



# InTouch

## Board Approves Four Early Dismissal Days for Secondary Schools

Trustees agreed for the second year-in-a-row to designate 4 separate days as Early Dismissal Days at the high schools for next year.

During the 2013 -14 school year the board approved to pilot 4 Secondary Early Release Days. The result of the pilot was a huge success according to Pino Tassone, Superintendent of Education.

“These days really accomplish two things: improved student achievement by providing additional professional learning for our teachers and it also supports secondary students in obtaining their required volunteer hours.”

Mr. Tassone elaborated on what early dismissal days look like. “Essentially the school day is compressed with periods being shortened and students bussed home early. Meanwhile the teachers remain at school to participate in structured professional learning that is aimed at increasing their instructional knowledge and skill,” he said.

He added that the shortened days provide some additional benefits for teachers.

“Rarely are all teachers available to work together on intense and focussed professional learning and we also see significant savings in PD, specifically in the area of supply teacher costs.

Early Release days also provide benefits for the students. “Secondary staff worked with Volunteer Thunder Bay to ensure that placements were made available to all students who are not yet connected to a service or agency for volunteerism,” he said.

### Sample Schedule of an Early Release Day

Period 1 8:40-9:30

Period 2 9:30-10:20

Opening prayer 10:20-10:30

Period 3 10:30-11:20

Period 4 11:20-12:10

Dismissal of students 12:10 - Students bussed home to begin their volunteer experience

Lunch for Staff 12:10-12:45

Professional Learning Session 12:50-2:50

## Board Putting BEST (Board Environmental Stewardship Team) Foot Forward

The Board Environmental Stewardship Team (BEST) supports our Good Places to Learn and Work strategy for increased environmental friendliness. BEST works collaboratively with all members of our Board to expand environmental stewardship initiatives.

The Ontario Eco-Schools Program has been a particular focus for the team in continuing to improve on environmental education and operational practices. To date, seven schools are Eco-certified.

The committee includes Alex Busch, Michael Tracz, Joel Bisenthal, Joel Facca, Lindsay Tomasevic, Don Grant and Alma Provenzano.

Superintendent Omer Belisle recognized the group for their work. “I want to personally thank these individuals. These initiatives require a lot of work and a lot of personal time behind the scenes and for that we thank you all.”

## Construction Update

Tom Mustapic, Associate Director and Superintendent of Business and Corporate Services provided Trustees with an update on the two new additions at our schools.

### St. Martin School

The St. Martin project commenced in August 2013. The scope of the project includes a gymnasium expansion, four classroom addition and renovations to four-classrooms. Total value of the project is estimated at \$3,392,000.

“This project is proceeding extremely well. It is ahead of schedule and on budget. The gymnasium expansion was completed in early January and occupancy was taken. The addition is essentially complete with occupancy occurring the week of March 24th. The contractor has moved to the final stage of the project which involves the classroom renovations. We expect this project to be completed well before the original completion target of mid-August 2014,” he said.

### Holy Cross School

The Holy Cross project commenced earlier this month. It involves a one-classroom addition. Total value of the project is estimated at \$750,000.

“This project has met the commencement date despite the extreme winter conditions we have experienced. We believe this bodes well for the completion of the project which is targeted for mid – August,” he added.



*The four-classroom addition at St. Martin School*

