

Director's
ANNUAL REPORT



2022-2023

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OUR
MISSION

**Together We Educate
Heart Mind and Soul.**

OUR
VISION

**To inspire spiritual
growth within an
inclusive and respectful
environment.**

OUR
VALUES

**To graduate students
who have the knowledge,
skills and confidence to
affect change.**

STRATEGIC *Priorities*



SUPERIOR
NORTH
CATHOLIC DSB

ABOUT US

AT A GLANCE

Superior North Catholic District School Board (SNCD SB) is one of the smallest and most northern school boards in Ontario, located north of Lake Superior. The kindergarten to grade 8 school board spans over 14,000 square kilometres and requires 5 hours to drive from border to border.



Number of elementary schools: **8**



Number of students: **717**



Total number of permanent employees: **172**



Total number of casual employees: **145**

MESSAGE

FROM THE *Director*



The ultimate responsibility of education is to foster the holistic development of individuals and lead them toward leading productive lives. Catholic schools have the added responsibility of guiding students along a Catholic lens, which means we focus on the importance of others by valuing kindness, empathy, compassion, equity, and inclusivity. Our lessons, whether academic or otherwise, are based on the belief that our students are at the core of what we do. Our decisions are always based on what is best for students.

The increase in enrollment at SNCDSB is a testament to the fact that our quality programming holds value for our parent community. In 2023, we continued to invest funding and effort into the social and emotional well-being of students. Without security and well-being, it is challenging to learn. Increased support for special education, cutting-edge technology, and innovative approaches to how students learn has set us up for positive outcomes. Although we continue to have staffing challenges like many other organizations, we still provide teachers with exceptional professional development and training in math and literacy. With the Ministry of Education's emphasis on mathematics, we have created a Math Strategy Achievement Plan to focus on increasing scores and readying students for the future. In 2023, we also offered our first reach ahead credit for grade 8 students. This allows students to ease the transition between elementary and secondary and reduces the academic demand in the first year of high school. We will continue to offer more reach ahead credits this 2024 school year.

I want to thank all our staff and volunteers who play a critical role in a student's school experience. I commend my executive team and all who work behind the scenes at our Catholic Education Center for their collaborative approach and commitment to our students.

A special thank you to our parent community for trusting us to serve your children. The following images and information in this report will detail our accomplishments and show the student experience.

"Together We Educate Heart, Mind *and* Soul."



Maria Vasanelli
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FAITH
AND
JUSTICE

The Superior North Catholic District School Board continues to prioritize Faith and Justice through investing in human and digital resources to support Catholicity, faith development, and religious and family life education. Faith Day, the faith ambassador program, liturgical celebrations and observances of Catholic Education Week are supported by the Board's Catholicity and Special Projects Lead, who provides ongoing support to educators and administrators virtually and in-person through ad hoc meetings and the SNCDSB Halo. The SNCDSB Halo is a digital resource provided to staff, trustees and local clergy according to the liturgical calendar and provides links to virtual resources, reflections, and prayer services, as well as information about saints, feasts, and other important aspects of Catholic culture to compliment and standardize our religious education programming across our system.





SOCIAL JUSTICE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

INNOVATION & QUALITY

Superior North Catholic District School Board values the presence of God in every individual and provides a welcoming, inclusive Catholic culture that instills compassion, hope, acceptance, integrity, faithfulness, respect and self-worth.

Equity and inclusive education efforts were ongoing and continue to require strategic leadership and shared commitment. Through our commitment to following the Institute for Catholic Education guidelines and recommendations, our organization identifies and addresses any and all systemic inequities and barriers affecting Indigenous, racial, and ethnocultural communities in the planning and delivery of programs and services.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The Catholic Parent Involvement Committee met four times during the school year. All meetings were held virtually due to our vast geography and to provide easier access to our parents from all our communities.

During the meetings, the Committee discussed strategies to increase parent engagement at the school and Board levels.

In response to PPM 166, Keeping Students Safe: Policy Framework for School Board Anti-Sex Trafficking Protocols, the committee also presented to parents from all of our communities to promote awareness, prevention and safety.





MATH UP

As a Math Team, we continually seek ways to collect and monitor student learning and growth in Math. With much success in using Math UP Classroom, the Math Team further investigated Math UP Leadership to support our Principals. The team worked with Doug Duff (the creator of Math UP Leadership) to discuss the math needs and concerns of Superior North Catholic DSB. We felt that bringing Doug onto our team as a consultant/ lead learner for the 2023/24 school year was a great fit.



