



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Drug Awareness

Board launches comprehensive strategy to tackle illicit substance use

(Windsor, Ontario, Monday, Oct. 23, 2017) – A collaborative, system-wide strategy to warn students and their families about the serious consequences of illegal drug use was launched today by the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board.

“We’re extremely alarmed by the number of reports we’ve been hearing from around our community about the use of opioids and the presence of potentially fatal substances like fentanyl that are being found in many street drugs,” said Director of Education Paul Picard. “We felt that it was incumbent upon us as a school board to take a proactive approach to this issue before any of our students are seriously harmed by misusing any of these substances.”

The strategy was announced today at St. Thomas of Villanova Catholic High School, where Principal Amy Facchineri has teamed up with a variety of school community partners to host a series of events to make students and their families aware of the dangers of drug use. Those events include two information sessions for the entire student body to be hosted by the LaSalle Police Service, an information night for parents, and an information session for members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA).

“Teachers care very deeply about their students, so we completely support this initiative,” said Joe Brannagan, President of the WECDSB’s OECTA secondary unit. “This is a community problem that’s not exclusive to any one school, so we need to take a total team approach to alerting students to avoid drug use, as well as informing them about where they can get help if they’re dealing with substance abuse.”

Facchineri emphasized that these events will be ongoing.

“This is just the beginning of a continuous and sustained effort to provide new and relevant information to our students and their families,” said Facchineri. “We need to be vigilant about ensuring they remain aware of the risk these substances can pose to their health.”

Besides the information sessions, a major component of the strategy involves a public awareness campaign, which will include regularly posting new information to the board’s web site and using social media to direct students and their families there so they can learn more about potentially harmful drugs. All of that information will be shared with schools throughout the entire board. Letters under the *We Need to Talk* banner

“Learning together in faith and service”

are being sent to parents to draw their attention to the resources.

“As trustees, the health and well-being of our students is one of our top priorities,” said Barb Holland, Chair of the WECDSB. “As a faith-based Catholic school community we have a natural obligation to do everything we can to protect our students, so we fully support this initiative and hope that it will go a long way towards reducing the amount of illegal drug use in our community.”

Detective Al Gibson of the LaSalle Police Service said he applauds the board’s efforts.

“We know these substances are out there in our community,” he said. “People can be taking common street drugs and not even be aware that they contain extremely dangerous levels of opioids like fentanyl, and the consequences can be grave. We need to do everything we can to make people aware of this problem.”

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