

RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of the General Meeting of the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Held in the Board Room, on Monday, April 28, 2025 at 4:45 p.m.

Bob Schreader, Chair of the Board, opened the meeting with a prayer. He asked that the following people be remembered in our prayers: Dave Huckabone (father-in-law of Julie Huckabone, Principal at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke), Pauline Perreault (mother-in-law of Frances Perreault, Educational Assistant at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke), Cecil Keller (father of Angela Prince, Educational Assistant at St. John Bosco School, Barry's Bay), and Our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Mr. Schreader then acknowledged the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

RESOLUTION #1

Moved by Pat O'Grady

Seconded by Bob Schreader

That Trustees move into In-Camera Committee in Committee of the Whole.

...Carried

RESOLUTION #2

Moved by Pat O'Grady

Seconded by Susan Artymko

That Trustees move out of In-Camera Committee in Committee of the Whole.

...Carried

ROLL CALL

Present:	Chairperson	- Bob Schreader
	Vice Chairperson	- David Howard
	Trustees	- Susan Artymko - Anne Haley (virtual) - Jeannie Ivory - Jerry Lavalley - Pat O'Grady
	Student Representative	- Ben Wood - James Russett
	Director of Education	- Mark Searson
	Associate Director of Business Affairs & Treasurer	- Mary Lynn Schauer
	Superintendent of Educational Services	- Clint Young
	Superintendent of Educational Services	- Heidi Fraser
	Superintendent of Educational Services	- Derek Lennox
	Recording Secretary	- Nancy Levasseur

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

RESOLUTION #3

Moved by David Howard
Seconded by Pat O'Grady

That the Agenda for the April 28, 2025 General Meeting of the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board be approved.

...Carried

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLUTION #4

Moved by Jeannie Ivory
Seconded by Anne Haley

That the Minutes of the General Meeting of the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board held in the Board Room on Monday, March 31, 2025 at 4:45 p.m. be approved.

...Carried

DISBURSEMENT LIST

RESOLUTION #5

Moved by Jerry Lavalley
Seconded by Susan Artymko

That the listing of payments as shown on APR2 be approved as presented.

...Carried

BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF MINUTES

New Procurement Restriction Policy

Information was provided on the newly implemented Procurement Restriction Policy developed by the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement in response to recent U.S. tariffs.

The policy, effective April 4, 2025, restricts public sector entities from procuring goods and services from U.S. businesses, in response to U.S. tariffs. The policy applies to Ontario government entities and designated Broader Public Sector (BPS) organizations. A U.S. business is defined as one with its headquarters or main office in the United States and employing fewer than 250 full-time employees in Canada. Procurements from U.S. businesses are only allowed if the business is the sole viable source and the procurement cannot be delayed due to health and safety risks.

The policy stipulates that all new procurements, irrespective of value and procurement method, are subject to these restrictions. Exceptions require documentation and approval by the highest level of authority. The document also provides guidance on how to apply these restrictions in different procurement processes, including invitational, open competitive, and non-competitive procurements, and outlines the necessary steps for reporting and handling information requests related to the policy.

PRESENTATION

Dominican Republic Experience

Bob Schreader welcomed Tara Crossman, Teacher at Bishop Smith Catholic High School and Coordinator of the DRE program and Grade 11 students Elliot Lofstedt and Johnathan Armstrong to the meeting. Tara said that she has been part of the DR Experience for over 18 years now and thanked the Board for the opportunity. She said that this year's team has been going to the feeder schools giving presentations on their experiences in the DR. This year the presentations centered around comparing Canada to the Dominican Republic.

The team presented a slide show which looked at a number of comparisons between the two countries, such as bodies of water, school life, school facilities, homes and culture. They showed how Canada and the Dominican Republic exhibit notable differences in their use of natural resources, education, and living conditions. Dominican culture is rich in symbolism and the group described the Dominican people as friendly, happy, smiling and content.

Elliot and Johnathan each shared their personal reflections on the trip, saying how moving it was to see how generally happy and friendly the Dominican people are. They said they learned a lot from them by seeing how happy they are even though they do not have a lot of material possessions.

Bob Schreader thanked the group for attending the meeting and sharing their experiences with the trustees.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION #6

Moved by David Howard

Seconded by Susan Artymko

That the Board accept the following retirements with regret:

- Tracey Pecarski, President, OECTA Renfrew County Unit, effective June 30, 2025 and
- Helen Heath, Educational Assistant at Our Lady of Sorrows School, Petawawa, effective August 31, 2025.

...Carried

GOOD NEWS FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Renfrew/Westmeath Schools

Anne Haley, local Trustee, reported on activities taking place in the Board's Renfrew and Westmeath schools.

Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew

- During Holy Week, students participated in the Stations of the Cross to prepare for Easter. They also contributed to the Easter Food Drive, with 40 items donated by each class to coincide with the 40 days of Lent
- Students have been busy preparing for Catholic Education Week from May 4-9. During CEW, students will be celebrating Mass with Father John Lacey. On May 13th, they will celebrate Our Lady of Fatima Feast Day, by praying the living rosary
- The school is excited about their new learning space, the Hub, an alternative learning environment, which fosters a dynamic atmosphere where students thrive in a collaborative workspace. Embracing flexibility and recognizing diverse talents, the Hub recently witnessed a remarkable role reversal. A student with exceptional artistic abilities, Kowyn Kasaboski, took the lead in a workshop, guiding six teachers through the nuances of painting. This initiative underscores the importance of art as a vital outlet for expression and highlights the Hub's commitment to empowering students to become both learners and leaders. Many thanks to Ms. Mitchell, Special Education teacher, for organizing the session for staff to reverse roles and learn from one of the very talented students at Our Lady of Fatima
- Ms. Delaury's grade 4 class has been creating tissue paper flowers and kind notes for their kindness initiative. Once they have enough flowers and notes, they take a "Kindness Walk" around the school subdivision. This initiative has made an impact on the community with many people sending thank you notes back to the school and letting the school know how appreciative they are of the kindness project
- Ms. Huckabone's Grade 6 students visit the hospital every two weeks to visit the older patients. This initiative is called "Adopt a Grandparent" and they participate in recreation activities, bingo and more – another way to bring joy to the community!

St. Thomas the Apostle, Renfrew

- Students have been enjoying their new school building and all the collaborative spaces. Before Easter, they gathered for a prayer service as a school community, a wonderful opportunity to gather and pray during Holy Week. The annual draw for Renfrew Hospice also took place at this time.
- Students from St. Joseph's High School visited the Grade 6 and 7 classes to talk to them about the Dominican Republic Experience and share what they do to prepare and what the experience taught them.
- On April 16th, the school orchestrated a surprise Pep Rally in the gym, showering Ms. Forgie, Educational Assistant, with cheers and well wishes before her participation in the Boston Marathon!

- The school participated in Earth Week and every day they “adopted” a vulnerable animal from the World Wildlife Fund Canada. On Wednesday, they focused on powering down and using less electricity, on Thursday they picked up garbage in the community and on Friday they brought lunch with as many reusable containers as possible
- On April 25th, the school took part in a Federal Student Vote, providing a valuable educational experience that encourages future participation in Canada’s democratic process and fosters informed citizenship

Our Lady of Grace, Westmeath

- This year, staff and students took a close look at their faith practices and the signs and symbols that represent their Catholic heritage. Staff and students actively foster their faith through various activities that spread Good News and Joy throughout their school environment
- The Classroom Prayer corners were spruced up to help engage students in the faith journey and to serve as visible reminders of the importance of personal prayer and reflection. Mrs. Schael, the school’s Evangelical Lead, has created monthly newsletters with helpful resources and tips. Her focus and suggestions for the Prayer Corners were successful. Staff have also filled the hallway with beautiful bulletin boards as further examples of their ongoing commitment to Catholic education
- The principal, Mrs. Douglas, has purchased numerous religious symbols and displayed them in the hallway and classrooms to serve as constant reminders of their commitment to Catholic values and teachings. The school’s bi-weekly prayer services provide opportunities for communal worship and spiritual growth. Through these efforts, the school aims to create a Christian environment where students can deepen their faith and integrate it into their daily lives
- Students have taken a real interest in writing daily intentions in the Classroom Prayer Corners. As a result, the intentional visibility and accessibility of their Catholic faith are clearly resonating with students who are actively embracing opportunities like contributing daily intentions to their Classroom Prayer Corners.

INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

Business and Corporate Services Committee Report

Anne Haley, Committee Chair, reported on the meeting held April 7, 2025.

Community Use of Schools Request for Exemption of Rental Fees – Mark Valliquette, Guidance Counsellor at St. Joseph’s High School, Renfrew has requested an exemption of rental fees for the Jaguar Tri-Sport Camp being held this summer for the week of July 7-11. It is open to local students who will be heading into Grades 5-8.

RESOLUTION #7

Moved by Pat O’Grady

Seconded by Jeannie Ivory

That the Board approve the request for an exemption of rental fees for the Jaguar Tri-Sport Camp being held at St. Joseph’s High School, Renfrew, for the week of July 7-11, 2025.