Doug Duff presented a full day of professional development to all the principals, vice principals, senior team, and math facilitators. He ignited the idea that we can change our students' mindsets and academic achievements in a short period of time. Everyone was optimistic about the Math strategies and outcomes he presented. His enthusiastic modeling and professional conversations have us all excited to move forward with our Math School Improvement planning for the 2023/24 school year.



TEACHING
EXCELLENCE

**TEACHING
EXCELLENCE**



After the launch of Math UP Classroom in May of 2022, the Math Team started the year supporting this implementation as the core math program for grades K-8. With our lifetime subscription to this online professional learning platform, we are confident the educators at Superior North Catholic District School Board will have all the math resources needed to support their professional learning and the learning of their students, as well as a Balanced Math program.

Superior North Catholic District School Board staff can assess all grades from K-8 in Math UP. This helps staff to tailor learning to individual student needs, including students with special needs or requiring additional support. Math UP also provides “Going forward...Going Back” options that create a learning continuum across all curricular skills and concepts. This core math program also provides parallel task and differentiation opportunities.

At the end of the 2022/23 school year, the Math Team was enthusiastic that almost 60% of our staff regularly used Math UP in their classroom and look forward to continuing to train, model and demonstrate learning of this resource to all our staff.



EQAO Support sessions were provided for all grade 3-6 classrooms. Some of the highlights of EQAO Support sessions:

- The co-construction of an EQAO learning goal and success criteria
- Creating a growth mindset
- Development of a math wall
- Access to math tools
- How to answer multiple-choice, drop-down or drag-and-drop questions
- How to use the EQAO digital platform
- Showing your work at your desk
- Strategies for problem-solving (i.e. using manipulatives and graphic organizers)

EQAO

These sessions allowed students across the Board to learn from each other. It also gave the students the comfort of knowing that they were not the only students preparing for EQAO. Overall, after two years of completing these online sessions, the Math Team will continue to offer them in the future.

THE EARLY YEARS

Our Kindergarten classrooms continue to be where our youngest learners begin their exciting educational journey. Our Kindergarten environments continue to offer caring and engaging learning environments where children develop creativity and imagination, build and construct, draw and paint, listen and talk, and be curious.

Our Kindergarten programs and educators continued to focus on teaching excellence by developing both their Indoor and Outdoor Education spaces to ensure that students engaged in learning experiences that inspired their creativity and imagination; where they were able to build and construct, listen and talk, and to be curious about the world around them. We are so lucky that so many of our physical school buildings are surrounded by green space which allows educators and students wonderful rich learning experiences that only serve to enhance the Kindergarten curriculum.





FAITH
AND
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INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION

FOCUS
ON THE
FUTURE

In focusing on the future, Welcome to Kindergarten sessions were offered at all schools for all new families in March to May, where all newly registered children had an opportunity to explore their classroom and parents were able to learn about the Kindergarten program and the school that their family were going to become a part of. Ages and Stages Screening was conducted on all new students in Kindergarten at the end of May and were scheduled face to face to ensure that each Kindergarten educator had the opportunity to meet each of their new students and families one to one. Students continue to be invited for at least 3 Kindergarten transition visits in June and then an additional visit in August to ensure a smooth transition to Kindergarten and school occurs in September.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

At Superior North Catholic District School Board, our approach to Special Education programs and services is based on teaching excellence by meeting students' needs within the most supportive learning environment. We actively promote the goal of inclusive education, understanding that inclusion means that students with special needs fully participate in the life of the school community alongside their peers as their needs allow. Our educators work closely with one another and parents to provide the appropriate support for each child.

Support for struggling learners follows a tiered intervention approach, ensuring a process is in place for in-school special education teams to monitor and assess student progress through school-based programming and/or interventions. This monitoring ensures that appropriate support and programming is done first in school, followed by the next step. This may include referrals for board-level support through focussed interventions, therapy and/or assessment provided by fee for service providers or agency partnerships.

The evidence-based Empower Reading program is a Tier 3 intervention program developed by Sick Kids Hospital to assist children and adolescents with difficulties in reading and spelling to become independent and flexible learners. SNCDSB continues to offer this valuable program to our most at-risk readers. All students engaging in Empower significantly demonstrated increased self-confidence in reading as their reading scores increased by several grade levels due to this program.



