

St. Bernadette Catholic Elementary School

245 Lorne Avenue, Kitchener, Ontario N2M 3Y9
Tel. (519) 743-1541 Fax (519) 743-7873



St. Joseph's Church (519) 745-9302 <http://stjosephkitchener.org>
Pastors: Father Tom Vermiglio, Mussie Abraham, Meskel Abib and Brian Quigley
St. Joseph Parish Youth Minister: Mary Forcier
[Mill Courtland Community Centre](#)



"Together, with Christ, Everyone Achieves More"

**Safe Arrival Program: A reminder to please phone in your child's absence or lateness (519) 743-1541.
Our Answering Machine is available 24 hours a day.**

February 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to February, a month when we are encouraged to demonstrate our love for one another, particularly around the celebration of Valentine's Day. It is also a wonderful "look-ahead" month as we encounter the mid-point, not only of the winter season, but of the school year. As the hours of daylight become longer, we look forward to the promise of spring. We also look forward to the wonderful fun-filled February initiatives.



At St. Bernadette Catholic School we continue to enrich our students with opportunities to develop themselves through curricula, athletics and an assortment of school-based activities including PALS, LEAP, Eco team and several other student-based initiatives. These clubs and activities, in addition to the activities already running for our Grades 1 to 8 students, our inter-school basketball, volleyball during the month of February, make for a busy and exciting time at our school.

We also begin to prepare for our Lenten journey which begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26th. Each day we take the time to prepare and to reflect on the Gospel's message and how we are living up to God's law of supporting those in need. At St. Bernadette School we teach that each one of us has something to give: time, talent, material resources or even a simple smile. As Lent approaches, God invites us to open our hearts toward others and to be renewed in our thoughts and in our actions.

February also marks the end of our first term. We look forward to an exciting second term in which the students are encouraged to continue to strive to be the best that they can be. The students have been reminded to reflect upon the goals and next steps that they have set themselves following their first term reports. As a staff we encourage you to sit with your child(ren) and to discuss these goals with them.

While there are no formal interviews scheduled at this time, teachers will be happy to meet with you by appointment. We value the role parents play as the first educator of their child/children and as partners in each child's educational journey. The consistency you provide at home helps students develop learning skills and work habits.

On behalf of the staff, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued generosity, assistance and dedication in helping make our school a vibrant and caring Catholic community of excellence.

Yours in Catholic leadership,
Mr. A. Simoes



A Valentine Prayer

God bless you with the warmth and love. We celebrate today, with personal fulfillment in your work, your rest and play. God bless your close relationships with people you hold dear and fill your life with gentle things to warm your heart all year. Amen

**...There are in the end three things that last:
Faith, Hope and Love,
and the greatest of these is Love.**

1 Corinthians 13:13

Our newsletter can be accessed at <http://stbernadette.wcdsb.ca>
Follow Us on Twitter @StBernBears

Nurturing a Catholic Community



Parish News

We continue to pray for all intentions in our school community – for those who have passed away and all who need our prayers during time of sickness.



Pancake Tuesday February 25th

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent and a prolonged period of fasting, so it is common to enjoy a day of sweets and treat before Lent begins. As a school spirit and faith event, all students will receive a pancake brunch on Tuesday, February 25th. Students are encouraged to bring their normal snacks and even a light lunch on this day in case they are in a class that eats early and are extra hearty eaters. Thank you Catholic School Advisory Council for helping us with this special event.

Pastoral Plan Launch

On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, Fr. Joseph de Viveiros C.R. will be celebrating Mass for staff, students and parents from the Waterloo Catholic District School Board. This celebration will bring a close to our Board's Pastoral theme from this past year, Called to Belong. While our gathering at St. Anthony Daniel Parish will close one chapter, it will also give life to this coming year's Pastoral theme, Gathered to Become. Mass will be celebrated at 4:00 p.m. at St. Anthony Daniel Parish in Kitchener. A reception in the Parish Life Centre will immediately follow Mass. We anticipate that each school community be represented at this upcoming celebration. We are inviting all principals, staff members, and students along with their parents to join us for this celebration of faith.

Catholic Education Week – Igniting Hope

May 3rd – 8th, 2020

www.goodnewsforall.ca



“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

Catholic School Advisory Council

All are welcome to attend our monthly meetings. The next School Council Meeting will be on;
Tuesday, February 4th at 6:30 p.m.



