually convenient time to take your child on a short tour of the school, and meet a few of the staff. If you have any questions, you could get them answered at the same time.

I have attended all meetings that related to the restructuring, and was interested to see that the families of BOTH St. Francis and St. James feel very strongly about their respective schools - both love the atmosphere, the "family" feel and both feel they have the best staff. Having heard the current St. James families say these things, I feel reassured and I'm starting to look forward to getting to know the staff there over the next two years. Of course, if I sit and think about it for a minute, I can probably come up with the names of at least six staff members at St. James that I already know, and I know that they are good people and good at what they do. I'm already questioning why was I ever worried?

Of course, we don't just worry about our students moving over to St. James, but also the ones staying at St. Francis. We now have to get to know a whole new set of children and their parents, and where we sort of knew who would be

teaching what grade and subject, now it seems a mystery to us. While it may seem odd to think of some of our primary teachers teaching a junior or intermediate level, it's hard to imagine that just one short year ago Ms. Angel went from teaching an SK/1 class to teaching grade 7's and 8's. Look how successful that has been. I don't know the qualifications of all our teachers, but from personal experience I know that many teachers, maybe even most teachers, have qualifications and training to teach multiple subjects and levels. As a parent, I have decided that I will trust that our school board is doing what is best for our children. I will also trust that they are making the change as smooth as possible for everybody, including our children, our families and our staff.

And finally, look at the benefits that our children will enjoy. Starting in September, all of our primary children will get to enjoy playing in a large yard with grass and all of our junior and intermediate children will get to play sports in a large gym with a good wood floor. With all primaries at St. James, the school will be able to focus all activities specifically to that age group. St. Francis will get to do the same for juniors and intermediates. Can you just imagine the activities that both schools can introduce now that they have the numbers to support them? I'm already hoping for a sewing club that can help make the costumes for next year's drama production, or maybe learn to quilt, or maybe a games club. The possibilities are endless! While I understand the misgivings and hesitation over the changes that are coming, it is my hope that once all of the practical matters are looked after, everyone will come to embrace and support the new St. Francis and the new St. James as much as they did the two schools in their former states.

Lorraine Fenn, Chair

## "Change is good, Donkey"

Although Shrek's mantra, "*Change is good, Donkey*" has become a bit cliché, it does serve as a reminder that change is inevitable *and* that it's best dealt with positively.

Many adults find coping with change challenging so it's not surprising that young children, who are still trying to make sense of their world, struggle with change. There can be a great sense of security in having things familiar and predictable. However, like you, your child will face many changes in their lives and one of the most important life skills that you can help them develop is

## “Change is good...”, continued

the ability to deal with change effectively.

We all know there are no silver bullets when it comes to the art of parenting. Following are just some suggestions on how you might help your child face change:

1. **Don't delay.** Sometimes adults delay speaking to their children about change believing that it will reduce anxiety. While well-meaning, this may result in a child being overwhelmed by too swift a change. Like adults, children need time to process information. Even worse, the child may overhear conversations or sense that a change is coming before it is properly explained to them. The unknown can be more frightening to your child than the change itself.
2. **Be truthful and straightforward.** Give simple explanations so your child can understand why things are changing. Discuss both the pros and the cons. Avoid sugar-coating the effects of the change in hopes of making your child happy. Kids are smart and they will see through this. By all means, focus on the pros but don't deny the cons. Talk about what will happen and what the change means for everyone in the family. Help your child to understand the facts.
3. **Acknowledge your child's worries and fears.** Encourage your child to ask questions and express their fears. Allow them to feel angry, sad and confused during times of change. These feelings are normal and they need to be able to express them. Acknowledge your child's feelings and respond sympathetically. You might say, “Yes, saying goodbye to a friend is really hard. That makes me feel sad too.” Give realistic reassurance. Be sure to

let your child know you take their concerns seriously. Allow plenty of time to discuss the change with your child. Encourage them to write about their worries in a journal.

4. **Read a book about change.** Look for children's books that deal with life changes for kids. This can help prepare your child for change events and open the door for communication. Use the situations and characters in the book to help your child talk about their own feelings.
5. **Confront change positively.** Maintain a positive attitude. Simply put, if you are positive about an upcoming change, your child will be positive too. Try to make sure that somehow, in some way, the change will add something good to your child's life.
6. **Be patient.** Help your child accept the change by offering endless encouragement and support. Some children may need to talk about the change over and over. This is their way of processing the information and developing an understanding.

All children react differently to change. Some adapt easily to change, taking it in stride while others may show signs of anxiety and stress. During times of change, your child may become clingy, moody or irritable, angry, sad, anxious, afraid or less sociable than usual. You can help by being aware of what your child is feeling and by recognizing that reactions like these are normal. Watch for telltale signs that your child is becoming overwhelmed including, strange aches and pains, loss of appetite or trouble sleeping. Continue to talk with your child about what she is feeling and be a good listener. Offering extra love, encouragement, and support during times of change will go a long way toward helping your child develop very important coping skills.

### It has been another busy year for the St. Francis de Sales Catholic School Council. Here are some of our accomplishments:

- Provided assistance in organizing and hosting the Annual St. Francis de Sales School Open House/Welcome Barbecue
- Organized volunteers and conducted regular head lice checks throughout the school to minimize the spread of head lice
- Organized and executed weekly pizza/sub lunches and monthly hot dog days, MacMillan Food Fundraiser and published the St. Francis de Sales Family Favourites Too Cookbook as fundraisers to provide much needed funding for school programs and initiatives
- Provided water for students participating in the Annual Terry Fox Walk/Run
- Published bi-monthly School Council NEWS aimed at improving parent communication on important issues
- Assisted with funding for workshops by Dr. Hetty VanGurp and Dr. Tina Daniels to address anti-bullying and peaceful schools initiatives
- Prepared grant proposals and successfully obtained Parents Reaching Out (PRO) and S'Cool Life Fund grants to help fund school programs and initiatives
- Aided families-in-need by helping defray the cost of co-curricular programs
- Organized and hosted the 7th Annual Family Fun Night in celebration of our Catholic School Community
- Administered a parent questionnaire regarding co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and fees and based on an analysis of the feedback, presented school Administration with twenty-five recommendations representative of your feedback
- Fulfilled several special requests for funding from teachers and staff in support of school needs, programs and activities including prizes for Lent Bingo, in-school Kindergarten Science field trip, new library resources and financial assistance with outstanding debts related to school agendas, swimming, etc.
- Funded the Grade 8 Graduation Award, St. Christopher's medals for graduating students and provided financial assistance for the Grade 8 trip

Thanks to all community volunteers, parents, staff and teachers for your ongoing collaboration and support of School Council initiatives.

If you are interested in volunteering, would like to attend a meeting or if you would like to learn more about the St. Francis de Sales School Council, please contact the school at 613-283-6101 or approach any member of council:



**Chair**—Lorraine Fenn, **Treasurer**—Margaret West, **Community Representative**—Bernice Chiniborch, **Parish Representative**—Lorraine Fenn, **Teaching Representative**—Anik Blanchard, **Principal**—Derek Haime, **Vice-principal**—Dan Lesser, **Parent Representatives**—Lisa Brennan-Trudel, Shelley Nadeau, Tracey Nichols, Tracey Stringer, Janet Yanosik