...Carried

Strengthening our Commitment to Supporting Canadian Goods & Services -

Trustees strongly supported prioritizing Canadian businesses for procurement, echoing the Sudbury Catholic board's motion. Concerns were raised about the practicality of sourcing all construction materials from Canadian manufacturers, with a suggestion to prioritize Ontario or Canadian sources.

A significant discussion centered on student travel to the US, with a strong sentiment to immediately halt all such trips until conditions improve. This aligns with the Ontario government's recent prioritization of Ontario procurement and a new policy restricting procurement from US businesses. Mary Lynn confirmed the ongoing "Buy Ontario" directive and the Ministry's survey on existing non-Canadian contracts. OECM will respond for board purchases made through them. Challenges were noted regarding software (like Acadiance) and elevator/lift refurbishments (with major US suppliers like Aaon), where moving away from the lowest price might not be financially beneficial.

Mark proposed immediately halting approval for all student travel to the US and pausing procurement decisions pending further guidance from the Ontario government.

It was agreed that a motion will be made to not approve any student trips to the US for the time being. The procurement aspect of the Sudbury motion will be revisited later. Bob noted Trustee Artymko's support for the motion.

RESOLUTION #8

Moved by Anne Haley

Seconded by Pat O'Grady

That the Board agrees to not approve any student trips to the United States for the time being.

...Carried

Community Use of Schools – An updated summary of scheduled community use of schools from September 2024 to August 2025 was provided as an information item.

Educational Services Committee Meeting Report

Committee Chair, Pat O'Grady, reported on the meeting held April 7, 2025.

Presentation – Inclusion & Accessibility Update – Angela Bergeron and Damian Solar attended the meeting to speak about the Board's significant progress and ongoing commitment to inclusion. Key highlights included a shift towards the social model of disability, emphasizing barrier removal and opportunity creation, guided by the principles of awareness, improvement and action. Successful inclusive sports initiatives, such as wheelchair basketball and sitting volleyball in partnership with organizations like the Abilities Centre and ParaSport Ontario, have demonstrably engaged students and fostered an inclusive mindset. These initiatives have garnered local and upcoming national recognition. The Board is also proactively addressing accessibility through staff training (AIDE sessions based on AODA), curriculum adjustments (Lexia Reading Program) and empowering student voice through initiatives like the accessibility working group. Collaborative partnerships with community organizations are central to this work,

which aims to move beyond equality to achieve true equity and justice by removing barriers for all students and staff. Future plans include activities for National Accessibility Week and continued expansion of successful inclusive programs.

Board Programs and Information –

- a) *Faith Portfolio*** – The Board has been developing a new process to address the challenge of losing high-quality applicants who may not be actively attending church and thus struggle to obtain a pastoral letter. This new system aims to streamline the process for these candidates. A key issue highlighted was the difficulty faced by local priests who are frequently asked to provide pastoral references for candidates they may not know well. The current system poses challenges for local students returning from university who may encounter new parish priests unfamiliar with them.

The proposed solution involves a profile where candidates can articulate their spiritual journey. Teachers will also have the opportunity to take a course that qualifies them to teach religious education. Bishop Brehl and Father Holly are both supportive of this new approach, which still includes a mechanism for priests to provide their sign-off.

- b) *April Mental Health & Wellness Newsletter*** – This was an information item.

- c) *Coding Student Attendance on Cultural Days*** – A recent Board Meeting included a presentation focusing on student attendance “G” day absences. The Board considered establishing cultural days for students and discussed potential activities, with hunting and farming receiving agreement. However, hockey’s inclusion as a cultural activity was questioned due to the popularity of other sports. Heidi Fraser, speaking from a Human Resources perspective, raised concerns about potential staff inquiries regarding their own cultural day eligibility. Ultimately, a decision was deferred, with Clint Young and Heidi Fraser tasked with reviewing staffing implications and reporting back to the Education Committee next month.

- d) *April Student Support Newsletter*** – This was an information item.

- e) *Student Success Conference*** – A team of 10, including Heidi Fraser, will be attending a conference in Ottawa this week. The conference is being hosted by the Eastern Region Student Success Group. The agenda includes guest speakers such as Tom D’Amico, who will discuss AI and student success and Dr. Andrew Campbell, who will address equity and student success. All participating boards will be offering at least one workshop. The conference is seen as a valuable opportunity to learn about initiatives in other boards.

- f) *EOCCC Conference*** – Twenty RCCDSB educators recently attended a conference with Hannah Beach as the keynote speaker, who has previously worked with our staff and will be our keynote for this year’s CCD. Kelli Ronholm from George Vanier school also presented at this conference and her session complemented Hannah Beach’s presentation very well.

