

## Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways *the St. Francis de Sales Journey Continues*

We believe that in order to ensure our students achieve their maximum potential we must become more effective collaborators. However, as Katz, Earl and Jaafar (*Building and Connecting Learning Communities The Power of Networks for School Improvement*, 2009) noted:

*...bringing people together does not necessarily produce better outcomes, unless the collaborative work is organized to engage people in the process and is supported to move them beyond their established patterns.*

The staff of St. Francis de Sales quickly adopted the Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways (T-LCP) as a vehicle to achieve this. Our next challenge is to continue to make connections beyond our school to create expanding networks and hubs.

St. Francis de Sales Catholic Elementary School is located in *sensational* Smiths Falls and is part of the equally *sensational* Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO). We have just fewer than 300 students in grades 4 to 8. We offer core French in all grades and we offer French immersion in grades 5 to 8.

Our T-LCP journey began during the 2007-08 school year. Jennifer Perkin, principal of St. James Catholic Elementary School (also in Smiths Falls) and our board's LSA lead principal suggested that one teacher from St. Francis and I travel with her and one teacher from St. James to attend a T-LCP workshop with Denis Maika and Elaine Hine in Belleville. Suffice it to say that they had us at "hello."

Jennifer, with tremendous support from CDSBEO Superintendent Dr. Donaleen Hawes, quickly organized a T-LCP workshop at St. James with both of our staffs and they were immediately convinced that T-LCP was something we should try. The ongoing support from Denis, Elaine, Dr. Hawes and Jennifer has continued to be integral to our students' success.

Very quickly, the entire teaching staff from junior kindergarten to Grade 8 gathered together to plan a pathway during the 2008-09 school year focusing on making inferences. We identified this as an area of concern based on our analysis of students' results summarized by our data wall. The results were quite compelling demonstrating significant improvement in making inferences and in higher order thinking in all grades. A second pathway was undertaken with equally compelling results.

Later in the year the teaching staff agreed that they should get together to plan the 2009-10 school year using the T-LCP model. We knew that our school would be changing from a JK to Grade 8 school, to a grades 4 to 8 school. This created some additional challenges. The result was

an eight pathway, year at a glance planner developed around eight curriculum-based history, geography, social studies and science themes. Plans that are more specific were designed for each grade level from this.

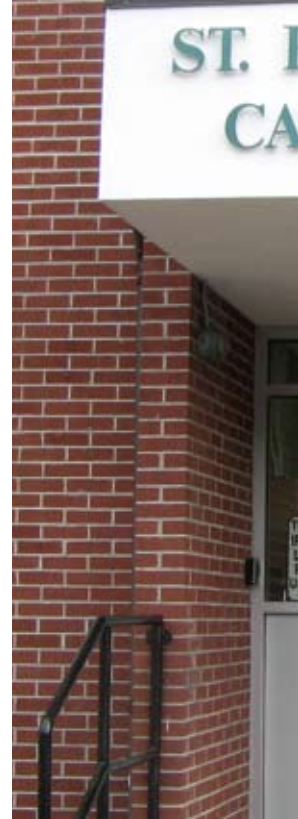
Before I go on to explain the T-LCP that we are immersed in this school year, I must impress that there has been much constructive dissonance along the way. This has manifested itself in frustration, disagreements, sometimes even with raised voices (temporary), hard feelings and even tears. We always, however, came back to the table and resolved our issues resulting in a better plan of action for our students. As I said at a recent presentation, "We do not all gather in a room, join hands and sing *Kum Ba Yah*. It has been tough slogging and still is, but the benefits are indisputable."

Our pathway, as mentioned above, is actually eight smaller pathways, each between four and six weeks long, which will take us through the 2009-10 school year. Our plan is a living document and we meet regularly to make adjustments to maximize student success. Our data wall is integral in ensuring we are able to set targets, pick marker students and ultimately determine if a given pathway is achieving the desired results.

