

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

INITIAL ADDRESS

by

PATRICK J. DALY  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

Initial Meeting of the Board  
Tuesday, December 6, 2016

*“Jesus sent the apostles out to proclaim the Kingdom of God – an announcement that God is bursting into the world in the person of Jesus Christ.”*

Your Excellency Bishop Crosby, Fellow Trustees, Mr. Hansen, Special Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

These words from a book of daily reflections by Kathryn J. Hermes, FSP, have been at the centre of the 160 plus year history of publicly funded Catholic school education in Hamilton-Wentworth. In union with our Bishop and in solidarity with Parishes and parents, the leadership, teachers and other staff in our schools have faithfully lived this central purpose.

Throughout numerous educational reforms, our predecessors (locally elected Catholic Trustees) have collectively (Board) adapted strategies, programs and resources so as to support our school communities in boldly proclaiming that God has indeed “burst into the world in the person of Jesus Christ.”

The pace, scope and, in some cases, intrusiveness of educational reform has increased in recent decades. On each occasion Catholic School Boards have shaped and implemented these many changes so as to protect and strengthen our unique identity.

A recent initiative of the Provincial Government with regard to “Well-Being” – while not without some degree of

challenge – is a wonderful opportunity for our system (Board) to communicate that which makes Catholic Schools distinct.

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association has articulated its support for the thrust of this initiative while reminding our Government of the right and responsibility of Catholic School Boards to articulate a Catholic vision of “Well-Being.”

I suggest a commitment to student “well-being” in our community has been clearly defined and communicated as:

*“In union with our Bishop the mission of Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth is to enable all learners to realize their fullness of humanity of which Jesus Christ is the model: From our Catholic vision Fullness of Humanity (different than full*

*potential) gives life to 'well-being'.*”

I further suggest that at this, the mid-way point of our term of office, we consider student “well-being” through a distinctively Catholic lens. I do so appreciating that the realization of our mission (to enable all learners to realize their fullness of humanity of which Jesus Christ is the model) today takes place within the context of at least 3 realities:

- (i) while the “what” of our mission remains constant the “How to” although not without some challenge promises much hope;
- (ii) as Bob Dylan wrote/sang a number of years ago, “the times are a changing,” (calls for the openness of new/creative strategies and initiatives); and

(iii) the “How” flows from our commitment to the Education of the Whole Child – Body, mind and spirit (soul).

## BODY

Catholic Education and our School System have always placed priority on the physical “well-being” of students. As a result of a number of societal factors we have recognized the need and been supportive of (new) ways to promote active and healthy living. Throughout our three-year Physical Literacy Plan we have seen the introduction of a number of new and additional initiatives including:

- The Professional Development of Primary Preparation and Planning (PPT) teachers as well as Junior level teachers.

- The training of older aged students to lead younger children in active recess.
  
- The painting of games in playgrounds to encourage young people to be more engaged in physical activity.
  
- Recognizing the importance of Physical Literacy we have supported the tremendous work of our teachers and other staff through a number of community partnerships:
  - participation in the 20/20 Run For Change which includes 20 weeks of training;
  - YMCA provides support for activities at some of our schools before, during and after the School day;
  - and;

- Rising Stars engages students at our Equal Opportunities Schools in a number of sports and other physical activities.

As a result of the goodness and generosity of our teacher and other volunteer coaches we have outstanding co-curricular athletic programs. At the elementary level in partnership with the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), the Crusader Athletic Program provides thousands and thousands of students with the opportunity to participate in fun and competitive sports. At the secondary level we have Varsity Programs second to none in the Province.

Recognizing the unique opportunity coaches have, many of our teacher and other staff volunteers have placed renewed



priority on their personal Christian Witness through their participation in our “Catholic Coaching Program.” Just this past Friday almost one hundred teachers participated in a faith focused “Play Like a Champion” Professional Development Day. For their sacrifice and generosity of time and self, we thank all of our teacher and other volunteer coaches for the significant difference they make in the lives of our students and school communities.

The urgency with regard to physical and healthy living (among young people) challenges us to look for new ways to better engage our students. I would like to suggest two areas that I believe have much promise:

- (i) more involvement and education of parents with regard to the important role they play with regard to the promotion of physical activity of their children; and
  
- (ii) more opportunity for intra-mural athletic programs for our students. In this way those students (majority) who are unable to play at the varsity level would be more active and involved in sports.

### MIND

Academic excellence is one of the pillars upon which Catholic Education has been built. As a result of the tremendous work of our teachers and other staff, our students (schools) continue to realize high levels of achievement. We have much to be grateful for and proud of.

