

Report to **Catholic School Councils & Parents**



Hamilton-Wentworth
Catholic District School Board
Believing, Achieving, Serving

March 2010

Trustees reconsider mandatory system-wide elementary uniform embroidered crests for September 2010

Since their implementation in September 2004, mandatory school uniforms have been well received and strongly supported by the Catholic school communities of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. In the past year, the board has considered ways to strengthen the policy and promote school identity while remaining sensitive to socio-economic and other factors. **Recognizing that effective communication at the local school level has been an important factor in the broad support and success of the mandatory elementary policy, trustees, at the March 2nd meeting of the board, resolved that a system-wide policy requiring all schools to have mandatory embroidered crests by September 2010 be rescinded.** The board will enter into a consultation process with principals, teachers, Catholic School Councils and parents before bringing an interim report back to trustees in January 2011.

Progressive disciplining strategies result in fewer suspensions and expulsions

Trustees, at the February 16th Religion, Family Life and Instructional Services Committee meeting, approved a Suspension, Expulsion and Violent Incident Report for the school year 2008-2009, which indicated the following:

- the total number of suspensions (2200) represented a 19.2% decrease from the 2007-2008 academic year;
- 7358 instructional days were lost due to suspensions, which represents a 19.9% decrease from the previous year;
- the average length of suspensions was 3.34 days, which is consistent with suspensions over the previous 19 years;
- 1145 suspensions were for Conduct Injurious to the Moral Tone of the School/Mental Well Being of Others. This represents the most suspensions for a particular category of incidents and is a decrease of 59 from the previous year;
- 110 students received 10-19 day suspensions in 2008-2009 compared to 134 in 2007-2008;
- 54 students received 20 day suspensions in 2008-2009 compared to 70 in 2007-2008;
- 7 exclusions were administered compared to 5 in 2007-2008;
- 718 suspensions were administered to 378 exceptional students, representing an increase of 1.5% from 2007-2008;
- 11 expulsions were administered, up from 10 in 2007-2008;
- 12 violent incidents occurred, representing a decrease of 2 from the previous year.

Since September 2009, 36 students with 10-20 day suspensions have participated in PASS (Program to Assist Student Success), a program which allows students to continue their education in an alternate school setting and experience a positive re-entry back to their home schools. The decrease in the number of suspensions and expulsions reflects the implementation of progressive disciplining strategies (resulting from implementation of Bill 212) that are being conscientiously employed by school staffs at the elementary and secondary levels. The philosophy and strategies of the Tribes Program and Restorative Justice Practices initiated in several schools have also begun to positively impact on teachers' approaches, students' responses and the learning/teaching environment.

Staff and students respond generously to humanitarian crisis in Haiti

A recent system-wide fundraiser called "Coins from Caring Kids" raised more than \$145,000 for St. Joseph's Home for Boys in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which was destroyed in the January 12th earthquake. The orphanage, founded by Michael Geilenfeld, a former Missionary of Charity Brother, has provided refuge for hundreds of abandoned children over the years. "This outpouring of support is indicative of the goodness of the staff, students and people in our schools and administrative centres," says **Chairperson Patrick J. Daly**. The funds will be matched dollar for dollar by the Canadian government for other Haitian relief efforts.

Assistive technology improves learning outcomes for students with exceptionalities

A February 16th report to trustees on the use of Assistive Technology by students with special education needs showed improvement in academic assessment results, provincial assessments and students' self-confidence. In September 2009, the board opened an Assistive Technology Learning Centre at St. Ann Catholic Elementary School in Hamilton for junior division students identified with a learning disability. The program runs for 4-6 weeks during which time students study the regular Ontario curriculum with special accommodations in the form of laptop computers and software. The board also continues to offer GLE (General Learning Essentials) classes at all of its secondary schools, which focus on helping students with special education needs access the secondary curriculum by learning to use appropriate assistive technology hardware and software. Professional opportunities on the use of Assistive Technology continue to be provided to teachers. An Assistive Technology video is available for viewing on the board website at <http://www.hwcdsb.ca/programs/studentsservices/>.

Specialist High Skills Major program expands into three new sectors

The Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) is a Ministry approved program that allows students to focus on knowledge and skills that are of particular importance in a specific sector. Students who graduate with a SHSM designation on their diploma are prepared for success in the postsecondary destination of their choice. Since the program was introduced in 2006, participation in the program has grown from 177 to 670 students. Currently 14 SHSM programs are offered in five sectors: Arts and Culture; Business; Construction; Health and Wellness; and Hospitality and Tourism. New sectors will be introduced in September 2010 in Transportation, Community/Development/Public Service, and Energy. These sectors were selected on the basis of student interest, postsecondary and industry partnerships, availability of experiential learning and coop, sector demand for and supply of labour, and postsecondary course availability. The impact of the SHSM is helping to change school culture towards a more coherent and integrated curriculum and course selection process in an interdisciplinary environment.

Trustees also approved the following reports of February 16th and March 2nd:

- HWCDSB has developed a new policy that prohibits employees from using hand held devices while operating a vehicle while on board business. The **Hand Held Devices Policy** aligns with Bill 118, *The Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2009*, which became law on October 26, 2009.
- In order to improve the effectiveness of the **Community Use of Schools** program, HWCDSB has purchased specialty software that will enable community groups to search the availability of schools using an online permitting system. The system will be in place and operational for September 1, 2010.
- Three secondary students and 2-3 adult youth ministers from the board will be attending a summer retreat program at the University of Notre Dame this summer. The program, called **Notre Dame Vision** is a series of 5-day conferences that enable participants to develop their Catholic leadership skills. A selection process is being developed to identify candidates for this summer.

Calendar

March 23, 6:00 p.m. – Religion, Family Life and Instructional Services Committee

April 6, 6:00 p.m. – Committee of the Whole

April 6, Immediately following Committee of the Whole – Board

* Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at the Catholic Education Centre, 90 Mulberry Street.

Board of Trustees

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