

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board Director's Annual Report 2020–2021



Message from the Director of Education

The 2020-2021 school year was one of a kind; but even in the midst of a world-wide pandemic, we had great confidence that our Catholic school community would pull together to embark on a school year like no other.

We developed and were confident in our return to school plan and our readiness for in-person teaching and learning. Every possible measure, following guidance from the Ministry of Education and Public Health, was in place in our schools and worksites to ensure they were as safe as possible. Our school teams allocated a professional activity day to review and discuss the safety protocols that were put in place over the summer.

One of our most remarkable achievements was the creation of our virtual school, St. Kateri Tekakwitha Virtual Catholic School, to provide access to remote learning for all students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

Fittingly, the part of our Board Vision Statement that we chose to animate was “open to mystery and endless discovery in the Lord, we are called to *love unconditionally*.”

The pandemic caused us to feel fear and anxiety—a global virus for which there was (at the time) no known vaccine threatened us and our loved ones, especially our elderly and immunocompromised.

Self-discipline, self-regulation and evidence-informed action were some of the practical ways we modelled calm for our students in the midst of their fears, and *unconditional love* addressed those fears head on. In 1 John 4:18, we are taught, “perfect love casts out fear.”

What did perfect love look like at RCCDSB schools in 2020–21? Empathetic listening and informed dialogue. Unconditional love exemplified and practiced by staff as they worked with students who were not engaged in online learning. Unconditional love demonstrated through the mercy that we showed one another, and that which is modelled to us by our Father in heaven.

It was indeed a school year filled with endless mystery, discovery and unconditional love. As you will read in this Annual Report, we completed the 2020–2021 school year journey as a Christian community ‘together and imperfectly through the grace of God.’

Mark Searson
Director of Education



**Image of
“Walking
with Jesus”
created by
our students**

Our Mission Statement: *Inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past, we are an inclusive Catholic educational community called to express our mission as Church to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future.*

About Us

Our Board offers a full range of academic programs in a caring and nurturing environment that encourages our students to achieve their personal best, while sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in their daily lives.

Our Vision

Inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past, we are an inclusive Catholic educational community called to express our mission as church to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, to make it relevant in the world today, and to be the hope for the future.

RCCDSB by the numbers

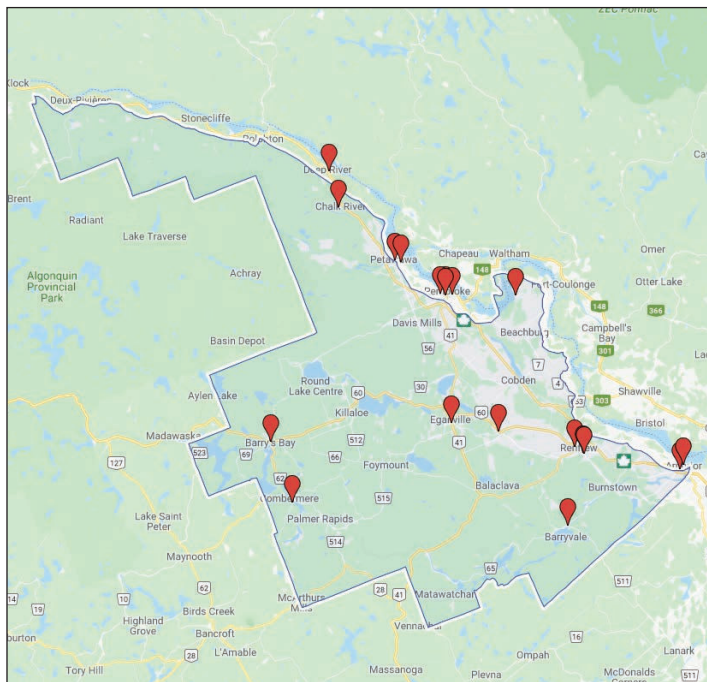
Schools and facilities

We have 21 schools in 14 communities across Renfrew County:

- 19 Elementary Schools
- 2 Secondary Schools
- 2 Alternative Secondary Sites
- 1 Young Parent Support Program
- 2 Section 23 Valleycrest Classrooms

Communities

Located in Eastern Ontario, 100 kilometres northwest of Ottawa, RCCDSB covers a largely rural area of more than 7,851 square km.