Saying that, the rapidly changing world we and particularly young people live in challenges us to ensure we provide students with the programs and support they require to live fruitful and successful lives. In this regard we are very fortunate to have the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations as a guide which defines the skills and gifts young people need in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. While never neglecting the “Basics” we need to provide students with programs that will assist them as they move on to post-secondary, apprenticeship or work.

We have and need to continue to provide significant investments in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). Our schools have introduced a number of programs which support the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (competencies) including: Computer Coding,

Robotics, Advanced Placement Mathematics, Mobile Digital technologies, and digital classrooms to name only a few. As we did recently with the establishment of an appropriated surplus to support technology we need to re-double our efforts to enhance these valuable programs/initiatives.

We have much to be proud of with regard to the teaching of the Arts. Our students receive high-level programs in the Arts during the school day and an ever increasing wide range of co-curricular activities in the Arts. To name only a few, our students learn a great deal and enjoy the Déjà vu Theatre, Junior Feeder School Choirs, Super Bands, Vocal Fest, Improvaganza and 7-5-1 Visual Arts Display. On behalf of the Board I thank all those teachers and other volunteers who give of themselves (and their talent) to provide students with these exciting

opportunities. As we have in recent years we need to continue to support additional funds for instrumental music and other elementary and secondary school Art programs.

The “announcement that God is bursting into the world in the Person of Jesus Christ” is of course intended for all. Saying that, we (and our Church) have a special responsibility to share and witness this good news with the disadvantaged and the hurting. This challenges and requires us to provide equity for all students. This as we know dictates that some students and school communities receive more than others so as to ensure equality in opportunity.

For a number of reasons programs like Wilma’s Place, St. Martin Manor, St. Charles Adult Education, Notre Dame

House, SOAR, Reading Recovery, Mental Health to name only some are more important than ever. We commend and thank our staff who serve in these very special ministries.

Similar to those who have previously held leadership in Catholic Education we are called (required) to give priority to these programs and in a particular way to the students in our Equal Opportunity School communities. This requires us (with much joy) to approve a budget process and the allocation of resources through-out the year which recognizes the unique needs of students and school communities impacted by socio-economic disadvantage.

As a Catholic school system, we recently recognized the significant contribution of former senior superintendent Mr.

James Hansen. The naming of the Auditorium/Meeting Room in his name was an expression of our deep appreciation to him but as well a wonderful opportunity to renew our unwavering commitment to our philosophy of Each Belongs. As part of that commitment we call upon the Provincial Government to increase and adequately fund Special Education.

### SPIRIT/SOUL

In his book “Charism and Culture,” Timothy J. Cook writes:

*“A Catholic School is a school first; however a Catholic School’s mission is not separate from its religious mission. What and how schools teach is what distinguishes them as Catholic.”*

Support of the “well-being” or formation of the Catholic Christian Spirit of a young person is at the heart of our School System. Given the reality of many families today, our schools have an ever increasing responsibility with regard to the faith formation of our students. This challenges us to explore new initiatives and to strengthen partnerships, particularly with parents and parishes.

The on-going roll-out of the new Elementary Religious Education Textbook/Learning materials and very recent release of the Secondary Religious Education Curriculum Policy Document (By the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario) are occasions filled with much hope. While updating the content of our Religious Education curriculum teachers are



invited to explore their own faith journey as they introduce the new material to their students.

I suggest that as well this is an opportunity for us to better engage parents with regard to the understanding of their role as the primary teachers of our faith. It challenges us to work with Catholic School Councils in the development of programs to support and assist parents in fulfilling this fundamental responsibility.

We as well are encouraged to offer every support possible to our Christian Service Programs (D.R.E.A.M.S., Notre Dame Vision, and Haiti). At this time each year I am reminded of Father Kennedy's commitment to the importance of providing

a component of authentic reflection as a part of their Christian Service Prayer.

Father Henri Nouwen wrote: “Through prayer the Christ within us opens our eyes to the Christ Among Us.” The importance of communal and individual prayer life in the context of Catholic Education cannot be overstated. I encourage every opportunity for students to pray, including more opportunity for student retreats.

The commitment to “well-being” (Realization of Fullness of Humanity) of course extends beyond students. It is incumbent upon us to continue to support and expand programs and services which promote the well-being of our staff. On behalf of the Board I thank Kelly Lazure-Valconi (EAP) and

Meg Petkoff (Respectful Work Place Officer) for the significant difference they make in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

In light of the ever increasing need I suggest a review of the alignment of our already strong adult faith formation, leadership development and well-being programs could prove beneficial to our staff and ultimately our students.

