



Director's Monthly Report

February 2024

Despite the grey skies and winter weather, the month of February represents a new beginning for many staff and students as we turn the corner of the academic year. Exams and culminating activities are completed in secondary schools as our students and staff begin second semester in earnest. Our elementary students will be receiving report cards to update on their progress to date while collaborating with parents about the way forward for the rest of the year. It is a time to reflect on all of the work and effort that has brought us to this halfway point in the year and a time to refine our plans and commitments for a successful second half of the year.

As we begin our Lenten journey we make our commitments of atonement, fasting, and almsgiving as we prepare throughout the six weeks of Lent for the most important celebration on our Christian calendar: the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Ash Wednesday on February 14th marks the beginning of our Lenten journey as we mark our foreheads in public recognition of our Catholic Christian commitments during this time. There are so many creative and humbling ways students throughout the system commit to charity (almsgiving), fasting ("giving up" for Lent), and pray throughout the season which continue to inspire and encourage as we lead by example in our communities as Catholics.

Ash Wednesday also falls on St. Valentine's Day this year, the day we associate with all things "love" on the day we acknowledge the Christian martyr St. Valentine who ministered to Christians who were being persecuted during the Roman Empire. St. Valentine is also the patron saint of Terni, Italy, of epilepsy, and of beekeeping.

Black History Month is celebrated throughout the month of February, but in the TCDSB, we have taken an approach this year that recognizes "Black History 365" which encourages the acknowledgement, exploration, and understanding of Black excellence all year long. This year's theme of "Know History, Know Self" is an ongoing approach to celebrating Black excellence and exploring important themes, ideas, and commitments. From our Dismantling Anti-Black Racism seminar in October to the BRAVE conference in November, the Sankofa series in November to the welcoming author Lawrence Hill, "The Nature of Things" host Anthony Morgan, and author Hezzy for our African Canadian Heritage Month programs, we continue to take a "365" approach to the celebration of Black history, culture, and excellence all year long.

Thank you to our staff throughout the system for the work they do every day to create safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for our students to learn and thrive, and to our wonderful parents and volunteers who give so consistently and selflessly to serve and support throughout every school in our system. We are truly blessed!

During **February** we celebrate **Love** as the **Virtue of the Month for February** and recognize important observances such as: African Canadian Heritage Month, Psychology Month, TCDSB Energy Conservation Month, National Inclusive Education Month, World Interfaith Harmony Week, World Day for Consecrated Life, Winter Walk Day, Canadian School Counselling Week, World Day of the Sick, Lunar New Year, UN International Day of Women and Girls in Science, St. Valentine's Day, Ash Wednesday, Childhood Cancer Awareness Day, World Day of Social Justice, Family Day, International Language Instructors' Appreciation Day (International Mother Language Day), National Human Trafficking Awareness Day

Highlights from February include:

- Recognizing and engaging with our school communities during **African Canadian Heritage Month** – Embracing the theme of "**Know history, Know self**" with **Anthony Morgan**, the new co-host of the CBC's The Nature of Things, to inspire and engage our students with his passion for science and learning
- Attending and serving breakfast at the Angel Foundation for Learning and the Grocery Foundation at this year's **Toonies for Tummies** event at the **St. Augustine Catholic School**
- Participating in the Ash Wednesday Mass with the **Fr. John Redmond** Secondary school community at **St. Teresa's Parish**
- Participating in the **Ash Wednesday Livestream Mass at the CEC**
- Attending and delivering greetings at the **Toronto Catholic Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association annual business lunch**
- Attending the **International Feast Day** at **St. Isaac Jogues Catholic Elementary School** celebrating diverse cultures and traditions through artwork, cuisine, and traditional attire
- Participating in the **Friends and Advocates of Catholic Education (FACE) Webinar** discussing provincial FACE initiatives and celebrating Catholic Education within our school communities
- Visting school communities such as **St. Nicholas Catholic School** and **St. Barnabas Catholic School**
- Participating in the **Spring Regional Education Council conference** along with Director of Education colleagues from GTHA
- **Meeting with Catholic Directors, particularly Catholic Directors from neighbouring GTA Catholic School Boards** in support of best practices, shared issues, solutions, and advocacy throughout Catholic education in Ontario