

Welcome Back!

Focus on student aspirations as we return to school



Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School JK/SK teacher Colleen Fox uses a paper cutter to prepare class materials in the teacher centre at the Catholic Education Centre. The facility was a beehive of activity the past couple of weeks as teachers from around the region prepared to return to school on Sept. 8.

A message from the Director of Education:

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

- Matthew Ch. 19. V. 14

On behalf of the entire Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board family, I'd like to welcome you back as we prepare to begin the 2015-16 school year. I sincerely hope that everyone had a safe, happy, fun-filled and relaxing summer vacation.

As we busily prepare to return to our classrooms, I would encourage us all to reflect upon some fundamental beliefs and principles that we hold dear: that every child possesses their own inner genius, and that our role is know each student so we might promote their intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being, while guiding them towards goals consistent with their individual aspirations.

As a board, it's our responsibility to provide them with the programs, resources, and support they need, and heading into the new school year, we'll see a number of new initiatives in our schools that have required a tremendous amount of planning and hard work, but are finally coming to fruition.

We're launching two new French Immersion programs at St. André and St. Joseph, which brings to six the number of schools that now offer this highly sought-after program; the F.J. Brennan Centre of Excellence will open its doors to new soccer and baseball academies to complement our Hockey Canada Skills Academy at the state of the art Central Park Athletics facility; and the first cohort of students will enter the new masonry program that we recently announced at F.J. Brennan Catholic High School.

All of these are reasons to celebrate, however it would be disingenuous to overlook the obvious uncertainty that many of us shared throughout the summer as we worked towards finalizing new contracts with our organized labour groups. While significant progress has been made, we are still not out of the woods yet. Rest assured, however, that we are all working very diligently towards settling on new deals that acknowledge our present fiscal realities, respect our employees, and most importantly, result in no disruption to the scholastic progress of our students.

Every school year brings with it a new set of challenges, and this year will be no different. While our enrolment figures are looking better than originally projected, we must still confront the reality that student numbers are declining in this region. We remain committed to find creative solutions to address that challenge so there will be minimal impact on our students and staff.

As we welcome our new students, celebrate our many successes and collaboratively confront our challenges, I would like to leave you with a simple, but poignant quote from the philosopher John Dewey: "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

Have a wonderful start to the school year.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Picard
Director of Education