



St. Matthew Catholic Secondary School – Premier’s Award for Accepting Schools

In June 2018, St. Matthew Catholic Secondary School in Cornwall was one of ten schools from across the province to be awarded the Premier’s Award for Accepting Schools. The award recognizes school teams that have done exceptional and innovative work in creating a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment.

St. Matthew is a secondary school that has a focus on supporting students' academic and mental health needs. Students often have to break down barriers to their education at a young age and many struggle with anxiety and mental health issues. To meet the learning needs and ensure the academic success of their students, the school has adopted a strategy which outlines a unique learning profile. This approach is reinforced with various programs to help support the learning journey.

St. Matthew Principal Joy Martel, Vice-Principal Andrew Lovett, Student Support Worker Kim Blanchet, and student Tyler Luchuk presented information to the Board about the award, and the programs the school provides to students.

“This award embodies our vision to create a school environment that supports every student, not only for academics, but emotionally, spiritually, and socially,” noted Martel. “Through support from our community partners, we have created an environment that creates a safe and comfortable learning environment for every student regardless of their learning profile, economic background, or mental health needs. No student is left behind at St. Matthew.”

At the school, students are encouraged to take on leadership roles. These skills can then transfer to other areas of their life, with the goal of becoming caring, contributing and committed members of their community.

The One Caring Adult initiative at the school ensures that students are connected to a staff member who helps support the student by building close connections and making sure they feel supported. The staff member takes the time to review timetables, help to arrange community service hours for graduation, and by showing genuine concern for the student’s well-being academically and personally.

The CCC (Connected, Committed, Contributing) Project is another initiative which began four years ago to create an intensive support system for students in care. The program is enhanced by a partnership with CAS, and through a designated lead teacher, the support system works to build relationships between students and staff with a focus on goal setting, credit progress, and graduation success rates. The program also provides the opportunity to screen students for at-risk concerns and mental health needs, to ensure that immediate care and support is provided through community partners.



Passport to success is another program which helps to provide support for students in credit completion. During Credit Rescue Week, staff work with students to try and get all credits completed for the semester. This program has helped to recover 74 credits to date.

A testimony provided by a recent graduate from St. Matthew's noted, "We are very lucky to have had the opportunity to attend and graduate from St. Matthew. This small close-knit family made sure we would be successful. We were noticed here, we mattered here, and we know how important it was to the staff here that we did the best we could. We have been given the chance to realize our potential and expand our skills. The staff never judged us for what we said or did, but allowed us to become who we are – young people with a big wide future ahead of us. We are leaving here knowing that there is sometimes more to education than books and assignments. We leave here with valuable life lessons including tolerance, patience, and kindness towards others."

Tyler Luchuk, a student at St. Matthew, who has struggled with anxiety and depression, spoke to the Board about his experience.

"The first time I entered the school, I was welcomed by both teachers and students. The best way to describe St. Matthew is a home away from home. The people there have become my extended family, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to attend St. Matthew."

"Thank you Tyler for making this presentation tonight. We appreciate you sharing your story with us, it has been inspirational, and it is wonderful for us to hear how you have benefitted from this program," noted Vice-Chair Ron Eamer.

"Congratulations to the staff for their leadership, and the students for your successes," concluded Chair Todd Lalonde. "We are so proud of your accomplishments, and thrilled that you have been recognized with this prestigious provincial award. It truly speaks volumes to the caliber of education and programs offered at St. Matthew."

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning allows students to engage in activities outside of the classroom. These activities deepen their understanding of classroom curriculum, and every student benefits from active participation in authentic experiential learning activities that are age and developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and safe.

Elizabeth McCormick, Experiential Learning Lead, presented information to the Board about opportunities for students to learn beyond the classroom. Schools across the Board participated in experiential learning activities to enrich and enhance curriculum expectations, and to deepen student understanding.

"With the help of community partners and allocated funding, students took part in activities ranging from photography sessions at the Eco-museum, to genetic replication labs at the



River Institute, and habitat workshops at the Aquatarium. The focus of the opportunities is to move beyond the field trip to provide meaningful activities which can be enriching and transformational for students.”

In addition to science and technology, students have participated in outdoor and cultural activities such as environmental and habitat education, conservation, and Indigenous cultural experiences. The opportunities provide a means for students to use equipment and tools that would not be available in a regular school setting, and to participate in a varied and interactive learning adventure.

“These experiences allow students to connect their classroom lessons with the world outside the school, thus promoting deep learning and engagement,” noted McCormick. “Student retention is increased through experiences, so there is certainly significant value in offering experiential learning to students.”

“Thank you for joining us this evening to share the great educational opportunities being offered to CDSBEO students,” concluded Chair Todd Lalonde.

Financial Statements – September 1, 2017-August 31, 2018

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario has reviewed and approved the financial statements for the fiscal period of September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018. Ashley Hutchinson, Manager of Finance, presented the Financial Statements for the 2017-2018 school year, followed by Andrew Newman, partner with KPMG, who presented an unqualified Auditor’s Report to the Board of Trustees.

“As always, the Board strives to make the best use of its fiscal resources, to provide transparency and accountability with regard to the allocation of those resources, and to optimize resources in support of student achievement,” began Hutchinson.

“Most importantly our funding is driven by enrolment,” she continued, “and for the 2017-2018 school year we experienced a 0.4 per cent decrease in enrolment from 2016-2017.”

Revenue for the year was \$185.6 million, and expenses totalled \$187.7 million.

“At year end, we had an operating accumulated deficit of \$2.1 million. This is due to rising costs in student transportation resulting from an arbitration order imposed on transportation rates that will require retroactive payments to bus operators for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018,” noted Hutchinson.

This imposed arbitration order has resulted in the Board being non-compliant to its obligations concerning a balanced budget as outlined in the Education Act, for the 2017-2018 year. The Ministry of Education has been made aware of the Board’s exceptional circumstances



and resulting financial position from this arbitration order that was not in the Board's control. The Board has and continues to work diligently with the Ministry of Education regarding the imposed arbitration order and the significant under-funding now associated with student transportation.

Andrew Newman came forward to present the Auditor's Report.

"It's my pleasure to be here tonight to present the Auditor's Report. KPMG has completed the audit, and in our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of CDSBEO as at August 31, 2018. The results of the Board's operations, and changes in its financial position for the year, are in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles."

Newman continued, "It is important to note that the Board did not mismanage its funds in 2017-2018, but rather had a transportation arbitration order imposed on it in August 2018 that included significant transportation cost increases for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 fiscal years that have now been included in these financial statements. The Board would have incurred a surplus had this not happened, as is evidenced in the Statement of Operations before you this evening." Mr. Newman further commented, "You have an excellent finance team, under Associate Director Norton's leadership and we thank them for their cooperation and their work in completing the report."

Board Chair, Todd Lalonde, expressed his thanks on behalf of the Board. "Thanks, Mr. Newman, for coming this evening to provide the Auditor's Report and thanks also goes out to our Finance Department for all of the hard work that goes on throughout the year. I know the transportation arbitration order imposed on the Board was not in the Board's control and we are pleased to hear that the Ministry is committed to working together to find solutions that will ensure the sustainability of student transportation and education programs in our Board."

The 2017-2018 Financial Statements will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by the middle of November.