

CATHOLIC TEACHERS IN EVERGREEN AND STAR WILL EXCEL THANKS TO LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP

Catholic teachers will benefit from a new leadership program from Newman Theological College, which was the brainchild of Evergreen Catholic School Division and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Division (STAR).

Teachers from across these two divisions will now have the opportunity to engage in leadership training from what is called the EXCEL Academy, which stands for Excellence in Catholic Educational Leadership. The program designed to develop the next generation of Catholic educational leaders in Evergreen and STAR school divisions.

The Academy's concept was developed by Evergreen's Deputy Superintendent Michael Hauptman and STAR's Associate Superintendent Troy Davies. They approached Fr. Stefano Penna, Dean at Newman Theological College to create linkages between their organizations. Newman agreed to provide the division's teachers with six graduate level credits for completing the EXCEL program as well as provide additional support and resources, including access to instructors and the library. The six credits can be applied to a diploma, which requires

a total of 12 credits.

Hauptman said the EXCEL Academy partnership is designed to support current leaders in their formation to become exceptional leaders in Catholic Education. "This program will provide a supportive and reflective environment that enables educators to develop their faith as it applies to all aspects of the Catholic leader experience," he said.

The program will also be very inclusive to staff throughout the division. "There will be eight face-to-face sessions, and the rest of the program can be completed online," Hauptman said. "That will be great for our teachers who live farther away in Hinton and Westlock. We're also looking at developing all levels in our division. We're offering this to staff at all levels, including teachers, not just principals or administrators already in leadership roles."

Using a disciplined application process, the program will accept up to 16 teachers into a cohort every two years. The teachers will meet eight times, for full day sessions, to focus on a challenging curriculum that has been custom-designed. A weekend retreat caps off the program.

Each curriculum module has been designed to deliberately focus on one of the four words that make up the EXCEL acronym. For instance, two sessions will focus exclusively on what it means to pursue "excellence" and two other sessions will focus on the implications of what it means to be absorbed in "leadership." In addition to academic and reflective work, participants will be required to engage in various leadership projects back at their sites to put their learning into concrete action. The entire program will be infused with a Catholic perspective. Even the lunches, which have been billed "Faith 'n Feast" sessions, will be a time when participants receive formation in the faith, as Newman faculty will join them during meals to provide theological teaching.

The partners are excited about this new three-way partnership and the potential it holds for developing a new cadre of Catholic educational leaders who are deeply prepared and spiritually formed to assume the mantle of leadership and the responsibilities that comes with leading our Catholic schools.

"Excellence in Catholic education starts with the leaders in our

schools that are in front of our children. This partnership will provide our leaders of today and tomorrow the training from a fully Catholic permeated perspective that will benefit our educational communities," said Evergreen Board Chair Robert Vasseur.

Maria Lentz, chair of the STAR Board of Trustees believes that students in classrooms being led by teachers taking part in this program will be enriched and so will all those around them. Newman Theological College has been so impressed by the program, it has asked for permission to offer it to other school divisions. ■



Deputy Superintendent Michael Hauptman

ST. GREGORY STUDENTS GET HANDS ON SCIENCE

St. Gregory Catholic School is gearing up to once again welcome the Science In Motion team to their school for three days of experiments and exploration.

An annual guest at St. Gregory, Science in Motion is the crew from the Telus World of Science in Edmonton that visits schools to teach students in a very engaging and fun way.

Students learn the secrets of blowing the biggest bubbles, what makes a boat float or sink and how light

affects the colours we see. They'll also be able to build machines and roller coasters, see how magnets work and learn about the sounds we hear.

"Kids always love our Science in Motion days," said Principal Tim Zarski. "It's very 'hands-on' and they watch, observe and learn much differently. It's a great experience."

The Science In Motion team will be at the school between Feb. 1 and 3 and will hold four classes per day. ■



St. Gregory students learn to blow the biggest bubbles during a Science In Motion session last year.



