

# Principal Praise

*October is time to acknowledge school leaders*



*Cardinal Carter Catholic Middle School Principal Nancy Sarkis has been described as a passionate and caring leader who creates a sense of family in her schools.*

(Windsor, Ontario, Thursday, Oct. 13, 2016) – She may have only been at the helm of the new Cardinal Carter Catholic Middle School in Leamington since September, but Nancy Sarkis is already making her mark there.

“She’s so passionate about our children and their education,” said Joanne Zeiter, chair of the school’s parent council. “Although our middle school is brand new, her dedication to it is immediately felt as soon as you walk through the doors.”

October was recently named National Principals' Month by The Learning Partnership, a charitable organization dedicated to support, promote and advance publicly funded education in Canada. The initiative was announced to drive awareness about the crucial role principals play in schools and communities across the country.

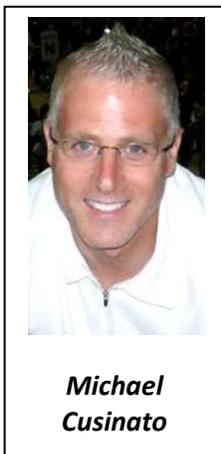
"We have so many outstanding leaders in our school, and this is an opportunity to showcase just a few of them," said Director of Education Paul Picard. "It provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the profound impact our principals and vice-principals have on our students, teachers and the community as a whole."

Zeiter wasn't the only one to praise Sarkis for her passion and dedication. Ruth Paesano, the school's vice-principal credited Sarkis with leading by example and creating a sense of family in her school.

"She inspires those around her to do more, learn more, and be more," she said. "She builds an environment where those around her experience values like truth, goodness, kindness, and compassion, and also intuition, creativity, and insight."

Colleague Tara Clark, a vice-principal at St. Pius X Catholic Elementary School said Sarkis is "an exemplary instructional leader."

"She walks side-by-side her staff in the journey to make marked impact on student achievement," she said. "Her expertise is tangible in the buildings she serves. She values the talents and skills that everyone brings to the table and develops and highlights their skills by providing opportunities for others to lead and to shine."



Being a caring and compassionate listener is an essential character trait for principals who often need to deal with tense situations, and those are the assets that Michael Cusinato brings to work with him every day at St. Anne French Immersion Catholic Elementary School, according to his closest colleagues.

"He's calm during difficult situations," said John Mazlounian, the school's vice-principal. "He hears people out before speaking, showing them that he cares enough to listen to what they have to say. I've been in many meetings that could have easily escalated into uncomfortable situations, but because of Michael's calm approach, that wasn't the case."

Cusinato has also earned the respect of the school's parent community. Motivated to always do the right thing, he is a steady and compassionate leader who works hard for his students, teachers, staff, and parents, according to Julie St. John, chair of the school's parent council.

“He works tirelessly to provide the best possible education for our children,” she said. “He seeks to instill in them a strong Catholic faith and an appreciation of the French language and culture.”

One of the ways he does that is by spotting talents and utilizing them for the good of the entire school community, Mazlounian said.

“Michael recognizes that he’s not doing the job alone,” he said. “Every teacher, child, parent, and staff member has so much to share. He knows he has a team of talent in our building and the job they have to do is to bring out the best in every single person. Our school is moving forward in a positive manner because of this team approach.”

Creating a culture of trust where all students, including the most vulnerable, can find comfort and acceptance is the ultimate aim of Holy Names Catholic High School principal Pat Hickson, according to one of his colleagues.

“Pat sets an example as to how we should respect people for who they are,” said vice-principal Chad Barrette, pointing out that Hickson co-chairs the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance. “By creating a trusting culture where teachers are comfortable in taking risks and being vulnerable, Pat is able to help our students continuously grow.”



Having an open door is an essential part of his leadership style according to Theresa Coutinho, chair of the school’s parent council.

“He’s always there when you need him, always there to lead,” she said. “He is the embodiment of our Holy Names school motto *Aliis Non Sibi* – For Others Not Oneself. As a parent I feel so incredibly lucky that we have him as our principal.”

And complacency is an attitude that’s not accepted in the school, Barrette added.

“Our theme for the year is ‘it’s okay to be where you are, but it is not okay to stay there.’” He said. “His daily announcements about how we can all live better lives reflect his beliefs and his actions, and help students relate to his message. He looks for the best in people, and on a daily basis he inspires staff and students alike.”

**During the month of October, we invite you to spread the word about this campaign by highlighting outstanding principals in our schools, sharing their stories, joining the conversation on Twitter with the *#OutstandingPrincipals* hashtag, and encouraging others to do the same.**