

BALANCED BUDGET IN PLACE AS CATHOLIC STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL

Students at St. Patrick School in Kapuskasing reconnect with their classmates on the first day of school.

The excited voices of children filled the halls of English Catholic schools this week, as students began a new part of their learning journey. The launch of the school year coincides with the beginning of the budget year for schools boards, and the Northeastern Catholic District School Board is no exception.

As students reconnect with classmates and meet their new teachers, they can rest assured that the books are balanced and that resources are in place to meet their learning needs. At the public Board meeting last week, trustees approved a balanced budget for 2005-2006 in the amount of \$32,051,396, which represents an increase of approximately 2.3 million dollars.

Board Chair Colleen Landers believes that this year's investments in education will support students as they enrich their minds and deepen their faith. "Part of our mandate as a board is to ensure that education funding is used in a manner that reflects our vision of the learner," explained Landers. "For us, this means ensuring that students acquire academic knowledge, practical skills and spiritual values. This budget fulfils that goal with a very sound financial approach that maximizes our use of funds. We are focussing particularly on literacy and numeracy, but recognize that a balanced approach to education is optimal for student learning. Our continued investments in resources and physical plant will also enhance our Catholic school system and help us achieve our mission to help each child learn."

The budget includes a commitment of over 4 million dollars in the area of special education to ensure adequate staffing, resources and programming. Over 1.2 million dollars have also been reserved for textbooks and classroom supplies.

Funding has been allocated for school renewal projects for 2005-06, including the construction of a brand new regulation size gymnasium at OICS, and several building upgrades at St. Anne English Catholic School in Iroquois Falls.

Vice Chair of the Board Elizabeth King is thrilled that St. Anne has been identified as a priority for this year. "Our Catholic school community in Iroquois Falls has a dynamic team of educators and support staff who already make learning enjoyable for the students," stated King. "The Board's commitment to modernize this school will rejuvenate school spirit and provide students with an even greater sense of pride in their studies. I am sure that families will be delighted with both the exterior facelift and the interior renovations planned in the coming year."

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