A foundation for teaching excellence is having a strong sense of belonging and connections within our system and communities. Our internal Mental Health and Well-being Team consists of Positive Behaviour Support Workers, Child and Youth Worker, the Mental Health Lead, and a Superintendent Responsible for Mental Health throughout the Board. The team worked diligently on various deliverables (using a tiered approach to intervention) throughout the year to ensure our students were set up for success. The team supported students on a one-to-one or universal basis using classwide approaches and strategies to promote each student in achieving excellence.

Professional development promotes Faith and Justice throughout the board. The SNCDSB continues to emphasize Mental Health Literacy for both staff and students. Each year, including the 2022-2023 academic year, the board dedicates a full PD day to learning and enhancing our understanding of mental health promotion at all tiers. The SNCDSB works closely with School Mental Health Ontario to ensure practices, resources, and training plans remain current and appropriate. We recognize that needs are diverse; therefore, we tailor training or PD opportunities to the request of the person requiring the support. The SNCDSB maintains their partnership with Children's Centre Thunder Bay. This partnership has been extended, and the board now has access to two part-time Social Workers who provide virtual clinical counselling services to students referred to their services.

The team continuously Focused on the Future and prioritized engagement and strong connections through various means, such as access to various Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) resources (Zones of Regulation, Kids Have Stress Too, Second Step Program, Roots of Empathy, etc). Our internal staff worked collaboratively with our classroom teachers to make sure that both SEL and mental health literacy opportunities were visible and occurring throughout the board. In grades 5-8, students were invited to participate in a Boardwide Virtual Mental Health and Well-being Student Leadership Committee. This committee's overall goal is to ensure the student voice is captured and that students are provided with leadership opportunities that will directly and positively impact them, their families, and the school communities.

The Indigenous culture has various natural healing components that organically promote well-being when balance can be achieved through a holistic approach. Collaboration and quality improvement will be centred on our relationships and understanding of those we serve. The SNCDSB emphasized creating and maintaining solid relationships with all stakeholders, including community partners.





SNCDSB takes great pride in the work being done with **Indigenous Education** and our initiatives to support students, teachers, families and the community. Our schools foster safe and comfortable learning environments that aim to improve student achievement and well-being for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students by following the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada - Calls to Action.

SNCDSB continues to offer Native Language in seven of our eight schools. SNCDSB understands the importance of learning language, especially starting at an early age and offers Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) to students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.



Indigenous Education continues to focus on having students see themselves in their learning by embedding culture into our schools to make learning more meaningful. We are proud to continue to support our students with current Anishinaabemowin Resources. Many tools (Anishinaabemodaa App) and resources (books, shows, songs, games, etc.) have been developed, and our focus has been to utilize these resources with a local approach and dialect. Throughout last year, students continued to have the opportunity to meet with Indigenous presenters, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous Organizations. For instance, students met with Q-Mack on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, who gave a powerful pre-recorded Virtual Orange Shirt Day Assembly. Students also shared in land-based learning experiences such as rabbit snaring, cooking of traditional foods, woodland art teachings and paintings, Ojibwe beading and teachings, traditional drum making, storytelling, bear grease teachings, sweetgrass braiding, community feasts, powwow, and so much more. SNCDSB students also had the opportunity to join an Indigenous youth council that supported youth empowerment, and we are delighted to see how our youth leaders use their voices to shape our system.



The work we are doing to honour the Truth and Reconciliation - Calls to Action continues to be reflected in our Strategic Plan and is regularly shared with our Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (which we call IEAC). This committee is made up of parents or guardians of Indigenous students as well as Indigenous community members, organizations and partners. IEAC is instrumental to our work in Indigenous Education as they continue to provide our board with good guidance, feedback, and suggestions and inform us of our next steps.

The partnership approach has been a key element as we work together to collaborate and ensure success. We continued to work closely with the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee (ABC) to support language revitalization. The ABC helps bring Anishinaabemowin programming and resources into our schools to support students and teachers.





Drawing on the knowledge and teachings from our local Elders, knowledge keepers, Indigenous organizations and committees to support our shared mission and goal of student success was also a priority. Our schools, principals, Indigenous Education Lead and Senior Team continue to strengthen these relationships and we will continue to collaborate on best practices and shared resources to support all learners.