Our approved 2021–2022 budget

\$77.5 million

Our population

Our October 31, 2021 enrolment numbers are:

	Students
Elementary	3,684
Secondary	1,170
Total	4,854

Employees

Approximately 600 full-time staff

Approximately 700 occasional staff

Leadership team

In the RCCDSB community of schools, we care, we learn and we work together to make our world a better place!



2020–2021 trustees: **Bob Michaud**, Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards Township, Brudenell, Lyndoch & Raglan Township, Madawaska Valley Township; **David Howard**, Deep River, Laurentian Hills, Head, Clara & Maria Township, Petawawa; **Emily Tracey**, Student Trustee, St. Joseph's High School; **Bob Schreder**, Chair, Pembroke; **Anne Haley**, Renfrew, Horton Township, Whitewater Region Township; **Andrew Bray**, Arnprior, McNab/Braeside Township, Greater Madawaska Township; **Pat O'Grady**, Laurentian Valley Township, North Algonia Willberforce Township, Admaston/Bromley Township, Bonnechere Valley Township. **Missing:** **Tarynn Kearney**, Student Trustee, Bishop Smith Catholic High School



Current administrative team: **Clint Young**, Superintendent of Educational Services, **Mary Lynn Schauer**, Superintendent of Business Services, **Heidi Fraser**, Superintendent of Educational Services, **Mary-Lise Rowat**, Superintendent of Educational Services, and **Mark Searson**, Director of Education

WHOLENESS & WELLNESS

Safety during a global pandemic

Safe, healthy environments was job number one before the doors opened and the first bells rang in September 2020.

Our schools followed guidance with respect to physical distancing, cohorting, use of space, scheduling, lunch protocols, pick up/drop off protocols, increased cleaning protocols and more to ensure the safety and well-being of our students, families and staff.

Resources were prepared at every level (primary, junior, intermediate and senior) to support health and hygiene in our schools.



Mental health supports

- Online wellness groups (by age) began in August to prepare students for back to school, as well site-based transition back to school programs for students with special needs. Day camps in Pembroke, Renfrew and Arnprior schools gave students and parents a firsthand look at what school would be like in the fall of 2020.
- A virtual mental health office provided daily access to counsellors and social workers for students, parents and staff



Here to Help!

Join our Social Workers and Counsellors for Virtual Office Hours

Daily 1:00 - 3:00pm

Available to answer any questions for students, parents and staff

Click on this link to join

<https://meet.google.com/lookup/c4chlhvew>

- Well-Being Kits were delivered during our second stay-at-home order period. The kits were designed to support students' spiritual, physical and mental health and to offer some experiential learning while helping students find ways to relieve stress. Each kit contained healthy snacks, an exercise mat, exercise bands, relaxation activities and other treats. The kits were hand delivered to students' homes by a member of the Safe Schools or Mental Health Team. The students also received an invite to two cartooning workshops and three breathing, stretching and relaxation sessions. These workshops were offered in partnership with local companies and were conducted virtually.
- Throughout the year and into the summer, virtual grade-specific wellness activities were offered, including 'Fitness Fun Monday, Artist Wednesday, Coding Club Thursday.' Online support sessions and book studies were available to parents as well.




Fitness Fun Monday

Join us Monday the 3rd!

Parents can register for this group by signing up at the bottom of the page for their child. If you leave your email, a reminder email will be sent to you 2 days and then again 2 hours before the program begins.

Groups run by division for half an hour:

- Primary (JK- grade 3) at 3:00 - 3:30pm
- Junior (grade 4-6) at 3:30 to 4:00pm and
- Intermediate (grade 7-8) at 4:00 to 4:30



Artist Wednesday

Join us Wednesday!

