



InTouch

Our Enrolment Holds Steady

At Monday night's Board meeting, Superintendent Tom Mustapic provided Trustees with information on our enrolment trends for the past five years.

- Enrolment in our schools has declined by 6% (506 students) from 2009 to 2013.
- City-wide, enrolment has declined by 10% in the same time period.
- Our elementary enrolment has declined by 4% (234 students) while our secondary enrolment has decreased by 10% (272 students).
- North Ward enrolment has declined more rapidly than South Ward enrolment.
- The number of male and female students in our system has been equal over the past five years.
- After reaching a low of 512 students in 2009, JK enrolment has trended up to 557 students in 2013.
- Overall, SK-Grade 6 French Immersion enrolment has increased by 12% over the past five years.
- Aboriginal Self-Identification numbers have remained relatively stable although First Nation enrolment (tuition fee students) has declined by 9%.
- Our Grade 8 to Grade 9 retention rate increased slightly in 2013 versus 2012.
- After years of decline, birth rates in Thunder Bay have stabilized at approximately 1,500 annually. JK enrolment as a percentage of the birth rate was slightly higher in 2013 than in 2012.

"Overall, 2013 saw positive enrolment results for our Board and JK enrolment numbers were at a five-year high," Mr. Mustapic reported.

New School Year Calendar Approved

At Monday night's Board Meeting, Trustees approved the calendar for 2014-15. Education Officer Dave Bragnalo noted that the calendar is very similar to this year's, with six PD days included. The School Year will begin on September 2 and end on June 26. Christmas Break will run from December 22 to January 2, and March Break is scheduled for March 16 – 20, 2015.

Lives Improve with Second Step

First introduced into our schools in the fall of 2012, Second Step is currently being taught in every grade, Kindergarten through Grade 8, for approximately 30 minutes a week. The program supports our Board focus on Student Well-Being. Special Education Coordinator Tina Corness and Student Success Consultant Kris Bragnalo explained to Trustees that we are working to "help students develop self belief, self advocacy and self regulation. Second Step is a research-based social emotional curriculum that helps students have a better chance at achieving school and life success."

Through the program, students learn to identify and understand feelings, respect differences among peers and show that they care. They also learn to manage anxiety and frustration. Most importantly, students are taught acceptable and respectful ways to problem solve.

Feedback on the Second Step program has been very positive as teachers recognize the importance of building social-emotional skills with their students.



Tina Corness and Kris Bragnalo

Recruiting for Kindergarten



Despite frigid temperatures, attendance was impressive at our two annual Kindergarten Information Nights. More than 320 parents attended the evenings, which were hosted at St. Bernard and St. Martin schools. Superintendent Omer Belisle hosted the events, which included an opening prayer from Father Ciaran, a welcome from Director of Education Joan Powell, a description of Board programs and services, information on the Fair Start program, and a video on our full day program. Kindergarten teachers, ECEs and principals from all 15 elementary schools attended their respective events. A wide range of community agencies and partners manned information tables and shared resources with participants. “Both nights were well attended and well received. There was a great energy in the room,” said Mr. Belisle.

Supporting Student Mental Health

Superintendent Pino Tassone updated Trustees on the Board’s Mental Health initiatives. He reported that, this year, we set up an on-call mental health crisis system where principals can call our Mental Health Lead or Mental Health Nurse for support and advice, or direction to other supports. We also developed a protocol with the Regional Hospital to notify our staff about students being discharged from Emergency Suicide Intervention. Our Mental Health Nurse helps students transition back to school after hospital through home and school visits. Elementary schools now have access to our system-wide mental health crisis response service. In addition, our Mental Health Nurse provides direct service to elementary schools by connecting with students who may be at-risk. We continue to train principals, teachers and support staff in suicide prevention. Our Board has built strong relationships with local services and agencies to improve service accessibility for our students. Currently we have a number of initiatives going on with Children’s Centre Thunder Bay, including social work services, our Early Learning Intervention Program for K-8 students, and other Day Treatment services.

St. Pat’s Grad a Role Model

When Amanda Harris was in Grade 9, she knew that she wanted to attend college. Unlike other students, she was coping with cerebral palsy and living her life in a wheelchair. Unwilling to let these challenges hold her back, Amanda developed a love for learning and a positive attitude toward achieving her personal best. She credits her family and teachers, especially Mr. Cameron, her Grade 6 teacher, who encouraged her to keep trying always and never give up.

Throughout her education at St. Pius X, St. Elizabeth, St. Edward and St. Pat’s, Amanda remained in mainstream classes. After graduating in 2004, Amanda began her quest to attend college. She experienced three unsuccessful attempts until, finally in 2012, Confederation College started their Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) Program. Amanda’s dream became a reality when she was accepted into the Early Childhood Education program.

Amanda has maintained a 4.0 grade point average each semester and has served as Class President. To date, she has completed co-op placements at St. Elizabeth School and at Communities Together for Children. Amanda is described as an excellent role model for her peers as she demonstrates all of the key traits that contribute to successful learning. Amanda will be in the first class of graduates of the CICE program.

After graduation, Amanda hopes to find a career working with children. And she’s not ruling out continuing her education at the university level. Congratulations, Amanda. You make us proud!



Amanda Harris