Minutes of meetings are posted on our school website

<https://stbernadette.wcdsb.ca/school-council/>

School Updates and News

Listed below are highlights from the month of January:



1. Our Restorative Schools Service Coordinator, Theresa Mayer continues to support our school community in restorative approaches as we continue to build peace and inclusion.
2. Last month we thanked Ms. Burtenshaw for her support and service to our Kindergarten program. Welcome Ms. Murcia-Herrera who has joined our school as a Designated Early Childhood Educator.
3. Welcome to Lyndsay Hannon who has joined our fabulous lunch hour supervision team.
4. Our Rosary Club has begun every Wednesday. Thank you to Mrs. McKay for leading this important faith club for our school. Also thank you for taking the time to share all the wonderful activities Mill Courtland Community Centre has to offer with our students.
5. Our winter agreements and school code of conduct were reviewed.
6. The following communications were either sent home or sent electronically to each family: FDK Registration, weekly updates and January Newsletter.
7. Congratulations to Ms. Lachapelle and her family on the arrival of a baby boy. We are all excited and can't wait to meet Griffin.
8. Students continue to use their agendas daily to assist them in staying organized and better prepare for tests and assignment deadlines.
9. We are collecting gently used games, puzzles, books, decks of cards, dice, craft supplies and Lego to boost the indoor recess supply in classrooms. If you can help, please bring it to school.
10. Our fantastic shed made by St. Benedict High School students has arrived and it looks amazing. The design and artwork really show home much effort was put into this. Thank you to Ms. Doherty Masters for always coming up with ideas to make our school better.
11. Knowledgehook, is now a Board approved "Green Tool" which ensures student information is stored in a secure manner. This online, interactive math resource will support student learning in Grades 3-8. Knowledgehook will provide additional math support and instruction for learning both in the classroom and for differentiated home-practice. If you have any questions or concerns about this program, please speak to your child's classroom teacher.
12. Note to Parents/Guardians of children who ride the bus. Please be aware that if you child(ren) normally rides on the school bus to come to school and buses are cancelled due to weather:
 - you are **not** required to call the school to note their absence.

- if you choose to drive your child(ren) to school, you are responsible to pick them up at the end of the day.

13. Add our calendar to your Smartphone, Tablet or computer. Please use the following address to access our calendar from other applications. You can click on or copy and paste this into any calendar product that supports the iCal format.

https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/wcdsb.ca_9e9veg0qtuff8og46hrq0vqu8k%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics

Caring For All Children – Shared Responsibility

Anaphylaxis

We ask that you join our staff in taking care to ensure the safety of all students in the school, as some of our students have potentially life-threatening allergies. We ask you to be extra careful in checking labels and avoid sending any Valentine's treats to school that may contain peanut or tree nut products.



Medication at School

A reminder, for the safety of all students, that all medication to be taken by or given to your child at school, requires an Administration of Oral Medication form to be completed by a parent/guardian. All medications must be stored safely in the office (or classroom with approval of the teacher) and administered by designated school staff.



positive school climate. For more information including fundamental beliefs, where does it apply and roles, responsibilities, please visit:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf>

February Learning Commons Update



Our early years and primary division students are currently participating in the Blue Spruce reading program. Students all over Canada are reading the same ten picture books written by Canadian authors. Once we have read all ten books, students get to vote for their favourite book. In May, the Ontario Library Association will announce the winning book. Ask your student about the leaves on our tree.

The first ever I Read Canadian Day will be held on February 19 across Canada. Young people in Canada are encouraged to read Canadian books and to share their love of reading on this day.

St. Bernadette School Improvement Plan



The staff of St. Bernadette look forward to continuing to work with you, to best meet the needs of all our students. Our winter/spring sees us in preparation for learning more about understanding mathematical vocabulary, number sense fundamentals, reading, writing strategies and applying those principles when answering both open ended and multiple-choice questions. Our school improvement insists we remain focused on equity of outcomes for all, a focus upon student voice, displays of student artifacts which articulates to specific learning goals and success criteria.

Kindergarten Registration

Registrations for JK and SK will take place this month. We encourage early registration to prepare for your child's entry into our school. In addition, we will have one evening available if you can not make it during the day – Tuesday, February 18th. Please have the following items available when registering:



- Roman Catholic Baptismal Certificate
 - If you are a non-Catholic, but wish to explore a Catholic education for your child(ren), please review the WCDSB Admission to Catholic Elementary Schools policy: <https://www.wcdsb.ca/about-us/policies-and-administrative-procedures/admissions-to-elementary-school-apa001/>.
 - Child's Birth Certificate
 - Proof of Address - we will need a copy or your child's birth certificate and proof of residence.
- Please contact the office at 519-743-1541 to book an appointment or to inquire about more information.