Parents can register their child for this group by signing up at the bottom of the page. If you leave your email, a reminder email will be sent to you 2 hours before the program begins. You can also choose to sign up for next Wednesday as well!

Groups run by division for half an hour:

- Primary (JK-grade 3) at 3:00 - 3:30pm
- Junior (grade 4-6) at 3:30 to 4:00pm and
- Intermediate (grade 7-8) at 4:00 to 4:30

This session will focus on engaging art activities focused on feeling good and incorporate many of the calming strategies from the group *Stress Lessons* created by the Psychology Foundation of Canada!

Physical education

A number of exciting physical education programs were delivered to as many students as possible across our board, including snowshoeing, an introduction to orienteering (map, compass, GPS), and archery. Kudos to our teacher volunteers who attended a weekend PD session to become qualified archery teachers. Student feedback was extremely positive!



Teacher Amanda Cameron's Grade 4/5/6/7/8 class at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Calabogie completed a week-long archery program.



Community partnerships included the Canadian Tire Jump Start program, CCAC, Shaw Woods and the National Archery in the Schools Program.

The RCCDSB Special Assignment Teacher (SPAT) for Physical Education worked in collaboration with our Mental Health Lead to provide links to 'daily physical activity' among the Virtual Wellness activities for students.

Special "March Break – Give Me a Break Activities" were developed for elementary schools and Summer Institute activities focussed on a holistic view of wellness.

Planning ahead, Ministry funding was secured for the introduction of a cricket program for all schools in the Board in fall 2021.

In addition, work continued with our Indigenous Education Lead to order and distribute Lacrosse equipment to targeted schools with a goal to implement this Indigenous-based program at all of our schools in winter 2022.



Leadership Academy reaffirming for staff

The EOSDN Leadership Academy 2020–2021 helped staff in their roles by providing a framework to be mindful and to self-reflect on their profession.

"It allowed us to develop a mission statement on how we would like to grow both personally and professionally. It also helped us become more confident as leaders and how to effectively connect with people," stated one participant.

ACHIEVEMENT & POTENTIAL

The phrase ‘21st century learning’ took on new meaning in the face of COVID-19. The 2020–21 school year began in-person but pivoted to fully virtual teaching and learning.

Teachers grew their online communication and collaborative skills, for example, through the use of tools such as Jamboard interactive digital whiteboard, while responding to the learning needs of all students through the use of technology.

Preparation and support for remote teaching

When you hear the words ‘collaboration, creativity, connectedness, sharing’, you might automatically connect them to students. During the 2020–2021 school year, these concepts also applied to the support provided to help ensure success as staff pivoted to remote teaching/learning.

Collaboration:

- developed a remote consortia of small Catholic school boards to share students and ensure adequate numbers to accommodate timetables and staff allocation for online learning.
- worked closely with the Ontario E-Learning Consortia (OELC) to develop software for remote learning management and reporting
- worked with staff in the adoption of blended learning classrooms and technological use of online tools for teaching/pedagogically sound practices and strategies

Creativity:

- built and developed online courses and course materials
- worked with the OELC to develop Google integration strategies between boards

Connectedness:

- worked closely with secondary school guidance departments and vice principals to manage/schedule timetables.
- monitored student success and attendance and provide weekly data to student success teachers and attendance teams

Sharing:

- ensured employee access to Ministry resources
- worked with the OELC to develop Google integration strategies

All this, along with the purchase of laptops and desktop computers, monitors, webcams, Helpdesk software and more ensured that our staff had the tools they needed!

Preparation and support for remote learning

We worked hard to remove barriers to success and improve student achievement in the remote learning setting:

- Wi-Fi enhancements
- Purchase of more than 800 iPads and App licensing for students, more than 1,000 Winbooks and Chromebooks and 115 Kajeet devices
- Purchase of software programs such as Google Enterprise and SeeSaw as well as continued use of Google Classroom and D2L BrightSpace



Outdoor learning spaces. Students at St. Andrews Catholic School in Killaloe take learning to new heights in their comfy, distanced perches.



