

Good News Release

RCCDSB Secondary Schools Ignite Student Spirit Through Inclusive Athletics, Faith, and Community Outreach

February 27rd, 2026

It has been a busy month for student engagement at RCCDSB Secondary Schools, as both schools roll out a series of initiatives focused on inclusivity, academic support, and spiritual growth.

St. Joseph's High School, Renfrew

Highlighting the month's athletic calendar for St. Joseph's High School, Grade 7 and 8 students will be heading to the court for a specialized sitting volleyball tournament. The event will feature an appearance by Paralympian Jolan Wong, who will provide students with a firsthand look at adaptive sports and the importance of resilience in high-level competition.

At St. Joseph's High School, Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. McDonald have helped students organize a chess club during lunch hours. Students engage in a friendly competition, and the school will soon be hosting their second Chess Tournament. The club includes students from grades 7-12 and has a great group of nearly 40 students.

The spirit of community extends into the heart of the school's mission. St. Joseph's students hosted the Kindness Café, a student-led initiative that fosters a welcoming atmosphere for all. Students and staff always look forward to the Kindness Cafe days.

St. Joseph's High School has been planning Parent Evenings and dedicated sessions for Grade 7 and 8 students from local feeder schools, ensuring a seamless transition for the next generation of RCCDSB graduates. Their upcoming orientation night is Thursday, February 26th, with special school tours, information sessions, and more.

Academic excellence remains a top priority through the newly established JAG Study Den. Organized by the Student Council, this after-school program provided students with the space, time, and peer support necessary to excel during exam time.

On the spiritual front, Father Bill has been leading "Teaching Masses" across several grade levels, including Grade 7, 8, and senior Religion classes. These interactive sessions break down the parts of the Mass, offering students a deeper understanding of the liturgy and its significance in their daily lives. This coincides with active Chaplaincy news, as Grade 12 students begin their graduation preparations. Students have also been deepening their faith through Adoration sessions in their religion classes.

Additionally, St. Joseph's was excited to launch round two of the Alpha Program for their Grade 8 and Grade 12 students in Semester Two. This program aims to introduce students to the Catholic faith and answer big questions in a warm and welcoming environment.



Chess Club at St. Joseph's



Mrs. Dickerson at the Kindness Café



Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke

At Bishop Smith, students recently returned from the Dominican Republic Experience (DRE) in Yamasá. Upon arrival, they received warm greetings from Sister Noelia and Sister Mercedes! After arriving at the Sor Maria Clinic in Yamasá, the team spent time unpacking our donations and enjoyed a wonderful introduction to the Grey Sisters serving here in the Dominican Republic. Principal Starlin Morel of Fray Pedro de Córdoba Elementary School shared his deep gratitude for the team's visit and the school supplies they provided. He highlighted the enduring bond between Canadians and the Grey Sisters, noting that the very foundation of education in Yamasá began through these long-standing international connections.

To support families in need, the DRE team put together 16 essential care kits containing bedsheets, soap, and towels and spent the afternoon at Batey El Cano delivering these supplies directly to the community.

From the kitchens of the Margueritte Center to the artisan workshops of Yamasá, these experiences offer a deep dive into the heart of Dominican heritage. Under the expert guidance of continuing education teacher Gisele Acosta, students master the intricate art of crafting authentic chicken pastelitos from scratch, honouring the flavours of traditional pastry-making. The journey into the island's roots continued at the Guillen Brothers' workshop, where master artisans and agriculturalists like Ramón Guillén bridge the gap between history and craft. Here, visitors move from the delicate finishing touches of Taino-inspired pottery to the rich aromas of the farm, witnessing the transformation of cocoa beans from the roasting tray to hand-ground artisanal chocolate. While these are just a few of the Dominican Republic Experience highlights, more will be shared through RCCDSB social media pages over the next month.

February has been a busy time at Bishop Smith Catholic High School. With the beginning of the new semester and new term comes new opportunities for everyone. Many of the senior students are embarking on co-op experiences this semester, including a number of students who are enrolled in military co-operative education placements, taking some students as far away as North Bay. Students are currently selecting courses, with Guidance assisting them in exploring options for their future pathways. Bishop is also getting ready to welcome their newest Bears! In the coming weeks, students from feeder schools will be visiting as they prepare to join the community for the 2026-2027 school year.

The Bishop Smith annual pancake breakfast took place on Shrove Tuesday. Each year, the administration team prepares pancakes for the Bishop Smith school community, and this event is one which is enjoyed by all.

To mark the beginning of Lent, staff and students participated in Ash Wednesday classroom services, which offered a time of reflection and prayer. Students and staff had the opportunity to receive ashes as part of the prayer service, and it was good to witness the reverence with which ashes were received by our students.

Bishop Smith Bears are having a successful month in sports and extracurriculars, with basketball, volleyball, curling, and Nordic skiing teams advancing to county, Eastern Ontario, and Ontario playoffs and championships. Earlier this month, the school welcomed teams from across Renfrew County for our board-wide Destination Imagination competition, and it was exciting to see so many schools represented at Bishop Smith.

Grades 7 and 8 classes have had an exciting month, with presentations on the skilled trades from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. A very successful Winterfest Day was held, with some students travelling to Alice and Fraser for skating, hockey, snowshoeing, and other outdoor fun, and some students travelling to Mount Pakenham for a day of skiing. Next up for the Grade 8s is the course selection process as they prepare for the transition to high school.

This is an exciting time for students at RCCDSB Secondary, and the schools look forward to what the rest of the year will bring.



Warm Greetings from Sister Noelia and Sister Mercedes



Principal Starlin Morel of Fray Pedro de Córdoba Elementary School shared his deep gratitude for their visit and the school supplies provided.



DRE Team dropping off essentials



At the Guillen Brothers in Yamasá, Claire Noble is putting the finishing touches on pottery inspired by traditional Taíno culture.



In Yamasá, the Guillen brothers are celebrated as both master artisans and agriculturalists, renowned for their Taíno-inspired pottery and artisanal chocolate. We were fortunate to join Ramón Guillén, who walked us through the entire process—from roasting the cocoa beans to grinding them into chocolate.



Max tried his hand at crafting authentic chicken pastelitos from scratch.



Bishop Smith Volleyball County Champions