



## Adult & Continuing Education – Personal Support Worker Program

St. James Catholic Education Centre is working to increase growth mindset in students and adults through wellness programming, equity and inclusion, and improved pathway planning and credit accumulation. There are seven schools under the St. James Catholic Education Centre umbrella including, the CDSBEO eLearning program, continuing education night school, literacy/numeracy school, summer school and the PSW adult day school program.

Jennifer Lentz, Vice-Principal of St. James Catholic Education Centre, and Anita Plunkett, PSW Program Instructor, provided an overview of the Personal Support Worker Program to the Board of Trustees. Through the program, which has been offered since February 2009, graduates obtain a certificate of professional designation which is recognized across the province of Ontario by employers who manage personal care supports.

“These are unprecedented times we are living in right now,” began Vice-Principal Lentz. “There has never been another time that PSW’s are so needed, so valued, and so important to our Health care system. The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario is committed to educating and graduating the most skilled, job-ready, sought after PSW’s across our communities.”

Each year in Ontario, approximately 8,000 students graduate from a PSW program, and 2,000 of these obtain their certification through a district school board program. Currently, 20 school boards across the province offer the programs which are highly recognized, affordable, and the only training stream that can support learners to obtain their secondary school diploma.

“In 2014, the CDSBEO partnered with Beth Donovan Hospice in Kemptville and developed a palliative care training that is PSW focused and recognized by the Champlain Hospice Palliative Care Program,” noted Plunkett. “This is an additional training that allows PSWs to work in the community in palliative care.”

Graduates also obtain seven different certifications, some of which are offered through various training partnerships including Elder Abuse Ontario, Public Health Ontario (infection prevention and control training) and Living Works (suicide awareness training).

In its thirteenth year, the Board has graduated over 1,100 PSWs. This year, three program locations are being offered in Cornwall, Vankleek Hill (the largest program this year) and in Smiths Falls.

Lentz noted that some of the program components have been modified in their delivery as a result of the impacts of COVID-19.

“In the fall, the program delivery began through the Microsoft Teams virtual environment, with clinical and co-op placements at the same location, where possible. The provincial government



has implemented many initiatives to expand the ability to train PSWs, and students are working while in the program to gain their practical experience. This came with a lot of flexibility and creativity but supporting the student to be able to have that employment while completing the program was important and valuable.”

Individualized pathway planning continues to be a strength of the PSW Program. As adult students, this option gives learners the opportunity to gain secondary credits and obtain their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) through prior learning achievement recognition (PLAR). This semester, seven students are on track to receive their OSSD through PLAR.

Program enrolment has doubled this year, partly as a result of new partnerships that have been established with Hawkesbury Employment Agency, Cornwall Job Zone, and Work Matters in the Lanark community.

“I would like to offer you my compliments on developing an outstanding program that continues to grow,” concluded Chair Lalonde. “We have a very high graduation rate, which is truly a testament to the amazing work you are doing to support students in this program.”

## CDSBEO New Elementary Mathematics Curriculum Implementation Plan

The new elementary math curriculum teaches students fundamental math skills and connects them to real life, to prepare students for learning success. In June 2020, the Ministry of Education released the new digital platform for the elementary mathematics curriculum for grades 1-8. The new mathematics curriculum is part of a four-year math strategy which includes new curriculum content with a digital format, and embedded tools for educators.

Nancy McIntyre, Principal of Curriculum and Crystal Lake, Numeracy Consultant, provided an overview to Trustees about the implementation of the new math curriculum. Released in June for implementation in the fall the new curriculum provides rich context with clear expectations and teacher supports. It has been 15 years since the Ontario math curriculum had been updated.

“The new curriculum provides rich content and clear expectations, teacher supports as well as real-world examples to help develop cross-curricular connections along with a new focus on re-modelling, coding, financial literacy, infographics and STEM,” noted Principal McIntyre. “Our team continues to develop resources and professional learning to support our educators with these changes.”

Educators from Kindergarten through grade 8 have participated in a half-day of professional development to help them discover the changes, resources, and expectations around the new



curriculum. Teachers also had an opportunity to review and compare the 2005 expectations with the new 2020 expectations, to see what new content was added to the grade they teach.

"Feedback has been very positive, and primary teachers commented on the value of the Financial Literacy curriculum as well as the continuum format, which allows teachers to see learning expectations not only for the grade they are teaching, but also for the grade before, and the grade following," explained Lake.

EQAO data collection has demonstrated that students in grades 4 through 6 experience the most learning challenges in math. In response, the Board has developed a gap-closing resource for SERTS and junior math teachers which provides diagnostics that teachers can use to identify gaps in student understanding. Once identified, the binder provides lesson plans and activities to help build foundational understanding where needed.

The Curriculum Department has also developed a weekly resource for educators which includes engaging activities for student learning around the new Social Emotional Learning strand.

"There is strong evidence that developing social-emotional learning skills at school contributes to all students' overall health and well-being and to successful academic performance. It also supports positive mental health, as well as students' ability to learn, build resilience, and thrive," noted McIntyre.

Board curriculum consultants will continue to support educators with the development and delivery of the new curriculum content.