

Expanded focus

Summer learning program adds new site and numeracy component



Alexa Dixon uses an iPad to take a photo of her 'Things I am good at' list during the Summer Learning Camp at H.J. Lassaline Catholic Elementary School. Helping her is Focus on Youth camp leader Philip Bakos, a Grade 12 student at St. Anne Catholic High School.

(Windsor, Ontario, July 9, 2015) – Art, singing, and swimming are at the top of Alexa Dixon's personal list of things she does best.

Her parents and her teachers hoping that 'math' will soon be added to that list.

While she was wrapping up Grade 2 at L.A. Desmarais Catholic Elementary School in Forest Glade, Alexa's mother Kelly enrolled her in the Summer Learning Camp at nearby H.J. Lassaline Catholic Elementary School. Designed for Grade 2 and 3 students, the camp focuses on both

numeracy and literacy, and is intended to prevent the summer slide that some students experience as a result of being away from school for two months.

“Summer is such a long stretch for her, and she had been struggling just a little bit,” Dixon said of her daughter. “I’m sure this is going to help her out, and we can’t wait to see the improvement.”

This is only the second year for the camp. Last year it was focused solely on literacy and only offered at the Catholic Education Centre to students from Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. John, St. James, and St. Christopher.

However based on last year’s success, board administrators decided to expand it, both in size and scope, adding a numeracy component and offering it to students from H.J. Lassaline, L.A. Desmarais, W.J. Langlois, St. Jules, and St. Bernard – Windsor. There are eight teachers working in the program about 28 students at each site.

“After last year’s camp, we fielded a lot of calls from parents who wanted to know if we were going to be offering it in other areas,” said Maggie Dorion vice-principal at Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School, and the summer program’s administrator. “We realized that we had the opportunity to help a lot more students by expanding in to the east end.”

Adding that numeracy curriculum is in keeping with the Ministry of Education’s emphasis on improving provincial math scores, said superintendent Emelda Byrne. Much of that curriculum deals with geometry, spatial and proportional reasoning, she said.

“It really helps the students with their reasoning,” Byrne said. “The more they manipulate shapes, the better they understand the space they take, and that helps with skills like measuring and math vocabulary. They begin to develop natural math skills.”

The program also relies heavily on technology, Byrne added.

“Each student gets an iPad to work on throughout the summer,” she said.

And the program isn’t all work either. Students get a recreational component with field trips to area pools and bowling lanes so they can have some fun too.

When students return to school in September, their new teachers will be provided with a wealth of information such as student work samples, anecdotal observations and pre and post-

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Summer Program
Administrator

assessment results to help them get a better understanding of what that student needs in terms of their numeracy and literacy skills.

“Their teachers don’t have to reassess them on their abilities in September because they already have all of that current information,” Byrne said.

Dorion said based on feedback she’s received from both parents and teachers, the program is having a positive impact on scholastic performance, so students like Alexa feel much better about themselves.

“It really increases their confidence, because they’re not losing two months of practice,” Dorion said.

For her part, Alexa says the camp is a lot of fun, especially the group work.

“We get to help each other and stuff,” she said, adding that her group has been learning about two and three dimensional objects. “We get to work on tablets too.”