- g) **CODE Gen AI Learning Network** – This is an AI learning network to assist with AI integration in our schools and systems.

Ministry of Education –

a) Ministry Communications to District School Boards – March 2025

- **MAAP (Measure of Achievement and Participation)** – Our team submitted this on March 21st, ahead of the March 28th deadline.
- **Early Reading Screener** – All communication requirements have been met, achieving 100% compliance for the first screening done on November 15th. Letters were sent home and results were included on February report cards, aligning with Ministry expectations. Students not meeting the benchmark were reassessed in January and February, with those results appearing on the June report cards.
- **Student Achievement Plan** – This is a largely pre-populated document with minimal changes from last year, utilizing Ministry-provided statistics. The Board will contribute the few areas where local input is required and the plan will be posted by the April 30th deadline.
- **Financial Literacy Graduation Requirement** – Announced a year ago, the Ministry has not yet provided further details. Updates will be shared as they become available.
- **OSSLT Adjudication Process** – While not yet implemented, a process is in place for students who do not achieve a passing grade or complete the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test course.
- **Skills Ontario** – The Board typically does not participate in Skills Ontario due to the cost of travelling to Toronto. Instead, a successful local showcase is organized in partnership with Algonquin College, which also offers opportunities for students with special needs to compete.

Supporting Math Achievement and Spring Readiness – This was an information item.

Other –

- a) **Ontario Human Rights Commission Report** – This report was recently released by the OHRC and there are recommendations within this report for school boards.

Special Education Advisory Committee Report

Susan Artymko, Committee Chair, reported on the meeting held April 9, 2025.

Presentation – Special Education Financial Position – Mary Lynn Schauer presented the Special Education financial position. She provided an overall executive summary of revenue and expenses projected for the 2024-2025 school year, with prior year comparisons based on audited financial statements. The initial Board budget for the following year is set in June and is based on projected enrolment for October 31st and March 31st. A revised budget is prepared approximately halfway through the school year and is based on actual enrolment for October 31st and projected enrolment for March 31st. The Ministry of Education uses an average of the two enrolment count dates of the current school year to determine funding for the year.

Current Special Education surplus/deficits are as follows:

- 2023/24 Financial Statements – Deficit (\$818,212)
- 2024/25 Original Budget – Deficit (\$657,645)
- 2024/25 Revised Budget – Deficit (\$559,192)

We are projecting a deficit of \$559,192, which is not alarming as special education normally operates in a deficit.

The Average Daily Enrolment (ADE):

- 2023/24 – 4,851.18 students
- 2024/25 Original Budget – 4,872.31 students
- 2024/25 Revised Budget – 4,881.81 students

Our projected enrolment was 9.50 students lower than actual enrolment, which means more grants overall and our enrolment is 30.63 students higher from the 2023/24 school year.

A chart was presented showing numbers of students with exceptionalities, by diagnosis and by school as at October 31, 2024. There are currently 701 students identified, which is 14.16% of the total student body, a figure comparable to previous years. Total students with an IEP this year is 1,060 which is 21.41% of the student body. The provincial average is 17.17%. In response to a concern expressed on our Board's high percentage, Mr. Young noted that we do tend to trend higher and that there is no rationale for it.

Overall, special education expenditures are budgeted at \$14,939,445. It was noted that special education transportation is not part of this budget. It is covered under the transportation budget and is a very significant amount of the transportation budget.

Board Reports –

- a) **April Student Support Newsletter** – This was an information item.
- b) **PPM128: RCCDSB Code of Conduct Policy – Parent Feedback** – The Ministry of Education issued some major revisions to this policy in July 2024. The major focus was on three big topics – cell phone use in schools, social media sites and very strict anti-vaping rules. Our Board has a draft policy ready but we are required to get feedback from the community including staff, parents and students. At our March meeting we asked SEAC members to give us feedback regarding this policy. No feedback has been received and we will ask again at the May meeting.
- c) **Special Education Report – Homework** – The Committee had a few updates for the report at this meeting. An email will be sent out on April 10th with a deadline of April 17th for any other changes. The report will be finalized for the committee to approve at the SEAC meeting.
- d) **Special Education Funding in Ontario** – The committee passed a motion to add our signature to the OCSB letter requesting more funding for Special Education.

Next Meeting Date – The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Secondary School Report – St. Joseph’s High School, Renfrew

James Russett, Student Trustee, reported on activities taking place at St. Joseph’s High School in Renfrew.