**INDIGENOUS
EDUCATION**



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



Superior North Catholic District School Board has integrated Indigenous Experiential Learning into school learning. These experiences offer valuable opportunities for students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures, traditions, and perspectives. Through cultural activities facilitated by Indigenous Elders and community members, students have engaged in storytelling, traditional crafts, and drumming while singing traditional Anishinaabemowin songs and fostering a profound connection to Indigenous heritage.

Taking the students on the land provides hands-on learning experiences about the environment, traditional land use practices, and the significance of natural resources. Our students had the pleasure of receiving bear grease teachings and making the traditional medicine, cedar bath to cleanse and heal, and water walks where they learned of ceremonial water teachings, prayed for the water and walked proudly to honour all the waters. Our schools collaborated with our First Nation communities and the Anishinaabemowin Boodawe Committee to incorporate Anishinaabemowin, history and perspectives while exploring the trails and learning about rabbit snaring. Rabbit snaring can offer kids valuable lessons in outdoor education, self-sufficiency, and cultural understanding. It teaches them about animal behaviour, tracking, and ethical hunting practices while fostering a deeper connection to the land. Through this activity, children develop responsibility, respect for wildlife, and environmental stewardship. The students reinforced their learning by speaking the language while doing the activity. The students also said they felt happy, engaged and motivated while being in the bush.

Ribbon skirts and shirts for students can serve multiple purposes within educational settings. The teaching and making of the skirts and shirts promote cultural appreciation and awareness and foster a sense of pride and identity among our students. Additionally, the skirts and shirts can be worn during cultural events or ceremonies, allowing students to showcase their cultural heritage and talents. Integrating ribbon skirts and shirts into student attire can enrich the educational experience, celebrate diversity, and promote cultural understanding and unity within the school community.

By weaving Indigenous content throughout the curriculum, schools enrich students' education and contribute to the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages, traditions, and knowledge systems.

Technology Enabled Learning

Technology Enabled Learning for the 2022-23 school year was again supported by the Technology Team, consisting of Sarah Clowes, System Technology Lead, and Cara Figliomeni, our Technology Enabled Learning Teacher under the supervision of Paul Tsekouras, Superintendent of Education. The TELT continued to support educators by facilitating school visits across SNCDSB and assisting them in using Brightspace Portfolio and the digital tools available in the SNCDSB Hub. To continue building capacity across the school district, each school identified a designated Technology Champion. The responsibilities of the Technology Champion include supporting new technology tools and 21st-century learning resources, troubleshooting technology, and liaising and working with the Technology Team. Throughout the year, the Technology Champions, in collaboration with the Technology Team, met to review SNCDSB's multi-year Strategic Plan, mainly focusing on the pillar titled Focus on the Future. They aimed to pinpoint priorities and establish support initiatives for the following 2023/24 school year. The TELT also assisted in implementing the School Messenger App and Brightspace Parent and Guardian App during school events, including Parent-Teacher interviews and Open Houses.

A priority for the 2022/23 school year was also the effective adoption and implementation of the ministry's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) D2L's Brightspace, which has been personalized at SNCDSB and referred to as the SNCDSB Hub. Enhancements to the SNCDSB Hub to support student learning will continue into the 2023/24 school year.



BLENDED LEARNING



The Board continues to support educators by providing software solutions that enhance the quality of classroom instruction. The goal of using digital tools is to deepen students' thinking beyond what is achieved through paper and pencil tasks. Programs such as Google Read and Write provide students with the tools to be successful in reading and writing. Students continue to leverage technology to have texts read to them and use features such as speech-to-text to write their thinking. Programs such as IXL, Reflex, Lexia and Raz Kids also support educators in integrating a balanced literacy or numeracy block into their classroom.

Supporting students transitioning to high school remains a strategic priority for the Superior North Catholic District School Board (SNCDsb). A key component of the transition process is the implementation of Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Brightspace in Grade 7 and 8 SNCDsb classrooms to ensure students have been exposed to and learned the program before beginning their secondary education. Knowledge of the D2L Brightspace platform is paramount to the successful transition of SNCDsb students to secondary school.