RCCDSB educators explored and applied new teaching and learning approaches made possible by the use of technology to increase engagement and improve student learning.



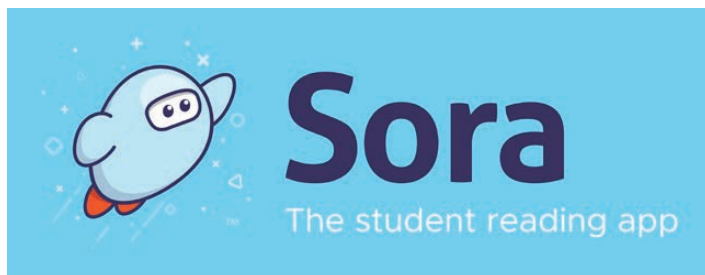
Students learned from each other online, sharing things they do at home, like raising chickens and beekeeping!

Literacy

Teachers were provided with professional development to gain proficiency with digital platforms for teaching.

New curriculum supports to ensure a seamless transition between face-to-face and distance learning included:

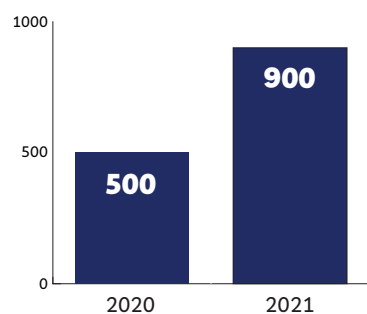
- RAZ-Plus—Kindergarten to Grade 5 digital literacy program with materials for teachers and engaging reading resources and tools for students.
- Currents For Kids—an engaging online interactive current events resources for students in Grade 3 and up.



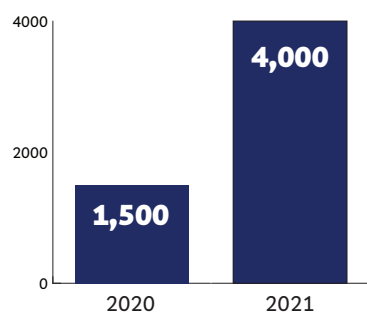
Student Reading App provides great options

The SORA digital library student reading app saw an increase in use during the 2020–2021 school year. The app offers a large collection of books, personalized reading options, and a suite of tools (bookmarks, notes, highlights and more) that make reading fun!

RCCDSB SORA report highlights:



900 students
accessed the platform in
2020–21 versus 500 in
2019–20



4,000 ebooks
and audiobooks
signed out versus
1,500 ebooks
and audiobooks
signed out



90 minutes
average student reading/
listening time per month

Math

A Professional Development day for staff in September 2020 included a recorded math session to introduce educators to the new math curriculum and available supports, including those already within our schools.

Teachers and students took advantage of many learning tools including:

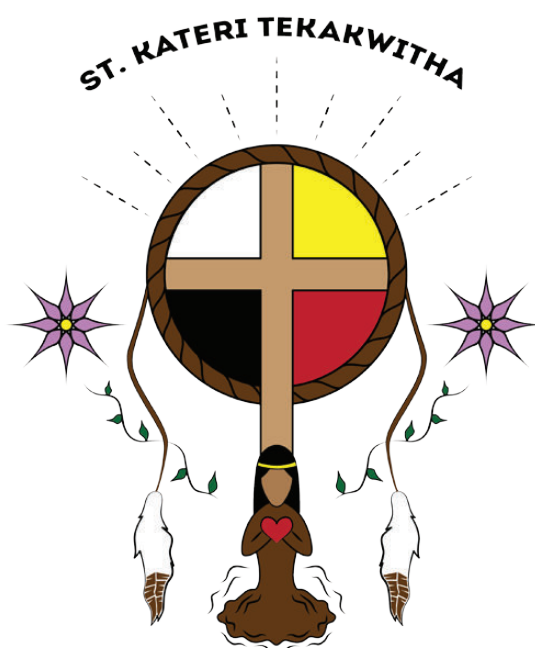
- Math Up—online Kindergarten to Grade 8 math instruction App
- Zorbit's Math Adventure—exploring curriculum-aligned math concepts in unexpected ways
- GIZMOS and Desmos online programs for Grade 7–12 math and science
- Micro:bits (learning to code), Scratch (block-based visual programming), Tinkercad (online 3D modelling program) to support work in coding in Grade 7–9 classrooms

