



Social-Emotional Learning in Mathematics

The implementation of a new strand in mathematics known as social emotional learning is helping CDSBEO students develop a positive relationship with mathematics. Social-emotional learning skills help students develop confidence, cope with challenges, and think critically. This learning reflects current research and the government's commitment to student well-being and skill-building.

Principal of Curriculum, Nancy McIntyre, and Curriculum Numeracy Consultant, Crystal Lake, provided an overview of how social-emotional learning is helping students to become more confident learners and thinkers. With the release of the 2020 new Mathematics Curriculum (grades 1 to 8), the Ministry of Education has embedded "Social Emotional Learning" as a new mathematics strand.

"In 2019, the Ministry released the new Health and Physical Education curriculum which included the strand of social-emotional learning. Then in the fall of 2020, it appeared in the new mathematics curriculum," began Principal McIntyre.

"It is clear that social emotional learning skills are necessary for student success."

Students develop social-emotional learning skills and use math processes (for example, problem solving and communicating) across the math curriculum. Through these skills students will learn to make connections between math and everyday life. The strand helps students to recognize and discuss mistakes and learn from them, as well as use strategies to be resourceful in working through challenging problems. Benefits to social-emotional learning include academic improvement, positive social behaviour, less emotional distress, and fewer problematic behaviours.

Since October, the CDSBEO Curriculum Team has been producing social-emotional learning lessons and tips each week to help educators navigate and integrate these skills into their mathematics program. In the first few months of social-emotional learning lessons, the team focused on maintaining positive motivation and perseverance. Each lesson focused on a variety of themes including goal setting, planning for barriers, building courage and the importance of making mistakes.

"In January, we made the shift from building confidence and positive motivation lessons, to managing and dealing with emotions," noted Curriculum Consultant Crystal Lake. "We started to focus on identifying our emotions and looked at a variety of strategies to help instill calm, when needed. These strategies include breathing strategies, taking a mindful minute, calming colouring, and connecting with nature."

The importance of developing self-awareness and a sense of identity are also a focus of social-emotional learning. Students are invited to reflect on texts, specifically the book "I Am Enough" by Grace Byers, which provide constructive affirmations for those who lack self-



esteem and self-acceptance. The lesson provides opportunities for students to reflect on themselves in a positive light and build their self-confidence.

"In the coming months, we will look at the last point in the social-emotional learning expectations, which focuses on building positive relationships and communicating effectively," concluded Lake. "In these lessons, students will reflect on communicating effectively and what positive problem-solving can look like. We will continue to create lessons involving engaging read-alouds, with a variety of reflective and responsive activities that align with the appropriate expectations."

"Thank you for joining us this evening to share the exceptional ideas that have been provided to support social-emotional learning in our classrooms. This is certainly an amazing way to help our students grow personally and academically," concluded Chair Lalonde.

Care for Our Common Home

The CDSBEO has recently responded to a call for best practices that went out to all schools across the province from OCSTA Director of Catholic Education, Anne O'Brien. The request asked school boards to share the ways we communicate, collaborate, and celebrate eco initiatives in schools. The responses provided are to be featured in a collective OCSTA document called Together in Faith: Care for Our Common Home.

Principal of Religious and Family Life Education, Paul Mantha and Curriculum Consultant Meghan Wood submitted a response that was so outstanding, the Board received a letter from OCSTA President Patrick Daly thanking our Board for our contributions to OCSTA'S collection of promising practices that will be presented at the upcoming OCSTA Annual General Meeting.

"The CDSBEO Department of Religious and Family Life Education is excited to highlight the diverse means by which schools collaborate, communicate, and celebrate environmental initiatives as we work together to demonstrate our resounding response to the call of our Holy Father to care for our common home," began Mantha in his presentation to the Board of Trustees.

"OCSTA intends to publish this compendium of effective practices on May 24, 2021, as a means of commemorating the anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, Laudato Si, published on the same day five years ago, May 24, 2015. Our presentation this evening will highlight many of the wonderful examples of student and staff commitment to the environment that were shared with OCSTA."

On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis signed the encyclical Laudato Si', which called upon not only Catholics all over the world, but the entire global community to recognize how every person is



profoundly connected and dependent on one another, as well as on the natural world in which we all live. He stated that a great cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge stands before humanity, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. Pope Francis urges that we “regain the conviction that we need one another, and that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world.”

“With respect to *Laudato Si*, the OCSTA asked for boards to share the way their schools build environmental awareness, strategies, projects, campaigns, and activities through three areas including collaboration and connection, communication and engagement, and celebration and proclamation,” explained Mantha.

While there are many ways in which CDSBEO schools demonstrates these three important characteristics of effective stewardship, the EcoSchools program has provided an avenue to allow school communities to showcase their commitment to the environment. Schools from the CDSBEO first began applying to become certified as Ontario EcoSchools in 2008. That year, four schools (St. Andrew’s, St. John Bosco, St. Mark, and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School) received silver certification. The program has since grown, and the Board now has a 100 per cent certification status in all 39 elementary and secondary schools.

“It is through our EcoSchools work that we demonstrate our dedication to the environment and through which I will now summarize how we collaborate and connect, communicate and engage, and celebrate and proclaim our call to care for our common home.”

Collaboration by members of school communities and the building of community connections through eco initiatives takes places in a number of ways across the Board. Through the EcoSchools program, freedom is given to create goals and action plans based on the school community. Five areas that allow us to collaborate and connect continue to be a driving force in school eco initiatives. These include special environmental days (Earth Day, World Water Day, and World Ocean’s Day), student leadership, energy monitoring, waste audits, and school ground greening projects.

“Many schools also engage in collaboration and connection through the development of home-school-community partnerships in specialized recycling programs including battery recycling, printer ink cartridge recycling, and marker and pen recycling,” added Mantha.

Many additional examples were provided of ways that students engage in learning and leadership opportunities through various environmental projects and initiatives including the planting of butterfly and pollinator gardens, community garbage pick-up and greening projects, supporting local food banks with food grown in school gardens, regular waste audits and waste free lunch initiatives, composting, tree planting, and environmental awards for students.

“In closing, the teachings of Pope Francis encourage all people to be stewards of the Earth while caring for those who are most effected by climate change. Our CDSBEO community,



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students, staff, schools, and board demonstrate ongoing collaboration and commitment to environmentally sustainable actions and practices, not only through our EcoSchools initiatives, but also out of love and faith in solidarity for our common home. We enjoy communicating our passion for environmental initiatives and deeply engaging all school communities in practices that help to ensure sustainable practices.”

“I am so extremely proud of our Board and the success that has been attained in environmental initiatives. We are extraordinary leaders in the province, and it is amazing to be recognized through OCSTA for all of our accomplishments. Congratulations to our schools, and thank you Mr. Mantha, for sharing our success this evening,” concluded Chair Lalonde.