



Media Release: RCCDSB Director of Education, Mark Searson, Honoured with Distinguished Leadership Award for Excellence in Education

Pembroke, ON, April 22, 2026 - The Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB) is pleased to announce that its Director of Education, Mark Searson, has been honoured with the 2026 Distinguished Leadership Award.

On April 16th, the Superintendents of RCCDSB and the Director of Education attended the Ontario Catholic Association of Supervisory Officers (OCSSOA) Annual Banquet, where Mark Searson was presented with the Distinguished Leadership Award.

Over the past thirty years, Mark has dedicated his career to Catholic education. Since 2021, he has held the position of Director of Education, following previous roles as a teacher, department head, principal, and supervisory officer. At every stage of his journey, he has embodied a servant leadership rooted in faith, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to students.

As a respected and trusted leader, Mark approaches his role with humility and courage, and maintains a student-centred leadership style. From leading transformative system initiatives to strengthening instructional practice and technology modernization, he consistently ensures that decisions are guided by what is best for students' learning, well-being, and spiritual growth.

Mark's influence and dedication reach far beyond his local district. At the provincial level, he has been instrumental in shaping leadership development and professional learning through his involvement with the OCSSOA and the Eastern Ontario Staff Development Network (EOSDN). He has served as a mentor to aspiring system leaders and has offered valuable, insightful contributions at provincial forums. Across the province, colleagues value him as a thoughtful and balanced voice, particularly on topics related to governance, fostering faith, and enhancing student achievement.

Mark Searson, Director of Education, shares remarks of gratitude:

"Receiving this award is a deeply humbling experience. I am very grateful to those who put forward my nomination, and it truly is an honour to serve the Catholic families of Renfrew County."

Mark's deep Catholic faith is the foundation of his leadership. He sees his role not as a mere job, but as a vocation to serve. Through active involvement in parish life and diocesan initiatives, he consistently strengthens the partnership between home, school, and parish, ensuring the Catholic mission is central to all aspects of system leadership.

"This award is incredibly well-deserved, and the entire Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB) community shares in this pride. Mark is a true visionary and a foundational leader in Catholic education, whose tireless dedication has profoundly impacted our students, staff, and the wider community. His accomplishment is a testament to his innovative approach and commitment to fostering an inclusive and faith-filled learning environment. We simply couldn't be more proud of his achievement and the recognition it brings to his long-standing work," states Bob Schreder, Chair of the RCCDSB. "Mark's leadership has not only guided our board through complex challenges but has also set a high standard for excellence and service within the provincial education system. This honour reflects the deep respect and admiration we all hold for his professional contributions and his personal character."

Mark Searson truly exemplifies the spirit of the Distinguished Leadership Award - an educator who leads with faith, vision, compassion, and joy, inspiring hearts and minds in the way of Christ.



Mark Searson (middle) with the Superintendents of RCCDSB (left to right) Clint Young, Mary Lynn Schauer (Associate Director of Business Affairs and Treasurer), Heidi Fraser, and Derek Lennox.



Mark Searson, Director of Education and Award Recipient, pictured with his family (Not pictured: Daughter, Sadie).



Mark Searson and Sister Joan Cronin, Former Superintendent with RCCDSB, Former Executive Director of Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), Presently the General Superior of the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (GSIC).