



**May Good News Release
May 30th, 2023**

Students in Renfrew and Westmeath celebrate Catholic Education Week as a school community

The month of May has been exciting for RCCDSB's Renfrew and Westmeath schools, as the warmer weather brings more fun learning activities to the classroom!

As a part of Our Lady of Grace's School Improvement and Equity Plan, teachers have been engaging in professional development in the area of High-Impact Instructional Practices in Mathematics and Phonics/Phonemic Awareness in Literacy. Teachers at OLG begin their math lessons with a Number talk, which allows students to see solutions to number problems in different ways; group, compose and decompose numbers more flexibly; and understand how numbers work, rather than memorizing!

In literacy, Our Lady of Grace teachers have focused on using programs such as McCracken and Heggerty to support increased ability in decoding and spelling. The OLG team has also considered how we might support students in Grades 4 to 7 who may still struggle with decoding. Alicia Nieman, the Board's Inclusion Special Assignment Teacher, led educators in professional development specific to proper phoneme pronunciation and Tier 1 & 2 resources/strategies that educators can use to support phonics/phonemic awareness across K-7.

During Catholic Education Week, students in Mrs. Byce's class created beautiful pieces of artwork based on parables from the Bible and representing the artistic illustration style from the book, Listen to the Wind. On May 26th, the entire school headed over to the church to Pray the Living Rosary around the Statue of Mary, which is celebrated in May. The school also invited the community to join this celebration.

At Our Lady of Fatima, students and staff welcomed Mr. Solar to do Team Building with each class. In Our Lady of Fatima's school learning plan, they identified student collaboration as an area of need based on what they were seeing in class and recognizing the effects of kids working in isolation during COVID shutdowns. The idea of having Mr. Solar come for the whole school grew from a request that Stephanie Froats, grade 4 / 5 teacher, made. Mr. Solar came to work with her class, and in further discussion, it became apparent that others were experiencing the same thing. Educators wanted to provide a play-based set of activities to allow students to revisit the idea of working towards a common purpose, recognizing the different roles on a team, supporting one another and gaining a greater understanding of the concept of fair play.

May 13th was the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, and the school celebrated their Lady's Day on Monday, May 15th with a Living Rosary. Special thanks to Mrs. Newbrry, Madame Blondin and Ms. Belanger for their collaborative effort to organize this beautiful liturgy.

Additionally, Our Lady of Fatima hosted their Inaugural Our Lady of Fatima Golf Tournament at Renfrew Golf Club with 14 teams that teed up. It was a great day of fun and community building with OLF families. Another special thanks to School Council Chair, Erin Pasco, for organizing the event!

At St. Thomas the Apostle, the construction for the new school has officially begun, and students have been enjoying observing the progress of the new school building. Kindergarten students had the opportunity to visit the Bonnechere Bakery and learn how things are made. Students loved learning and tasting the products at the bakery, and a big thank you to the staff who made this field trip possible!

Grade 4 and 7 classes have been learning about healthy relationships and mental health. Students had the privilege of having OPP Constable Tina Hunt, Community Education and Engagement Officer, attend their classes to speak on this topic and further their understanding of mental health and the importance of having healthy relationships. Additionally, students in grades 4 to 7 have been enjoying exploring archery! This has been a great opportunity for them to try out a new sport. Students have also been very passionate about their National Pet Month Fundraiser by collecting items for pets to donate to the Renfrew County SPCA. A great idea that was suggested by the students!

Finally, during the May PA Day on May 19th, all staff across RCCDSB gathered to celebrate Christian Community Day as a whole school community. This was the first celebration where staff were all together to celebrate since 2019. The day began with mass at St. Columbkille's Cathedral Parish, followed by brunch with colleagues, and an unforgettable Keynote presentation on removing barriers by RCCDSB Director of Education, Mark Searson. A big thank you to Father Beachey and the organizing committee for all their hard work in making this day come to life.



National Pet Month
Fundraiser at St.
Thomas



OPP Presentation
on Healthy
Relationships and
Mental Health



Construction for
the New School
Building at St.
Thomas the
Apostle



Living Rosary at Our
Lady of Grace



Living Rosary at Our Lady of Fatima, May 14th



Team building with Mr. Solar!