

# Helping Your Child to Succeed at School

## A Message from the Director of Education

The release of this community newsletter coincides with the beginning of the implementation of our new strategic plan, *Lighting the Way — Rejoicing in Our Journey: Our Plan for Excellence in our Catholic Schools, 2014 and Beyond*.

The mission of the St. Clair Catholic District School Board is:

**Walking together in Christ's light with parish and family, we are called to build a safe and inclusive Catholic learning community and to serve as partners in the formation of life-long learners by:**

- **Living our faith;**
- **Promoting educational achievement and innovation;**
- **Fostering stewardship, leadership and social justice.**

This mission provides focus and direction for our daily work throughout our Catholic

school system. It also proudly proclaims who we are, what we aspire to and what we stand for in this community.

You can clearly see in our mission statement that we embrace our opportunity to work with our families and the broader community as a critical component of achieving our mission.

The ability to achieve our mission also depends on having a plan to get there. Our new strategic plan provides the roadmap to do just that; and that is why I am so pleased that this new plan places strong emphasis on high levels of achievement and well-being for every student.

These are just a few of the goals we have for our students and your children.

- Our students' learning experiences are 21st Century, reflective of the global and digital age in which we live, rich in critical thinking, creativity and citizenship and

enhanced by technology.

- Our students achieve their highest levels of appropriate educational and personal development.
- We prepare our students for academic and practical success through innovative career-based opportunities involving Colleges, Co-operative Education and Apprenticeships.
- We commit to high levels of achievement and well-being for all students through professional learning that is collaborative, job-embedded and responsive to their needs within a caring Catholic culture.

These high, but attainable goals, are dependent on all of us — families, schools and parishes — working together.

In the pages that follow,



**Dan Parr**  
Director of Education

you will find some very rich and practical resources and strategies to help support your child as a confident and competent learner in our Catholic schools.

We are truly a Catholic community, committed to providing the best possible education for our students, in a learning environment, where the teachings of Jesus our Saviour are central to our mission and celebrated every day.



**ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC**  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

*Lighting the Way — Rejoicing in Our Journey*

**September 2014**

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## Responsibility, Organization and Self-Regulation

Developing good learning skills is not something that just happens by chance. Students have an important role in taking control and responsibility for developing their learning skills and work habits.

This begins early in life and as students move through the grades, they further develop these critical skills, in preparation for post-secondary education and the world of work.

Strong learning skills and effective work habits are important for future success in school, at home and in life, in general.

For more information on the learning skills on your child's report card, visit:

<http://www.yrdsb.ca/aboutus/reportingstudentachievement/documents/learningskillsandworkhabitsbrochure.pdf>

## At Elementary School

To develop responsibility, students need to practice the skills that will help them to work independently and take ownership of their behaviour. Coming to school prepared with the materials needed, following the class routines and rules, finishing work in the given time, taking care of the classroom materials, environment and their actions, are key aspects of responsibility.

### How Parents Can Help at Home with RESPONSIBILITY

- Set your child up for success with the materials he needs for school; and help him establish routines to make it easier to break work into manageable chunks to meet timelines.
- Regularly follow through with consequences that have been set in advance. Children develop responsibility when they understand clearly the outcomes of their actions and the consequences are firmly and fairly applied.
- Help your child to see how her actions affect others. Teaching your child to be responsible is like stacking a pile of blocks. Each block adds a skill towards making responsible choices. As your child grows older, her thinking skills will help her to connect how her actions + consequences = decisions to act appropriately in future, similar situations.



## At Secondary School

Learning skills and work habits that are required for success in school are the same as those needed for the workplace. The Ontario Skills Passport describes these skills, which employers have identified as necessary for success at work.

For more information on the other skills needed for the world of work, visit Ontario Skills Passport at: <http://www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/Welcome.xhtml>

### Learning Skills/Work Habits at School

**Responsibility** — commits to learning; completes homework and assignments; manages behaviour.

### Work Habits in the World of Work

**Reliability** — punctual; uses time effectively; follows safety rules; follows direction; acts responsibly with materials and co-workers.

### Helping at home with RESPONSIBILITY and RELIABILITY

- Point out the direct benefits of your child's actions. At other times, it can help to calmly and clearly link some of his freedom and privileges to his responsible behaviour.
- Encourage your child to look for work. After-school and weekend jobs offer many teenagers another way to practice responsible behaviour. Negotiating salaries, arranging a schedule and dealing with the boss are all valuable experiences.
- Find out what volunteer opportunities are available. Most communities have some openings for volunteer work or community service to encourage concern for others and offer teenagers an opportunity to do work that is valued and admired in their community.
- Establish clear expectations for behaviour and set clear consequences for not meeting those expectations. Be sure to give positive consequences for good behaviour too and be consistent when enforcing rules for behaviour.