Student Council

- A school movie set is being prepared for April 30th with a Spirit Week taking place the same week
- Two more Junior Jag Days are being planned to take place in April and May
- An Easter egg hunt was held on April 22nd
- From April 22 – 25, the Environmental Ministers gave presentations to the students on the importance of Earth Day
- The marker drive is slowing winding down

Athletics

- The Senior boys/girls soccer teams have begun to practice
- Track athletes are starting to prepare for the upcoming track meet
- Easton Curly won bronze in badminton, qualifying for the next badminton tournament

Fundraising

- The DR students held a pizza lunch on the 24th to raise money for the DR

Pastoral

- The Pastoral Committee held a prayer service for Easter and the Grade 9 drama class acted out the stations of the cross.

RCCDSB Walking Pilgrimage

The Board’s Evangelization Committee has organized a Walking Pilgrimage on Saturday, May 10th, 2025. The pilgrimage is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. at St. Michael’s School in Douglas and will conclude at St. James in Eganville with a Mass at 4:00 p.m. This event offers an opportunity for a day of walking, reflection, and community, covering an approximate distance of 15.2 kilometers, with an estimated walking time of about 3.5 hours. In recognition of May as the month dedicated to Mary, the pilgrimage will incorporate Marian devotion, with the Rosary being prayed at designated rest stops. For those who may not be able to complete the entire walk, transportation will be available. Participants are advised to dress appropriately for the weather, wear comfortable shoes, and bring their own water, as the event will proceed regardless of rain or shine. To assist with planning, an RSVP is requested from all interested staff members.

OCSTA Information Items

Bob Schreader brought the trustees' attention to a number of the items received from OCSTA over the last month.

- a. (i) 2025 AGM Resolutions
(ii) 2025 AGM Resolutions Package – Bob asked that trustees who will be attending the AGM review the package beforehand
(iii) Final Status Chart
- b. Memo – Nominations Report
- c. Memo – Executive Director Announcement – Pat Daly has been appointed to the position of OCSTA Executive Director
- d. New Procurement Restriction Policy to Restrict Procurement from US Businesses
- e. Toonies for Tuition Flyer – our Board will provide two gift cards for this fundraiser
- f. Mandatory Training for Trustees
- g. Speech from the Throne April 15, 2025
- h. Passing of our Holy Father Pope Francis & Official Statement from Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
- i. CEFO – Celebrating Catholic Students
- j. Revised Nominations Report – Brian Evoy has been acclaimed to the position of Director of Region 10, which is our Board's region
- k. 2025 CEW – Sample Church Presentation
- l. Ontario Increasing School Board Accountability to Protect Students, Families & Taxpayer Funds

CORRESPONDENCE

APR9 – Non-Staff Source

1. April 7 - card of thanks from the Friends of the Regional Pool for the use of the gymnasium at Cathedral School on March 23rd for a fundraising event.

APR9A – Non-Staff Source

The Terry Fox Foundation shared the results of the 2024 Terry Fox School Run, announcing that schools across Canada raised nearly \$14 million for cancer research. Schools within the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board raised \$32,781.05. The Foundation expressed gratitude for the support and acknowledged that over 10,000 schools participated nationwide. The Foundation is seeking the Board's endorsement for the 2025 Terry Fox School Run, scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2025, or an alternative date. The Foundation will provide sample messaging and strategies to support school registration for the event. The letter emphasizes the 45th anniversary of Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope in 2025 and introduces the #FinishIt campaign.

FUTURE BUSINESS

General/Trustee Comments

Jerry Lavalley asked about a board that he heard is having to cut staff members in order to meet budget. Mark explained that a number of alternative programs that Boards offer are not Ministry funded and in order to be within budget, Boards may need to review the programs they are offering.

Meeting Dates

- May 1-3 - OCSTA AGM & Conference
- May 12 - Audit Committee Meeting
Board Office – 2:00 p.m.
- May 12 - Business & Corporate Services Committee Meeting
Board Office – 4:00 p.m.
- May 12 - Educational Services Committee Meeting
following BCS Meeting – Board Office
- May 14 - Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting
7:00 p.m. – Virtual Meeting
- May 16 - Christian Community Day
- May 26 - Board Meeting – St. Joseph's High School, Renfrew
 - Committee of the Whole – 4:00 p.m.
 - General Meeting – 4:45 p.m.

RESOLUTION #

Moved by Jerry Lavalley
Seconded by Pat O'Grady

That the recommendations made by motion and consensus in the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 28, 2025 be approved.

...Carried

RESOLUTION #

Moved by Susan Artymko
Seconded by David Howard
That the meeting be adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

...Carried



Chairperson, Renfrew County Catholic
District School Board



Director of Education and Secretary, Renfrew
County Catholic District School Board