St. Kateri Tekakwitha Virtual Catholic School

At different periods throughout the 2020–21 school year, virtual learning was a necessity due to the mandated closing of schools, or it was provided as an option for those who wished to opt out of face-to-face learning.

For the 400+ students fully opting out of face to face learning during the 2020-21 school year, RCCDSB formed St. Kateri Tekakwitha Virtual Catholic School, which provided and continues to provide a full virtual educational teaching and learning experience at the elementary level.

A combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning engaged teachers and students in effective literacy and numeracy practices five days a week with grade-specific Ontario curriculum.



CATHOLIC VIRTUAL SCHOOL

The beat goes on

The RCCDSB music team successfully adapted to “no singing and no use of shared instruments” during the 2020-21 school year. In-person programming incorporated use of ukulele, guitar, computer coding, rhythm and drumming.

The itinerant teachers were also able to creatively provide both asynchronous and synchronous online music and dance instruction to students when schools were on remote learning.

A music and dance program was also developed and delivered in a completely virtual environment for St. Kateri virtual school.

Pathways

A lot of work was done to increase awareness and promote pathway choices to RCCDSB students, including a credit-based summer program on the trades in partnership with Algonquin College.

Eight high school students (mostly SHSM students) from St. Joseph's High School in Renfrew and Bishop Smith Catholic High School in Pembroke completed a Level 1 Carpentry course during Quad Four of the 2020/21 school year at the Ottawa Valley campus.

In addition, 18 Grade 10 and 11 students from our high schools participated in the first Summer Trade Camp Dual Credit at Algonquin College Ottawa Valley campus.

Through our Experiential Learning Initiative, Coding and 3D Printing developed and expanded into more and more RCCDSB classrooms as the year went on.

French as a Second Language

Our French as a Second Language (FSL) program continues to evolve with updated resources, for example Mathologie for Kindergarten, Frimousses for Grades 1–3, and C'est Parti for junior classes and virtual field trips. In addition to new resources, extended is available in select elementary schools JK-3 as well as some extended French subjects are available to our high school students, as well as the opportunity to earn Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELF) certification.

Efforts to recruit and retain FSL teachers include career fairs, online courses and online conferences.



Progress report—High school graduation rates

A number of innovative programs such as Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM), Dual Credits, and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) are credited with helping to improve high school graduation rates.

Four-Year Graduation Rate

79.2%

(students who graduated with an OSSD* within four years of starting Grade 9 in 2015–16)

Province-wide average: 82.2%

Progress in the Four-Year Graduation Rate

12.7 points

(highest increase in province measured from 2018 to 2020)

Province-wide average increase: 1%

Five-Year Graduation Rate

87.8%

(students who graduated with an OSSD* within five years of starting Grade 9 in 2015–16)

Province-wide average: 88.1%

Progress in the Five-Year Graduation Rate

8.5 points

(highest increase in province measured from 2018 to 2020)

Province-wide average increase: 1%

*(to earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma [OSSD], students must earn a minimum of 30 credits including 18 compulsory and 12 optional, meet the provincial secondary school literacy requirement, and complete 40 hours of community involvement activities)

DIGNITY AND BELONGING

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board has been working to increase equity, inclusion and anti-racism education for staff and students.

