



School Profile: St. Luke Catholic High School

St. Luke Catholic High School offers students a specialized educational environment which is personalized for the individual needs of each learner. The program offers unique educational opportunities for students in grades 7 through 12, including many experiential learning opportunities and a well-established cooperative education program.

Principal Paul MacDonald and Teacher Laura Mackler, presented information to the Board about some of the learning opportunities available to students at St. Luke.

"St. Luke is a faith-centred educational facility where students learn in a safe, supportive environment," began Principal Paul MacDonald. "We promote self-discipline, motivation, and an attitude to always do our best."

One of the primary goals of the school is to develop the skills and confidence for students to become life-long learners, while providing experiences to help them achieve their full potential.

"Our graduates pursue opportunities that lead them directly into the world of work," noted MacDonald. "Particularly apprenticeship opportunities, ever increasingly over the last several years, have been a highlight of the options available to our students."

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and the Dual Credit Program are two pathway options for students to follow when working toward their diploma. At St. Luke, students pursuing an OYAP apprenticeship are teamed up with an employer, where they spend several months out of the classroom completing their level 1 apprenticeship. The Dual Credit Program gives students the opportunity to take a college course for a number of months, while still doing high school courses.

"Dual Credit has really come to play in our school," noted teacher Laura Mackler. "We have had so many students take advantage of this pathway, which allows students the opportunity to take a college course, while doing their high school courses. There are eight students this year who are completing dual-credits in semester one, and we have the most number of students enrolled in the western region – eight in total for semester one. They are taking a variety of subjects including art history, hairdressing, sociology, police foundations, and computer technology."

A testimonial video was shown of a current student who had struggled with anxiety and traditional classroom environments who had made huge strides in her education and success, and who plans now to pursue a career as a nurse thanks to her Dual Credit Program pathway.



Summer Learning Program 2018

CDSBEO has had the opportunity to offer the Summer Learning Program across the Board for the past nine years. This program, funded by the Ministry of Education through Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), has been an integral part of building literacy and numeracy skills, as well as developing students coding and robotics experience.

Principal of Curriculum Dawn Finnegan presented an overview of the benefits of the Summer Learning Program to the Board.

The program is intended to support students in the primary grades who would benefit from engaging and interactive literacy and numeracy instruction during the summer months.

Key components of the program include opportunities for students to increase their literacy and numeracy skills, and develop social skills through small peer group interaction. Students participate in daily physical activity, art programming, excursions, and other recreational activities. In addition, regular visits from guest speakers like Indigenous elders is a valued part of the program.

In conjunction with the Summer Learning Program, a significant research study is in place to examine the factors that minimize summer learning loss, and close the achievement gap. Each year, students in the program complete STAR testing, which measures their reading and numeracy level in June. Students are then revisited by board staff in September to complete the testing again, which allows for an analysis of how well the program helped students to retain academic skills over the summer months.

"An in-depth research study has clearly identified that summer learning programs do make a difference in minimizing summer learning loss, while also contributing to increased levels of student achievement and confidence," noted Finnegan. "The Summer Learning Program provides students with opportunities they may not typically have access to."

The program was held at five CDSBEO school locations, with 158 students from grades 1, 2, and 3 participating for four weeks during the month of July.

"Each classroom had a teacher and tutor who worked together to deliver programming. In addition, each site had a Robotics and Lego tutor who would work with small groups of children to introduce them to coding, robotics, and other science-based programming."

The experiential education and excursion component of the program brought students to places such as the local library, splash pad, museum, police and fire stations, as well as outdoor scavenger hunts.

"At the conclusion of the program parents were invited to complete a survey to share their feedback. The comments we received from parents were heartwarming. They had only positive feedback to share."



Balanced School Day Schedule

The Balanced School Day Schedule is an alternative elementary school schedule whereby students have three extended blocks of uninterrupted learning time, with two 40-minute breaks that include a 20 minute nutritional break and 20 minutes of outdoor play. Proponents of the Balanced School Day Schedule emphasize that moving from the traditional three breaks in a school day to two breaks minimizes time spent in transition. However, there are benefits and challenges related to both traditional and balanced school day schedules.

Curriculum Consultant Mary-Kate Bridson presented information to the Board on the Balanced School Day Schedule, which is currently implemented at five CDSBEO schools.

"Benefits of a Balanced School Day Schedule include longer blocks of uninterrupted learning time, with two breaks, and fewer transitions," explained Bridson. "The traditional model utilized in many schools includes three or four blocks of learning time with three breaks, two snacks, and one lunch."

"The second nutrition break can help to boost energy later in the day to promote greater concentration and focus. Fewer transitions for students can also contribute to less loss of instructional time due to dressing and undressing for breaks."

While there are some benefits to the Balanced Day Schedule, Bridson noted that there are also many benefits to a traditional schedule.

"Shorter blocks of learning time can be beneficial for our students who need frequent body breaks, or more frequent outdoor play opportunities. In shorter learning blocks, it can be easier to maintain student concentration."

From an administrative perspective, schools noted that while the Balanced Day Schedule allowed for easier scheduling of learning time and more convenient student recess supervision, challenges for staff team building and scheduling for prep time may exist.

Both the Traditional and Balanced Day Schedules are in line with Ministry of Education requirements.