For more tips, visit **Lifeworks.com** at <https://portal.lifeworks.com/portal-ca/viewers/HPSArticle.aspx?HPSMaterialID=2510> and **Parenting.org** at <http://www.parenting.org/article/responsibility-part-iv>

## How Parents of Children with Special Education Needs Can Help at Home

- Provide your child with opportunities to be responsible, such as taking care of a family pet, being responsible for the completion of household tasks and completing homework assignments regularly.
- Provide visual support in addition to verbal directions to assist your child with task completion. For example, show him how much time he has to complete a task, using a clock or a watch.
- Make a list. Have your child make a list (using words or pictures) of her responsibilities; and teach her to check off each one upon completion.
- Provide specific positive feedback to your child regarding the things he does properly. For example, say "I like the way you took the dog for a walk without being asked."

## At Elementary School

To develop organization, students need to learn the skills that will help them to manage time, plan tasks and complete them on their own and with others.

This will enable them to become more productive learners.

### How Parents Can Help at Home with ORGANIZATION

- Help your child break tasks down into smaller steps so that he knows where to start and has a plan to finish the task. Support and encourage him as he works through the steps.
- Reduce distractions when it comes time to focus. Consider the noise and activity level of the location in the home where she is doing her work.
- Provide him with manageable tasks that he can go through the process of planning and carrying out. Success breeds success and he will develop more confidence in his ability to plan and act.

## At Secondary School

### *Learning Skills/Work Habits at School*

**Organization** — establishes priorities and manages time to complete tasks; creates a plan and follows it.

### *Work Habits in the World of Work*

**Organization** — organizes work priorities when faced with a number of tasks; creates a plan and follows it.

## How Parents Can Help their Teenage Children at Home with ORGANIZATION

- Teens need to go through the steps — getting ready (knowing what they need), staying focused (doing it!) and finishing up the job. Success in this process develops confidence, self-esteem and independence.
- Set expectations that send a strong message that you know this is an important skill.
- Create an environment that is conducive to doing homework and set aside enough time to complete it.
- Encourage them to practice planning ahead.

For more tips, visit **KidsHealth.org** at: [http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/learning/child\\_organized.html#cat169](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/learning/child_organized.html#cat169)  
Or **Firstthings.org** at <http://firstthings.org/organizing-teens>



## How Parents of Children with Special Education Needs Can Help at Home

- Use planning tools. Agendas, calendars and “to-do” lists are wonderful visual supports for children.
- Use colour. Use highlighters of differing colours in agendas, to identify deadlines, tests, projects and special events. For example, anything highlighted in orange might indicate a test; or, information highlighted in yellow could indicate a project.
- Program reminders or alerts into technology devices so that your child is cued about a sports practice or doctor’s appointment.
- Break tasks down into manageable steps so that your child is not overwhelmed. Have her do a series of questions and then take a short break.

## At Elementary School

Self-regulation is the ability to control impulses, either to stop or to start doing something, if needed.

Self-regulation is not to be confused with obedience or compliance; when children are truly self-regulated their behaviour is the same, whether or not an adult is watching.

To develop self-regulation, students need to reflect on their actions and learning so that they can set goals and motivate themselves to do well.

### Helping with **SELF-REGULATION** and **SELF-ADVOCACY**

- Praise perseverance towards both small and larger goals.
- Provide as much structure and predictable daily routine and schedule as possible. Communicate changes to your child so that he can mentally and emotionally prepare.
- Stay calm and firm in your voice and actions, even when the situation feels “out of control.” Model how you work through the process of monitoring the situation and deciding how to respond.
- Role play with your child how to act or what to say in certain situations. Give her the language and the tools she needs to deal with situations that are not ideal.

For more information on how to develop self-regulation for younger children at home, visit the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** website at:  
<http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200607/Gillespie709BTJ.pdf>

## At Secondary School

### *Learning Skills/Work Habits at School*

**Self-Regulation** — reflects critically on own strengths, needs and interests; sets own goals and works to meet them; identifies learning opportunities and seeks assistance when needed.

### *Work Habits in the World of Work*

**Self-Advocacy** — uses knowledge and experience to solve problems and make decisions; seeks assistance when needed.

## How Parents of Teenagers Can Help at Home with **SELF-REGULATION** and **SELF-ADVOCACY**

- Remember to stay positive and model self-control of your own emotions, when dealing with lapses.
- Adjust your goals according to your child’s temperament, track record and age.
- Turn “have to” tasks into “want to” tasks.
- Create an environment where self-control is consistently rewarded.
- Teens benefit when parents talk to them about their feelings, show empathy and discuss constructive ways to cope.



For more tips visit **ParentMap.com** at:  
<http://www.parentmap.com/article/how-to-encourage-self-control-in-tween-and-teens>  
Or **ParentingScience.com** at:  
<http://www.parentingscience.com/teaching-self-control.html>

## How Parents of Children with Special Needs Can Help at Home

- Set step by step goals. For example, help your child to understand that if she studies for 30 minutes on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, she will be prepared for her test on Friday.
- Give your child a stress ball to squeeze while completing homework to help with concentration, if he is fidgety.
- Help your child to identify stressors and how to cope with them. For example, children who are anxious about homework may benefit from relaxation techniques, such as slow, deep breathing.
- Teach your child about positive self-talk, such as “I can handle this. I know what I am doing.”

For more tips about self-regulation visit <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/Shanker.pdf>