Equity Table

Some of the goals outlined by the RCCDSB Equity Table were to increase student voice in our planning and to bring equity education to our schools.

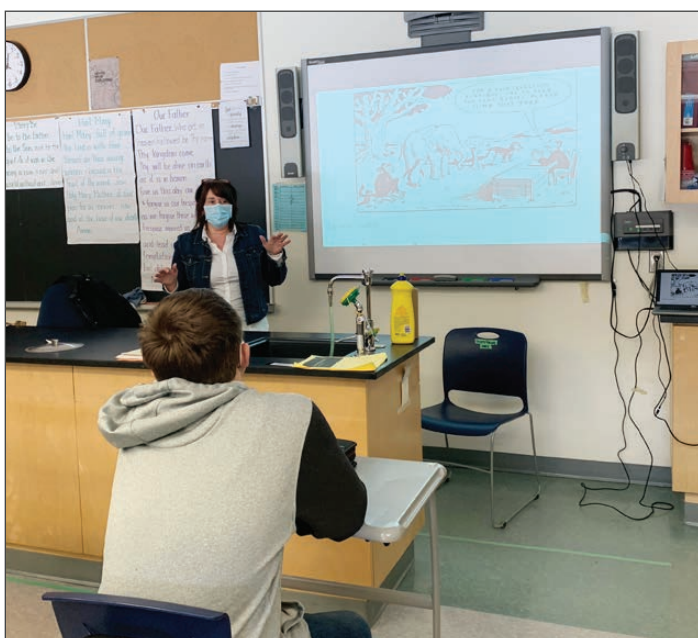
To accomplish this, the RCCDSB Equity Table completed two school visits to every Grade 6 and 10 class throughout the system with a focus on anti-racism bias. Student and staff data were collected from the visits.

During the first session, the team educated the classes to deepen their understanding of equity, discrimination, equality, inclusivity and being an ally. They also had an opportunity to engage in conversations with our students about these topics.

During the second visit, the students watched videos depicting different scenarios of discrimination and allyship and were given an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences with equity and diversity.

The data from these conversations and classroom visits is used to inform our school and board planning.

The members of the equity team were very encouraged by the honesty and empathy shown by students and were impressed with the students' willingness to learn and share ideas. It was another opportunity to witness examples how our RCCDSB students love unconditionally.



RCCDSB Equity Table school visit in a Grade 10 class.

Cultural competence training

- RCCDSB secondary staff completed cultural competence and multiple trainings in preparation for implementation of the NBE Grade 11 English course *Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices* in 2021–22.

NBE3U/3C/3E

English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Voices

An Alternative to our Traditional
English Courses (ENG3U/3C/3E)

- Chad Solomon, First Nations author, made six virtual presentations to our schools
- Some NBE teachers, guidance, and program team participated in Cultural Safety Training with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.
- One National Indigenous Peoples History Month presentation was provided per day for each school day.

Christian Community Day 2021

RCCDSB was blessed to have an inspiring keynote address from the Honourable Murray Sinclair, Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) at our Christian Community Day in May 2021. All board staff were involved in an afternoon follow-up session designed to reflect on bias, equity, and anti-racism.



The Honourable Murray Sinclair

SNAPSHOTS OF OUR YEAR



Classroom learning in September 2020. Father Ryan Holly visits Our Lady of Lourdes in Pembroke.



Grade 11 students in Bishop Smith Catholic High School's World Religion: Faith, Sacred Art and Culture course proudly display their St. Kateri images. Students were excited to show Bob Schreader, RCCDSB Board Chair, their work.