REGISTER TODAY ONLINE PAYMENTS NOW AVAILABLE!

For safety and efficiency reasons, we want to reduce the amount of Cash & Cheques coming into our school. School related expenses are now online for you to make payment.



Parents please register! **TODAY!**

Here's how:

- Step 1: Go to this website: <https://wcdsb.schoolcashonline.com>
- Step 2: Register by selecting the "Get Started Now" and following the steps
- Step 3: After you receive the confirmation email, please select the 'click here' option, sign in and add each of your children to your household account.

Thank you to all parents who have already registered!

School Code of Conduct/Safe Schools

A positive school climate and a safe learning and teaching environment are essential if students are to succeed in our school. A positive school climate means everyone feels they are welcome and respected. All students, parents, teachers and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility for everyone to be accountable for their actions and contribute to a



Admission of Out of Bound Students

Parents who are requesting or would like a renewal regarding out of bounds status must submit their application to the school office by Monday, March 9th. Please note that each request will be judged on its own merit. To view the policy visit <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/03/APA003.pdf>.

The application form can be found at <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/07/Form-APA003-01.pdf>

Spotlight on Student Activities



The Sporting Scene....

We wish Mr. Simoes and our Intermediate Boys Basketball Team good luck as they will travel to St. Mary High School on Thursday, March 12th for the small school tournament.

Our Intermediate Girls Volleyball Team led by Ms. Hayek will have their tournament on Friday, February 28th at St. Benedict High School in Cambridge. Go Bears Go!

Social Justice

As the new year begins, students on the social justice team are spending time learning about education in different parts of the world. They will later be sharing the challenges in certain areas with our students. Our social justice team is looking forward to this learning and awareness initiative.

Eco News Update

Our Eco Reps have been busy promoting our February events with their fellow students. On February 5, we are hosting Sweater Day and supporting the Regional Winter Walk to School Day. Students are encouraged to wear a sweater and try to take walk or take the bus to school. Students who participate will earn pompoms for their house colour.



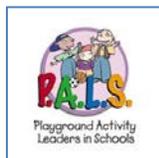
On February 25, Shrove Tuesday, all staff and students are invited to bring their own fork and reusable plate for pancakes. This action will help us as we move toward waste-free school events.

Thank you for continuing to send reusable containers for lunches and snacks. Every small action helps us to reduce our waste and take care of our common home.

P.A.L.S.

Wow! What a difference you have made in a very short period! The primary students who are playing with you are

having a great time and the adults who have watched you in action are very impressed! Thank you for taking the time out of your lunch hour to help with this project!



Keeping the games and activities very simple is a secret of the success.

Keep up the great work! We are proud of you!

A School with Kindness

In keeping with our School Improvement Plan and Safe School initiatives, we continue to be committed as a school, in partnership with the wider school community to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour. This proactive approach assists education staff, students and the larger community with bullying and providing the necessary strategies in responding and dealing with bullying incidents. Further to staff support, we have board personnel who assist St. Bernadette teaching staff in implementing the role of the school wide program. Each day we review our daily agreements – be kind, show respect, play safe and be an attentive learner.

Kids Help Phone (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

This easy-to-use website is aimed at children and youth. Its information is divided into the "8 and under", "9 to 12" and "13 and up" age groups, but it has resources that parents, and caregivers can use as well. From the resource page, click on the "More Links" tab where you can find a long list of web pages and a description of what they offer.

Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence (www.prevnet.ca)

This website is for many audiences: children and youth, parents, educators, health professionals, media, public and private organizations, and members of communities throughout Canada. Its information comes from researchers who are being funded to study bullying and then share strategies that have been found to work in preventing or stopping bullying. The website has many excellent resources that can be download.

Pink T-shirt Day – Wednesday, Feb. 26th, 2020

On February 26th, students and staff will be standing up and saying no to bullying by wearing something PINK. Pink – a soft, gentle colour, has gained a strength that deserves recognition by making a statement that we believe in no more bullying.



EQAO 2019 - 2020

All Grade 3 and 6 students across the province will once again participate in the provincial assessment done by EQAO (Educational Quality and Accountability Office). These assessments will be done between May 19th to June 1st. As we get closer to the testing time, specific dates and information will be forwarded to the parents/guardians of Grade 3 and 6 students. Please plan appointments and trips at other times.