To further support students' transition and exposure to D2L, Grade 7 and 8 classroom teachers participated in a half-day Professional Development session to learn how to deliver science, history and geography curriculum content to our Grade 7 and 8 students. The expectation was that D2L course content would be delivered in the classroom before students' graduation in June 2023. Through this opportunity, educators had the opportunity to review the Ontario-aligned curriculum content curated by D2L and learned how to navigate the system.

SUMMER LEARNING



From July 4 to July 21, SNCDSB delivered a summer learning program to kindergarten through grade 8 students. There were 26 students registered, with a Primary/Junior class (Kindergarten-Grade 3) and a Junior/Intermediate class (Grade 4 - Grade 8). We had nine new families register for the 2022-2023 Summer Learning Program! This program was led by Sarah Clowes and Cara Figliomeni, who ensured that the educators and students had all of the instructional supplies they would require through the creation and delivery of Discovery Boxes to each individual participating student across the board. The program's focus continued to be Literacy, Numeracy and Healthy Living. Both classrooms and leads worked closely with local Indigenous partners, educators, and resources suggested to ensure that programming supported all students and that they could see themselves reflected within their learning environment.



SUMMER REACH AHEAD PILOT



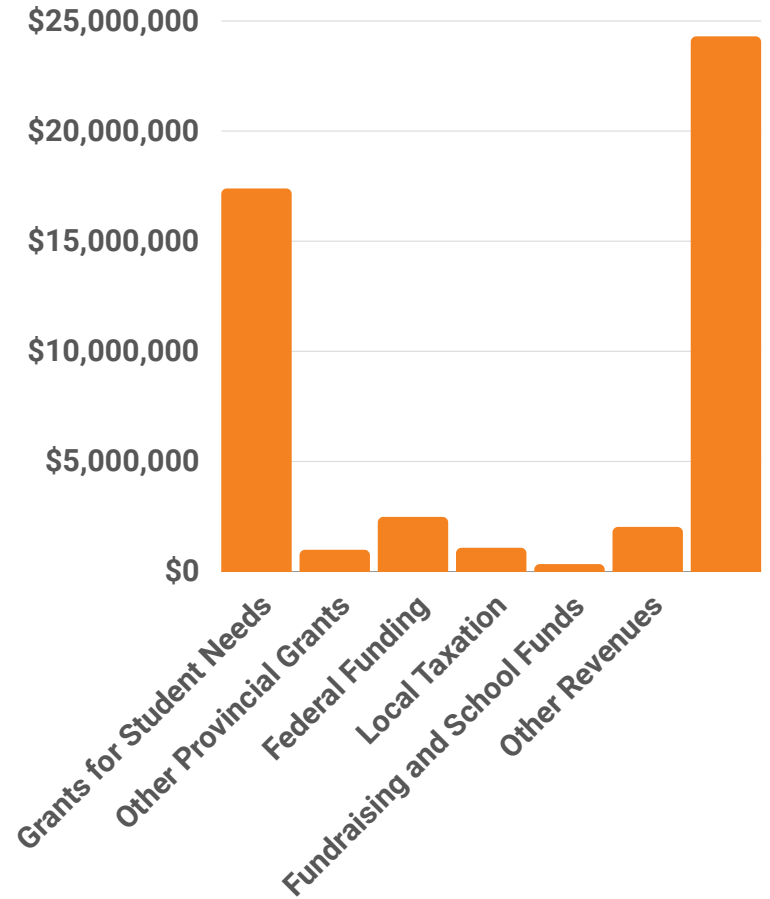
SNCDSDB successfully graduated students from the Reach Ahead credit GLS10 Learning Strategies. The course was administered through the D2L Brightspace platform, aligning its content directly with the Ontario Curriculum and Catholic graduate expectations. This exposure to D2L serves to enhance students' preparation for high school, as the Ministry of Education uses the same platform to deliver secondary e-learning courses. Daily synchronous and asynchronous learning sessions were facilitated through Google Classroom, providing students with a comprehensive educational experience.

GLS10
REACH
AHEAD
CREDIT

WHERE DID OUR FUNDS COME FROM?