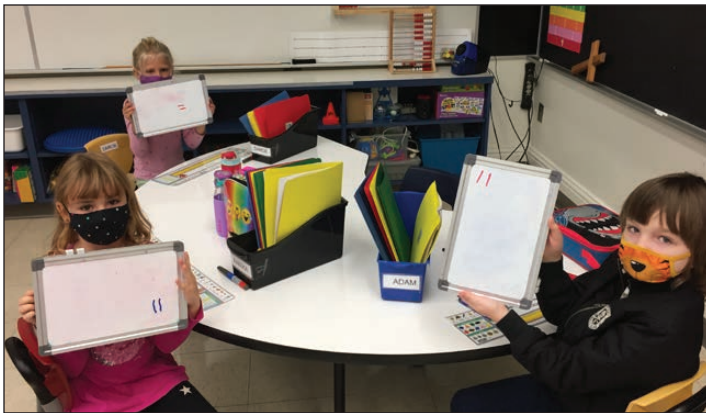
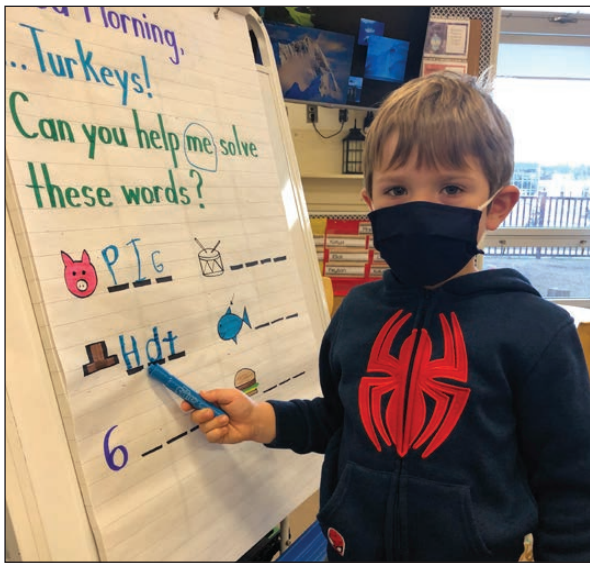
St. Francis of Assisi students wear blue for Autism Awareness Day.



St. Joseph High School received a donation of a statue of Saint Joseph that had resided for nearly 70 years at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse in Pembroke. The patron saint of the school was given a place in front of the main entrance.

Outdoor physical activities got students out of classrooms into fresh air!

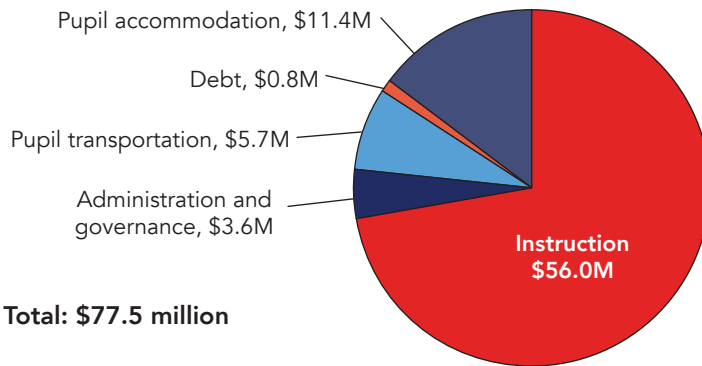




STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

2021–2022 budget

Expenditure by category



Capital Projects

- Improved ventilation at the following schools:
 - Our Lady of Fatima, Renfrew
 - St. Michael's Catholic School, Douglas
 - St. James Catholic School, Eganville
 - St. John Bosco, Barry's Bay
- Improved ventilation and upgraded lighting at the following schools:
 - St. John XXIII, Arnprior
 - St. Joseph's Catholic Elementary School, Arnprior
 - Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School, Pembroke
- Installed new, energy-efficient windows at:
 - St. Mary's OLGC, Deep River
- Replaced roofing at:
 - Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Pembroke



2017–2022 strategic plan

The pillars of our 2017–2022 strategic plan:

- Dignity & Belonging
- Wholeness & Wellness
- Achievement & Potential
- Witness & Integrity

The plan can be found at: <http://rccdsb.edu.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Strat-Plan-22-B-1.pdf>

