



## Spotlight on St. Mary CHS Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) Program at St. Mary Catholic High School in Brockville, focuses on the fundamental knowledge and skills specific to the arts industry. The program involves the practical and theoretical applications of Drama, Music, and Visual Art/Photography. Students are actively engaged in performances, productions, and other community-based events as part of the program curriculum. Through sector partnerships, students gain industry standard exposure to arts related information through their participation in field trips, guest speaker appearances, workshops and safety awareness training.

"St. Mary Catholic High School, with an enrolment of 570 students, offers a learning environment that is personal, full of opportunity, and focused on high expectations," began Principal JP Elliott in his introduction. "The staff at St. Mary want their students to become innovative thinkers, creative problem solvers, and inspired learners."

Elliott expanded on some of the unique course offerings at the school, including the Native Studies Program, and the Musical Theatre Program. The grade 9 Visual Arts course is an Indigenous inspired program, and the grade 11 English program has moved over to the Indigenous Stories curriculum, which features novels and texts of Indigenous origin, relevant to Canadian heritage and legacy.

"Our most prestigious program, however, is the Specialist High Skills Major in Arts and Culture, which has been guided for 11 years by Mrs. Diane Wooller," noted Elliott.

The Arts and Culture SHSM program at St. Mary CHS offers students a diverse choice of certifications and curriculum in all areas of the arts. The focus can be on visual arts, performing arts, communication technology, or even construction.

"At our school, most of the students are involved in the musical theatre, drama and music programs," noted teacher Diane Wooller.

"Upon completing their SHSM credit package, some students will have a wide array of courses. Within the Arts and Culture program, students receive certifications and training specific to their interest. Students have the opportunity to participate in workshops on choreography, painting, pottery, and preparing for auditions. Last year, we had someone from the community come in and give a framing workshop to our art students. It's a really amazing way to bring people in from the community, and to share their talents with our students and offer exposure to other areas of specialization that maybe our classrooms don't provide."

The Musical Theatre program, which is unique to St. Mary CHS, is open to students in grades 9 through 12. The course curriculum focuses on the preparation of a musical each June at the Brockville Arts Centre. Students involved in the program are part of all aspects of planning and performance.



"We had 65 students this year, and we have 80 students signed up for next year, and most students take it for all four years of secondary school," noted Wooller.

Profits from the ticket sales are used to finance the following year's production including costs such as licensing, costumes, scene construction and stage props. The school has recently completed this year's production of *Mamma Mia*, which ran from May 30 to June 1.

"The play sold out for the Friday night's performance, with over 3,000 people attending over the three days," explained Wooller.

The Board of Trustees was also treated to a performance by Olivia Chevrier and Zoë Cosgrove, who sang *Who Will Love Me As I Am* - a musical theatre selection the two performed in the Brockville Lions Music Festival in 2018. In addition, Catholic Student Trustee Michael Fenn and Zoe Cosgrove then performed *SOS Freedom*, a song from their most recent performance of *Mamma Mia*.

"It is amazing how this program allows friendships to form," noted Trustee Fenn, who has been enrolled in the program since grade 9. "The relationships that are built between students from grade 9 through to grade 12 is amazing, and St. Mary is so lucky to have this program."

Catholic Student Trustee Fenn recently won Best-in-Festival for voice at the 68<sup>th</sup> annual Brockville Lions Music Festival. Trustee Fenn will be graduating from St. Mary CHS this year, and moving on to teach voice this summer privately through the Student Summer Company Program. In the fall, he will be studying in the Music Concurrent Education Program at Queens University.

## Draft Proposed Budget for 2019-2020

Manager of Finance, Ashley Hutchinson, presented the draft proposed budget for 2019-2020 to the Board of Trustees. The draft budget includes an operating expenditure budget for compliance of \$184.6 million, with \$140.1 million for salaries and benefits related expenditures, and \$17.5 million for transportation costs.

"To begin our evening with some very positive news, I would like to note that our enrolment projections for 2019-2020 see an increase of 110 FTE, which is up 0.9 per cent from 2018-2019," began Hutchinson.

The main changes to the budget for 2019-2020, are a result of increased enrolment, change in funded class sizes, the introduction of the attrition funding allocation, expiry of the local priority funding, transportation stabilization amount, and other costs updates.

Hutchinson noted that 84 per cent of Board revenue comes from the Ministry of Education, and 10 per cent from provincial legislative grants (taxes), with the remaining amounts coming from the EPO grants, amortization of capital assets, and other revenue.



Currently, enrolment distribution in the elementary panel, as well as the change in funding at the secondary level for class sizes has contributed to changes to teaching staff positions, resulting in a reduction of 26.46 FTE. Other minimal staff reductions in various areas (ie; board administration, coordinators and consultants, continuing education) amounts to a further reduction of 9.19 FTE.

“Revenue after salary and benefits are paid out leaves \$44.5 million left for other expenditures,” noted Hutchinson.

Overall, the draft operating budget for 2019-2020 reports a slight in-year deficit of \$9,780, however, Administration is working to finalize the input of the information in the Ministry’s reporting system. This budget will leave the Board with an accumulated operating deficit of \$2.3 million.

Chair Lalonde asked about how the Board would deal with the outstanding \$2.3 million operating deficit that has resulted primarily from a 2018 transportation arbitration order imposed on Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO), the consortium that provides transportation services for the CDSBEO and the UCDSB.

Associate Director of Education, Bonnie Norton explained the Board’s strategy with regard to this matter.

“As you know, the transportation arbitration order had a significant impact on this Board, and the current deficit is a result of the retro payments made to bus operators over the last three years. The CDSBEO continues to dialogue with Ministry of Education staff to pursue additional government funding to offset these retroactive payments. We are very fortunate and grateful that we are going to receive some relief in 2019-2020 for the 2018-2019 transportation shortfall, however, we are not receiving any money for the back payments and the back deficits that have been incurred.”

Norton also noted that the Board continues to work closely with the UCDSB to dialogue with the Ministry for support in the matter. She also noted that Trustees continue to advocate to the Ministry for additional funding.

Management continues to review the 2019-2020 budget leading up to final budget approval. All expenditure areas will be carefully reviewed for efficiencies and to ensure excellence in Catholic program delivery for students across Eastern Ontario. The budget will be brought back to the Board on June 18, 2019, for final review and approval.