The theme for each pathway is primarily based on a science and/or social studies concept. The school-wide critical thinking question is a template, which is made more grade specific and is based on the Ontario Curriculum. The whole school question for matter and energy is, "How does the way I use energy affect the world around me?" Students from each grade level have an opportunity to work together to tailor this question to better match their learning needs. The modified question is printed, laminated and prominently displayed in each classroom to help maintain focus.

Each pathway features a distinct focus on one or more of the Catholic virtues: faith, hope, love, justice, fortitude, prudence and temperance. These are prominently displayed in each classroom and around the school.

Regular school or classroom events were integrated into the plan whenever possible. The Royal Canadian Legion public speaking was completed in September and early October as this fit with the pathway best, but the finalists competed at the Legion level in early January. Standardized assessments such as the Comprehension, Attitudes, Strategies and Interests (CASI) test are also integrated.



# FRANCIS DE SALES CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Teachers regularly use CASI-like questions to conduct periodic assessments to determine where to go next in reading and the OWA-like (Ontario Writing Assessment) writing tasks to determine next steps in writing. These are based on the curriculum theme/content of the current pathway.

Our data wall includes various assessments including, but not limited to EQAO, CASI, OWA and various pieces of report card data, including learning skills and marks for language and mathematics. Teachers can sort by any of these variables and can even insert other variables to compare with the more standardized data. Some of our teachers have included learning modalities based on Gardiner's work and have drawn many valuable conclusions from these comparisons resulting in better teaching and learning. This enables each teacher to differentiate within the pathway to meet individual needs.

On one level, we have certainly noted an increase in student achievement, which we attribute to the T-LCP model. On another level, I have noted that the T-LCP and associated processes have enabled us to organize our collaborative work in such a way as to engage people in the process. It has also most certainly moved us all beyond our established patterns. Collaborative planning of assignments and marks sharing across subjects is commonplace. We are focused on the students and their work. Valuable conclusions about the efficacy of a given pathway are drawn and are acted upon, in both the short and long term.

It is extremely gratifying and exciting to be a part of the team here at St. Francis de Sales. We continue our journey and we are striving to help build networked learning communities. We believe that T-LCP is an excellent and integral component to help achieve this collaborative culture and ultimately the success of our students.

For further information, contact Derek Haime at [Derek.Haime@cdsbeo.on.ca](mailto:Derek.Haime@cdsbeo.on.ca).



## New Members

### Welcome to our new members.

We look forward to assisting you in your new role as a school administrator and answering any questions you may have about the privileges of membership in CPCO.

## Long Term Disability Plan (LTD)

If you are a member of the following school boards, you need to apply for the CPCO Benefits Plan within 90 days of your appointment:

Algonquin & Lakeshore, Durham, Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, Halton, Huron-Perth, Niagara, Nipissing-Parry Sound, Northeastern, Ottawa, Peterborough/Victoria/Northumberland and Clarington, Simcoe Muskoka, St. Clair, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Waterloo, Windsor-Essex, York.

### For more information about the Plan and its enhancements:

- visit the CPCO website at [www.cpco.on.ca](http://www.cpco.on.ca) under the **Member Services** link;
- contact the Member Services Director at the toll free number: 1-888-621-9190 ext. 38; or
- contact Johnson Inc., the Plan Administrator at the toll free number: 1-800-461-4155.

***The CPCO Benefits Plan is a voluntary program and it is the member's responsibility to apply for coverage.***

## Membership Information

Communicating with our members is important to us. Up-to-date information is essential to ensure that we can provide you with uninterrupted services.

Make any changes online or contact Gaby Aloj, Office Supervisor at [galoj@cpco.on.ca](mailto:galoj@cpco.on.ca).

- » Moved schools
- » Moved boards\*
- » Moved to a new home
- » Going on leave or have been seconded
- » Received a promotion or change in your position

*\* If you have moved boards, check to see if the association is a member of the CPCO Benefits Plan for LTD.*

### Considering retirement this year?

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### Need legal advice?

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