

# Catholic School News

*Celebrating the Good News about Catholic Education*



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

January 2012

## Need for “courageous conversations” around education

Earlier this year, in a report to trustees, our curriculum team used the term “courageous conversations” to describe a school improvement strategy that focuses on open and honest discussion in addressing student achievement. As the board of trustees begins a new term of office, I propose that we, too, could benefit from such conversations at this time in our history.

I raise the need for a number of courageous conversations, not to in any way suggest I have the answers; I do so out of a conviction that there is a need for the Catholic community, particularly those in leadership positions, to come together at local and provincial levels and enter into discussions. I do so as well out of a sincere belief that this is a time of real opportunity for Catholic education. The real danger would be to be indifferent about the challenges that exist.

Challenges such as how will our Catholic schools continue to serve as light to our Church and world in a world that is constantly changing and often in ways that present obstacles to our mission? How will initiatives such as e- and virtual learning impact our Catholic classrooms? And, in light of the current reality, how do schools assist families in reconnecting with the Church? How do we help students connect their volunteer activities – their striving to do good – with their faith? How do we support teachers, staff and trustees in reinvigorating their own faith so that they can better help students discover Christ? These and other questions invite discussions that serve to promote and strengthen Catholic education into the future.

I am also convinced that conversations relating to structural changes in the way in which education is provided are urgently required. It is my hope that, building on the momentum of the Balanced Day discussions, we can talk about other potentially positive areas of change, such as the year round school year, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged schools. More than ever, we need to embrace courageous conversations about how we promote and realize equity in educational opportunity for all students. Although students and schools continue to excel both academically and in co-curricular activities, courageous conversations need to take place to address the obvious topics of closing the achievement gap and



**Patrick J. Daly**  
*Chairperson*

improving student achievement for all students, especially those in Equal Opportunity schools, as well as how to expand co-curricular opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Finally, we need to focus on governance and the significant number of regulations and restrictions in the education funding model which threaten to undermine the flexibility and autonomy required by Catholic school boards. There needs to be a balance between central and local control. Again, these are conversations we need to promote and participate in. Having said this, however, I am filled with hope when I think about the quality, strength in character and goodness of all of those who serve through our Catholic school system. I pray that, throughout this year, our conversations and decisions are sufficiently visionary and courageous to support parents, staff and parishes in ensuring the young people in our schools know that they are never alone: Jesus walks with them.

On behalf of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, I hope you had a happy and holy Christmas and experience a new year filled with much joy.

## Distinguished service recognized at all levels



The **Awards for Distinguished Service** recognized not only great leaders and visionaries in Catholic education but the school secretaries and office support staff who work quietly behind the scenes to make things happen. *More on page 2.*

## Diocesan celebration unites school boards in service of God

Six hundred partners in Catholic education came together “as God’s servants working together” at a Hamilton Diocesan Celebration hosted by the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School board on September 29th.

The annual celebration was initiated in 2008 in Waterloo to bring representatives from the seven Catholic school boards in Hamilton Diocese together “to give thanks for the wonderful gift of publicly

funded education,” said **HWCDNB Chairperson Patrick J. Daly**.

“The gathering is an opportunity for Catholic educators and staff to remember the tremendous leadership and sacrifice of those who built the strong foundation we have all benefited from and to fully reflect on the tremendous responsibility all of us have to work together to ensure the gift we have inherited is never taken for granted.”

The theme for this year’s 4th annual Hamilton Diocesan Celebration for Catholic Education was *God’s Servants Working Together*— words taken from St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians where he urges a fragmented group of Christians to be united in the service of God. It calls all those “who serve in the vineyard of Catholic education throughout our diocese to come together in a spirit of unity and fellowship,” said Daly.

The Mass was preceded by a keynote address in which **Vicar for Education Rev. Cornelius O’Mahony** described Catholic schools as “signs of vitality in our parishes and dioceses.”

The changing circumstances of people’s lives are having a major impact on the experience of Catholic education and parish life, he suggested. In this culture of change, the Catholic school becomes the place where parents are reconnecting with the church and with a religious and spiritual life.

“By working together,” he said, “the school and parish will discover creative doorways through which contemporary Canadians will enter.”



## Distinguished service to Catholic education recognized at all levels

This year’s Awards for Distinguished Service to Catholic Education were presented, in the group category, to the **school secretaries and office support staff** of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, past and present, and to three remarkable individuals – **Dr. Nicholas Mancini, Allan Calvert** and **Marcel Castura** – for outstanding service to Catholic education.

Through their service and witness, “they have inspired others to lead better lives,” said **Bishop Douglas Crosby** at a liturgy and recognition ceremony on November 22nd.

Presenting the award to **Jan Hume** on behalf of C.U.P.E. and **Fausto Ciarrocchi** on behalf of P.A.S.S., **Trustee Mary Nardini** thanked the school secretaries and office support staff for serving as “front line” ambassadors and “behind the scenes” representatives of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

Individual awards were presented to Dr. Nicholas Mancini, a long-serving trustee who played a critical role in the movement toward full Catholic school funding; former Director of Education Marcel Castura, a visionary leader who steered the board through a difficult time of curriculum and funding reform, upgraded school facilities and build new and better schools, raised student achievement and levelled the playing field for socio-economically disadvantaged students and schools; and Allan Calvert who, as Executive Assistant to the Director of Education, was instrumental in shaping the board’s strategic direction, and later, as Special Projects Coordinator, oversaw the board’s many special projects and events.

“Each of these remarkable individuals as well as the school

secretaries and office support staff have served Catholic education in immeasurable ways,” said **Chairperson Patrick J. Daly**. “This awards ceremony is an opportunity for us, as a Catholic community, to acknowledge their significant achievements and thank them for their dedication and commitment to our Catholic school system.”