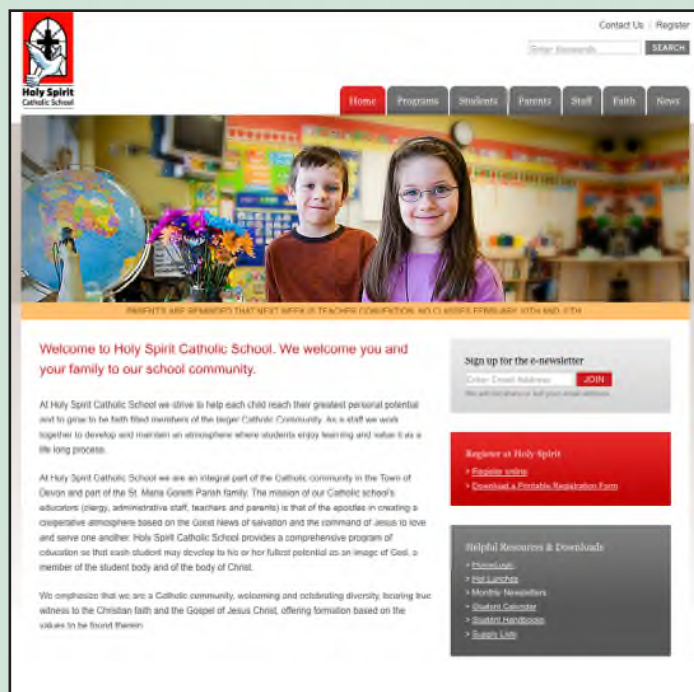
NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED FOR HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit Catholic School's redesigned and revamped website is now online. The school is the first in the division to have a new site launched and all Evergreen schools will have new websites by the end of the school year.

"It's going to be great for our students, staff and our parents," said Principal Steve Dempsey. "The sites are intuitively laid out and will make finding information about our school much easier."

The Holy Spirit site, and all of the new sites have specific sections for programs, resources, faith and for students. All the information you could find on the old website will be on the new site, including newsletters, information for parents and registration information.

The address for the site will all remain the same: www.hsccs.ca.



ST. MARG STUDENTS SPELL SUCCESS

On Friday, Jan. 7, St. Marguerite students put many hours of studying dictionaries to good use as the school hosted the finals for the Canspell School Spelling Bee in the school gym.

More than 30 students from grades 5-8 participated in the school finals, and the bee had to go to over 10 rounds of qualifiers to get down to the final four students, which happened to be one from each grade.

The top speller at each grade level was Jordyn Mueller (Grade 5),

Brenden Philpott (Grade 6), Halley McFaul (Grade 7) and Aiden Sawchuk (Grade 8, and overall winner).

Evergreen Religious Education Coordinator Karen Koester attended as the guest pronouncer.

Sawchuk will now move on to compete at the Regional Spelling Bee on Feb. 20 at the University of Alberta. He will have a shot at \$5,000 Canspell Education Award and a trip to Toronto in March to take part in the national competition.



Aiden Sawchuk, seen here with Principal James Fraser, is moving on to the regional Canspell Bee on Feb. 20.

GERARD REDMOND TEACHERS TO BENEFIT FROM KAGAN INSTITUTE

Gerard Redmond School is looking forward to their upcoming professional development days this month, featuring a cooperative learning specialist from the Kagan Institute. The staff will be presented with strategies for implementing effective cooperative learning techniques in the classroom.

"This is a school-wide initiative and should prove to be very informa-

tive and useful," said Principal Tim Fafard. "When students are engaged, they pay attention, they're motivated, they learn more, and the learning sticks."

The biggest difference between the Kagan approach and teaching using traditional methods is the ability to engage every student. Traditional classroom teaching captures the minds and attention of some stu-

dents, but not all. Good teachers engage more students. But even the best teachers who use traditional instruction don't require every student to participate. With traditional instruction, there is always a subset of students who fall through the cracks. There continues to be a widening gap between high achievers and low achievers. Kagan Structures aim to engage every student.

In the traditional classroom, the teacher is the hardest working person. The Kagan institute believes that this is backwards. Students need to work at least as hard! The more they interact with their peers and with the curriculum, the more they'll learn. Kagan Structures require every student to participate frequently and equally.

Schools:

Holy Spirit - Devon
John Paul II - Stony Plain
St Mary - Westlock

St Joseph - Spruce Grove
St Marguerite - Spruce Grove
St Thomas Aquinas - Spruce Grove

Evergreen Outreach & Distance Learning Centre - Spruce Grove

Gerard Redmond CCS - Hinton
St Gregory CES - Hinton