



Trustee News

CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

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Todd Lalonde, Chair (Cornwall-Glengarry)
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Specialist High Skills Major Programs

The Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program lets students focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Leon Haughian, SHSM Pathways Consultant, presented a report to the Board regarding SHSM program enrolment, demographics and future expansion. "A SHSM program allows students in grades 11 and 12 to focus their learning on a specific economic sector," explained Mr. Haughian. "They may obtain special certification (called Red Seal), gain co-operative education credits, sector recognized certifications, participate in experiential learning activities, and develop specialized knowledge and skills."

The CDSBEO Specialist High Skills Major Program is now in its twelfth year, and offers 24 programs in nine economic sectors. There are currently 510 students enrolled in a SHSM program, with the most popular sectors being Health and Wellness (164), Hospitality and Tourism (121), and Construction (65).

Students in the program are able to access many opportunities to learn about career planning and entrepreneurial skills. Teachers support students throughout their program and ensure that they are on track to attain the necessary, and sometimes demanding requirements, particularly with regard to various certifications. In the Board last year, 67 per cent of the students in the SHSM program attained their Red Seal, which is a rigorous certification process. Provincially, this number stands at about 53 per cent.

"New this year, we started the Agriculture Program at Holy Trinity. It is a very exciting program, which teaches students how to grow crops," noted Mr. Haughian. "We have a very passionate lead teacher there, Michael Smith. There are very few of these programs in Ontario, so we are pleased to be able to offer our students this unique opportunity."

The Construction Program at Notre Dame Catholic High School is now in its eleventh year. In the past the school has participated in building camper cabins for the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, and now Tyler Soares, lead teacher, has developed a new community partnership with Valley Sheds in Carleton Place to create opportunities for the students to learn through hands-on projects.

"Carleton Place is a booming area, and the school was fortunate to have the opportunity to build three sheds for Valley Sheds this year. The sheds have a little less details for the interior finishing than the camper cabins, but the students built three units rather than one," noted Mr. Soares.

"There was just enough time to complete the project during the semester. It really gives the students a sense of accomplishment seeing the end product, and they also have an opportunity to really develop the skills required to follow their pathway."

"I think it's great that when you visit the school the cabins are in plain view, and the community knows that this amazing learning is taking place at Notre Dame," noted Trustee Nancy Kirby. "I have also been impressed, in past years, by the number of female students that participate in Construction Technology. That is a testament to the success of the program."

Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario Curriculum Department continues to build capacity with both teachers and students to implement Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well as Coding initiatives system-wide. The Board has been on a journey over the past few years to move from traditional ways of using technology in instruction and learning, to leveraging 21st century tools. Coding requires computational thinking, which is embedded throughout the Ontario Curriculum. Because of this, educators can incorporate code into learning for all curriculum areas.

Andrew Lovett, Technology Enabled Learning and Teaching Consultant, presented information to the Board about CDSBEO's STEM initiatives, and how technology enabled learning is assisting teachers to explore and learn various ways to implement Coding/STEM into classroom learning.

"Cloud based learning and coding, or computational thinking, provides an amazing opportunity for students to develop 21st century skills, and CDSBEO has introduced an amazing capacity building series that will bring Coding and STEM to all of our elementary classrooms," began Mr. Lovett.

The Coding/STEM initiatives promote student collaboration, learning, technological thinking, and exciting learning opportunities for the students. The Board will host three days of capacity building and learning around Coding/STEM where two teachers from each elementary school will participate in a full day of learning. The initiative is designed to enable innovators and early adopters to infuse these initiatives into their classroom learning experiences. The teachers who participate will then share these new strategies with other teachers and students at their respective schools.

In December, 15 teachers attended a special day of professional learning around these tools, and as a result, several school communities throughout the Board are embracing new learning opportunities through STEM and Coding. Teachers in several schools have begun to design learning tasks for students using Minecraft EDU, Scratch, Makey Makey and the Microbit.

"This presentation has certainly provided examples of some very exciting learning opportunities that are taking place within our schools, and we really look forward to seeing these initiatives grow," noted Chair Todd Lalonde.