The total testing time will be 6 hours, approximately 2 hours per booklet of which there are 3: Reading, Writing and Mathematics.

Each booklet contains “common” items:

Reading – fiction and non-fiction passages, with varying levels of difficulty, followed by open-response and multiple-choice items.

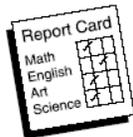
Writing – short and long writing prompts and multiple-choice items.

Mathematics – open response and multiple-choice items.

Sample tests for the Grade 3 and 6 Assessments of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics are now available on EQAO’s Web site, www.eqao.com. You will also find other great resources such as “Understanding Levels of Achievement” which uses EQAO information to improve student learning. Take a moment to look at this site, as there is valuable information and activities for you and your children.

First Term Report Cards

As per Growing Success, the provincial government policy on the assessment, evaluation and reporting of student achievement, Term 1 Report Cards will go home on **Thursday, February 13th**.



Black History Month



Black History Month is an observance of the history of African exodus in several countries outside of Africa. Since 1976, it is observed annually in the United States and in Canada in February. During Black History Month Canadians can gain insight into the experiences of black Canadians and the vital role this community has played throughout our shared history.

Nutrition For Learning



This February let’s all work together and run a quick and easy awareness program to support our program.

We hope you will join our campaign and support our program. We could use your financial support.

A special webpage on the Nutrition for Learning website has been created for our school at

https://www.nutritionforlearning.ca/st_bernadette/

We will also be sending home donation cards. Please contribute a toonie to our program.

Fit Bit February 2020

Enjoying Vegetables All Year Long

It can be challenging to find creative ways to fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits throughout our long Canadian winters. Our markets and grocery stores may

not be filled with as many local options as they are during warmer seasons. However, you may be surprised by how much local produce is available throughout the winter months in Ontario. Locally produced vegetables such as beets, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, squash, mushrooms, leeks and sweet potatoes are all available this time of year. Frozen vegetables are another healthy and affordable choice. If you are looking for some inspiration on ways to incorporate vegetables into your family mealtimes this winter, here are a few fun ideas.

- Add frozen or winter vegetables to dishes.
- Add sweet potato or squash to homemade chili and soups.
- Add shredded cabbage to salads - purple cabbage adds a splash of colour.
- Add leeks or mushrooms to a frittata or omelette.
- Add rutabaga, turnip or celery root to mashed potatoes.
- Blend cooked beets or sweet potatoes into a hummus recipe.
- Add frozen vegetables to stir-fries, soups, casseroles, pasta dishes or serve them as a side dish at meals.

Make winter vegetables fun for kids



Make roasted parsnip sticks; they are a fun finger food.

Cut and roast acorn squash in slices that look like smiles.

Try spiralized sweet potatoes or carrots as a fun new way to serve these vegetables.

Roast sweet potato or butternut squash medallions and let kids use cookie cutters to make fun shapes.



Find some winter vegetable inspiration in the recipes below

[Cabbage and Peanut Butter Chicken Stir-Fry](#)

[Butternut Squash Soup](#)

[Pork, Apple and Cabbage Barley Casserole](#)

[Crunchy Turkey Fingers with Oven Fries](#)

[Bean-Stuffed Cabbage Rolls](#)

Visit Foodland Ontario’s availability guide to find out when Ontario fruits and vegetables are in season:

<https://www.ontario.ca/foodland/page/availability-guide>.

The Umbrella Project



This month we are going to working with students to learn about **Purpose** and their meaningful contribution to the

world. As we always say at the Umbrella Project, all the skills are important and work best together! The happiest kids understand their own needs and their contribution to the bigger world around them.

How will a sense of **Purpose** help my child?

Purpose is the feeling that the things we do and the choices we make have meaning and make a difference. This makes us feel happier and more confident and gives us a set of guiding principles that help us make decisions. When kids have a sense of purpose it is easier for them to keep going when things get difficult because they can see a bigger picture. This can make them less likely to get stuck in the small trivial details that don't matter in the long run. The journey of life isn't linear so it's important to live each day with a bigger set goals and values that can make even the toughest of days feel worthwhile. Having a sense of purpose is so important that it can actually help your children live longer, healthier lives.