*The school secretaries and office support staff of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board – past and present – were recognized in the group category. “They are the people who keep the system’s engine running smoothly,” said presenter Mary Nardini. “They are, in a very real sense, the heart of the system.” From left: Jan Hume; Mary Nardini; and Fausto Ciarrocchi.*

## Thousands of students walk in solidarity with world's poor

Thousands of students gathered at Cathedral High School on the morning of October 23rd to take part in the annual "Walk with Christ: Justice for the Poor" fundraiser pilgrimage, a system-wide service project organized by the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board to help charities overseas.

"Looking out, I see each of you as pilgrims on a journey, a journey that will provide hope and inspiration; a journey that I know will be transformational for you as well as for our Catholic community," championed **Director of Education Patricia Amos**.

Over the past eight years, the board has raised more than \$500,000 for development projects in Haiti, Uganda and the Dominican Republic to improve conditions for people living in poverty. The 8-kilometre walk is what most children in Third World countries walk



every day just to fetch clean drinking water for their families.

"We try to make a difference by becoming more aware and by walking the extra kilometre to raise funds for development in the Global South," said **Dr. Paul Beaudette, Program Leader for Religion and Family Life**.

"It's about bringing light into a world where light is often darkened," added **Chairperson Patrick J. Daly**.

This year's pilgrimage raised \$46,000 – funds which will be allocated to ADESJO (Association for the Development of San José de Ocoa) in the Dominican Republic for the construction of schools, roads, home and irrigation systems; St. Gabriel's Parish in Beau Séjour, Haiti, which was destroyed in the January 2010 earthquake; the Catholic Dioceses of Southwestern Uganda for construction of new schools and the purchase of school supplies; and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace's Somalian famine relief project.

The event not only seeks to raise funds for these different projects, but to raise students' awareness of social justice issues, such as world hunger, and inadequate health care, shelter and education.

"It's really a moment in our life as a board where we say 'It's not just about us,'" said Beaudette. "We can't be true believers, we can't be disciples if we don't keep in mind that Jesus' eyes were continually on the poor, on those who were executed and marginalized, on those who weren't able to take care of their immediate needs in emergencies, or on those who weren't able to provide for themselves the basic necessities of life."

"If we gain that faith conviction, then we will have served our students well."

## Secondary diversity conference stresses unity

The students were grouped in different size configurations around the room to simulate a global village.

"This is the way it is," Linda Carrocci told the students. "This gives you an idea of the disparity that exists in our world."

It's a world in which one-fifth of the population has access to four-fifths of its resources, she added.

The session, called "Global Village and Simulation Game" was one of many sessions tackled at this year's Secondary Diversity Conference at Mount Mary Retreat Centre in Ancaster on December 5-6. The conference, led by **Christian Service Animators Linda Carrocci and Antoinette Krusto**, was designed to break down barriers between students and schools.

"We aim to do three things through this retreat experience," said **Dr. Paul Beaudette, Program Leader for Religion and Family Life**: "to support students in their work at their schools; to give them tools for leadership; and to help them work on their action plans for the upcoming year."

The simulation exercise is a good starting point, stressed Carrocci, noting that it provides students with perspective. "This is what our global village looks like."

What it will look in the future is anyone's guess, added Krusto. "The future is up to you to create. There are many things you can do

to change the world if you think globally and act globally."

Other activities stressed the importance of teamwork, problem solving and communication.

"What these activities teach us is that when we all come together, we get more done," said Krusto. That's the strength of Catholic education, she suggested.

"Unity."



## Unprecedented says Daly after two schools capture OFSAA gold

For two teams from the same city and same school board to win OFSAA gold medals in the same championship is not only remarkable but unprecedented, said **Chairperson Patrick J. Daly**.

On November 27th, the **St. Thomas More Senior Girls' Basketball Team** captured the OFSAA Quad A title in Windsor after defeating Brantford's St. John's College, 48-31. More than 600 miles away in Kingston, Ontario, the **St. Mary Senior Girls** ousted A.N. Myers, 49-30 for the Triple A gold medal.

"It clearly speaks to the high calibre of our student-athletes and coaches," said Daly.



Photo by Randy Smith (www.randysphotos.ca)

This is the Lady Knights first gold since 2004. St. Mary, which won the Quad A title in 2010, has acquired more than a dozen medals in the past 14 years. It's part of a tradition that harkens back more than a 150 years, said **St. Mary coach Rich Wesolowski**. "Clubs and high school teams are expected to win championships."

This commitment to excellence is the hallmark of Catholic schools, added Daly. "The unprecedented OFSAA gold medals by St. Thomas More and St. Mary senior girls' basketball teams are but the latest examples of the quality and success of our co-curricular programs."



Photo by Marie McRae

## Weaving the Catholic partnership



Coping with childhood anxiety, teen self-esteem, cyber bullying and sibling conflict ... these were just a few of the workshops offered at this year's 19th Annual Parent Conference on October 29th. The Parent Conference is an opportunity for parents and educators to share new ideas and explore new trends in child development and education, said **Parent Conference Co-chair Sue Verrelli**. More importantly, she added, the conference is an opportunity for parents to gather as a faith community in a Eucharistic celebration that connects the three tiers of the home-school-parish partnership.

"This parent conference is an occasion for us to learn about ourselves and to confirm our shared role in preparing our children for the future," said **Bishop Douglas Crosby**.

## Count yourself in!

Every time you move to a new home, you must re-designate your school support, otherwise the education portion of your property taxes will automatically default to the public school system. And that may impact your right to vote for Catholic trustee representation in municipal elections. For more information, please call 905 525-2930, ext. 2188.

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