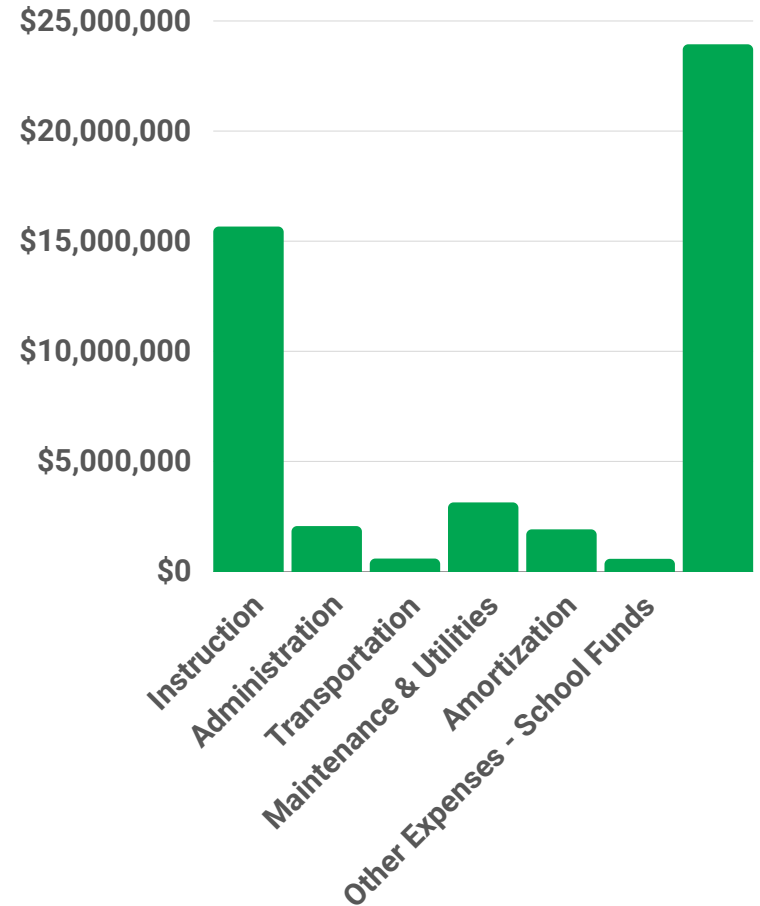


Revenues = \$24.3 Million



WHERE DID WE SPEND OUR FUNDS?

Expenses = \$23.9 Million



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



**FOCUS
ON THE
FUTURE**

CYBER SECURITY

During the 2022-2023 school year, the Information Technology department spent more time enhancing the Board's security posture using multi-factor authentication and raising awareness around cybersecurity risks and types of attacks.

The department upgraded the SNCDSB network with next-generation firewalls, wireless access points, and other network infrastructure to keep up with an ever-changing, secure ecosystem to keep our staff and students connected and safe while learning using technology.



HUMAN RESOURCES



FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The implementation of the Telus Health/LifeWorks Employee Family Assistance Program effective October 1, 2022 for all staff and their families

EASY CONNECT

Completed the 2nd and 3rd phase of Apply to Education (ATE) Easy Connect Project which includes Permanent Staff List Upload Automation in January 2023 and Absence Import/Export completed in May 2023 (Human Resources information system to ATE/Easy Connect). These efficiencies were implemented to reduce manual entries/submissions previously required by the HR Department.

DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

School Board's Cooperative Inc. (SBCI) Disability Management and Long Term Disability (LTD) Training during April and May 2023.

PLANT AND OPERATIONS

The Board continues to make improvements in our schools, including playground replacements, roofing replacements, flooring, doors and washroom upgrades.



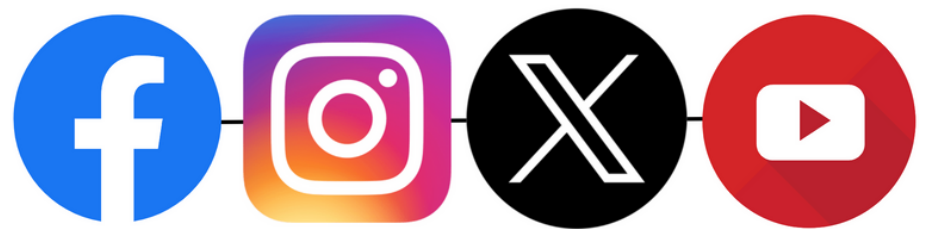
PLANT AND OPERATIONS

St. Hilary Catholic School is undergoing a renovation and addition project funded by the Province of Ontario and the Superior North Catholic District School Board to enhance learning environments, accessibility, and safety for students and staff.





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