For more information, please visit <https://umbrellaproject.co/parents/>

The following students were recognized for their demonstration of Cognitive Flexibility. Congratulations:

- JK/SK A: Demarco M. and Benjamin D.
- JK/SK B: Peter M. and Buruk E.
- JK/SK C: Colton W. and Thomas P-H.
- Gr. 1: Hyab O. and Vanessa F.
- Gr. 1/2: Danika S. and Jake L.
- Gr. 2/3: Brennan R., Grace P., and Trenton R.
- Gr. 3/4: Andrew G. and Abby R.
- Gr. 4/5: Genevieve H-C., Jimmy L. and Kim H.
- Gr. 5: Evan P., Wesley T., Victoria K. and Efrata G.
- Gr. 6: Mia V., Myah G., Betel W., Twilight H.
- Gr. 6/7: Jacob C. and Nolan D.
- Gr. 7/8: Portia C. and Yafet B.
- Gr. 8: Abbagele J., Fnan R. and Suleman N.

Mental Health and Well-Being
Love and the Active Role of Listening

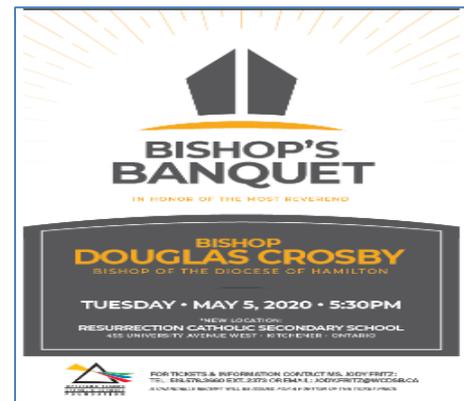
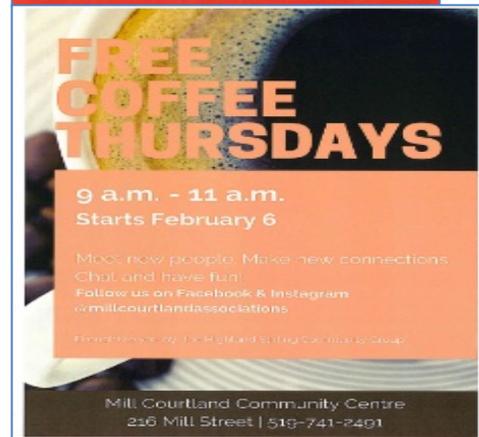
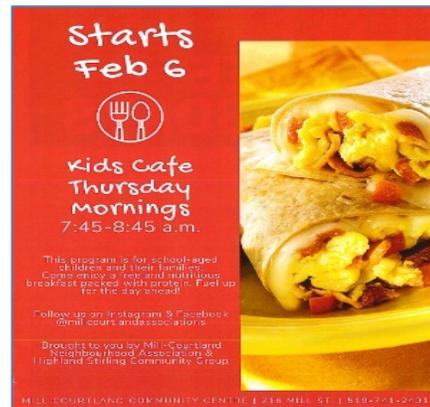
The Month of February is often celebrated with a focus on Love and Valentines. At the heart of Love is communication, communication of emotions, and communication of feelings. But communication can be tricky for some. Often, we talk more than we listen! Listening, when done well can not only help the love portion of our relationships, but all aspects of relationships.

Sometimes we may feel that “just” listening is passive and not helpful. Deep and present listening is often more helpful than any well-intentioned advice could ever be. In an article published in Psychology Today, Nancy Colier LCSW, Rev. reminds us that one of the most difficult things to do in a relationship (parent – child, spouse, friends etc.) is to listen to the person we care about, describe a problem and RESIST the impulse to jump in and solve the problem for them. Our nature is to fix – solve and move on. In fact, one of the most powerful things in a relationship is to listen, without judgement, and to just be with the other person.

Colier writes “Really, we just want our experience to **be heard**, listened to, understood, and cared about. We want someone to know how it is for us in this moment, in this life, and to keep us company in our experience— exactly as it is. What we want is for our experience to get to just be, without having to change into something else.”

Essentially, we can only feel loved to the degree we felt listened to. For parents and educators, the takeaway message is that listening to our children is very important. But this is hard to do when we feel the impulse to “jump in” and fix things or correct things.

Although fixing and correcting, and guiding are important too, listening allows our children to “hear” us. Make sure to find time to listen, to still our minds (and mouths) so that we can be with **them and their** experience. Listening is one of the most profound and powerful things we can bring to our relationships.