Related to both the “well-being” of our staff and success of our programs is the way in which we encourage the “creative energy of individuals within the organization.” I would like to suggest three examples where the vision and commitment of individuals (school communities) have made a significant positive difference to our students.

- (i) Sr. Ann Marshall (L. Thompson) – Introduction of Christian Meditation (as prayer) to the students at St. Brigid and now throughout our school system.
- (ii) Mrs. Lucy Hunt – Her tireless work and commitment to Stewardship of Creation has been a tremendous example to the students at St. Marguerite d’Youville and now all of our schools (witnessed by the EcoSchools certification of all schools).
- (iii) The De Mazenod Door at St. Patrick School which began through the vision of two wonderful priests and now, in partnership with the school, has brought hope to many in our community.

These remarkable examples highlight the importance of empowering and supporting individuals at the local level.

The realization of our mission is of course impacted in part by the financial “well-being” of our organization. We have benefitted tremendously from the wise counsel of our Senior Superintendent of Business Paola Pace-Gubekjian. Good stewardship, effective use of resources and sound planning will be needed, particularly during a period of financial restraint.

As I indicated last year strong relationships are crucial within the context of Catholic Education.

In this regard I would like to:

### BISHOPS

Thank the teacher of our faith in the Diocese who provides such wonderful example to all of us. We appreciate

the support and presence of Bishop Crosby. (Note: Trustee retreat)

### PARENTS & CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCILS

I want to thank the members of Catholic School Councils and CPIC for their leadership at the school and system levels. Throughout this address I have challenged us on a number of occasions to explore new ways to engage parents. I do so for the good of their children and Catholic Education.

### PARISHES

We want to thank Pastors and parish communities and assure them of our commitment to the very special relationship our schools share with you.

## EMPLOYEE GROUPS

I want to assure all of the Board employee groups of our continued commitment to work (serve) with you in a spirit of co-operation and harmony.

In closing we have much to celebrate. In the next few weeks we will begin the construction of a new Our Lady of the Assumption School as well as a new Child Care Centre at St. Gabriel's and an addition at St. Jean de Brebeuf Catholic Secondary School. As well with much appreciation we received the good news of the allocation of the necessary funds to construct another elementary school in Binbrook.

We most especially celebrate and take great pride in the outstanding achievement and goodness of our students.

In a special way we are grateful for the dedicated service and commitment to the Ministry of Catholic education from Staff throughout our School System. On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to thank:

- Principals, vice-principals, senior managers and managers for their leadership and important service.
- Teachers, chaplaincy leaders, custodians, assistant custodians, maintenance staff, educational assistants, clerical staff, early childhood educators, professional support staff and all school support staff for their Christian witness and dedicated service.



- I want to recognize and thank our administration support staff (Planning, Printing, Payroll, Purchasing, Accounts, Finance, Plant, Human Resources, Information Technology, etc.) for their important service.
  
- The quality and commitment of the senior leadership in our Board is indeed unique. We and the students in our schools benefit tremendously from their good example and leadership.
  - Assistant Superintendents: Sandra Scime, Greg Tabone and Julie Angiolillo.
  
  - Superintendents of Education: Corrado Ciapanna, Ivana Fortino, Toni Kovach, Morris Hucal and Sandie Pizzuti.

- Our outstanding and faith-filled business leaders:  
Paola Pace-Gubekjian and Jim LoPresti work tirelessly to ensure good stewardship of financial resources as well as the well-being of our staff. They are a blessing to our board and school communities.
  
- I want to recognize our tremendous Director of Education, Dave Hansen. A truly Catholic Christian gentleman with the necessary vision to lead our School System.
  
- On the Board's behalf and personally, I would like to thank those who serve us and the system so well in the Director's office: Sandra Giacinti, Emilia Rastelli, Stephanie Santi, Anne Paquette and Marnie Jadon.

I would like to express my personal support to:

- You, my fellow Trustees, for your continued confidence and support.
- Jerry Creedon for his goodness and kind and caring spirit.
- Lorena Madalena for her tremendous assistance and support (appreciate my added responsibilities at OCSTA have increased her already heavy workload).
- Want to thank my four wonderful children: Mike, Kyle, Colleen and Monica for their understanding and keeping me grounded (serenity).

- Although I know completely inadequately, I want to express appreciation to Carol for her love, constant support, loyalty and example.

In today's reflection in the *Season of Praise Advent Prayer Book*, the author in part writes, "Praise unleashes Joy. What we praise we appreciate. What we appreciate we celebrate. What we celebrate we proclaim." My prayer is that our deliberations throughout this year serve to inspire our school communities to continue to boldly announce/proclaim "that God has indeed burst into the world in the person of Jesus Christ."

Thank you.