February 2020



"TOGETHER, WITH CHRIST, EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE"

UMBRELLA SKILL OF THE MONTH: PURPOSE [HTTPS://UMBRELLAPROJECT.CO](https://umbrellaproject.co)

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| 2 | 3 1 st Day to Order March Pizza on School Cash On Line <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> Are you using School Cash on Line? https://wcdsb.schoolcashionline.com </div> | 4 Catholic School Advisory Council Meeting at 6:30 p.m. | 5 Rosary Club Winter Walk Day Wear Sweater Day | 6 Inspiring Hope + Wellness in Our Community Peggy Humphries School Visit AM WLU Afterschool Program | 7 | 8 St. Joseph Youth Group (Gr. 5-8+) 6:00-8:30 p.m. |
| 9 Martha Kalsai YMCA Settlement Worker Every Friday 8:30-12:30 p.m. | 10 <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px;"> Every Wednesday is a school spirit day. Wear our school colours - blue and yellow </div> | 11 Confirmation Session #3 6:30-8:00 p.m. | 12 Pizza Lunch Every Wednesday \$1.50 a slice Umbrella Project Follow on Twitter @umbrellapjct | 13 Term 1 Report Cards Go Home WLU Afterschool Program | 14 Happy Valentine's Day Red and Pink Day Intermediate School Dance PM | 15 National Flag of Canada Day St. Joseph Junior Youth Group 2:00-4:00 p.m. |
| 16 National Celebration of Canadian Books Week | 17 Family Day No School | 18 | 19 Gathered To Become St. Daniel Parish 4:00 p.m. Pastoral Plan Launch | 20 The Umbrella Project: Parent Night with Dr. Jen Forrestal 7:00 p.m. St. Anne Catholic School | 21 Grade 2/3 Museum Trip Robotics St. Joseph Youth Group (Gr. 5-8+) 6:00-8:30 p.m. | 22 |
| 23 Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Joseph Church 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. | 24 <div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 5px;"> MILL COURTLAND COMMUNITY CENTRE NEWS The Mill-Courtland Community Centre has many wonderful programs running in the new year - please call (519-741-2491) or stop by to check them out. Visit www.mcna-hscg.com </div> | 25 Shrove Tuesday | 26 National Pink Day Meningococcal Gr. 7/8 Ash Wednesday Lent Begins | 27 WLU Afterschool Program Umbrella Project Assembly Purpose Awards Kindness Introduction | 28 Last Day To Order March Pizza online Girls Volleyball Tournament | 29 Reconciliation Day of Preparation 1:00 p.m. |
| 40 Days | Provincial Family Day: Monday, February 17th, 2020 School will be closed. Students and staff are not required to attend school on this day. We wish you a wonderful "Family Day." | | | | | |

For up-to-date information on school bus delays, cancellations and school closures, please visit the [Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region website \(www.stswr.ca\)](http://www.stswr.ca).

To contact Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region directly, phone (519) 650-4934.

Information about student transportation cancellations or school closings due to severe weather is also available through the following media outlets:

KFUN FM 99.5 KOOL FM 105.3
 CKGL AM 570 CHYM FM 96.7
 DAVE FM 107.5

Nutrition For Learning Needs You!
 St. Bernadette Catholic School needs your support to ensure that the Nutrition for Learning program is available for our students.

Follow the link to make an online donation and support the program at https://www.nutritionforlearning.ca/st_bernadette/

Please make a difference and support....



PARENT NEWSLETTER - PURPOSE!

This month we are going to working with students to learn about **purpose** and their meaningful contribution to the world. As we always say at the Umbrella Project, all of the skills are important and work best together! The happiest kids are able to understand their own needs and their contribution to the bigger world around them.

How will a sense of Purpose help my child?

Purpose is the feeling that the things we do and the choices we make have meaning and make a difference. This makes us feel happier and more confident and gives us a set of guiding principles that help us make decisions. When kids have a sense of purpose it is easier for them to keep going when things get difficult because they can see a bigger picture. This can make them less likely to get stuck in the small trivial details that don't matter in the long run. The journey of life isn't linear so it's important to live each day with a bigger set goals and values that can make even the toughest of days feel worthwhile. Having a sense of purpose is so important that it can actually help your children live longer, healthier lives.

PURPOSE TIP #1

Do a family culture brainstorm

Creating a family culture is a great way to help your child start the journey of identifying with a bigger purpose. What do I mean by family culture? Culture is the behaviours that are characteristic of a group. This can encompass just about anything, from the types of foods you choose to the leisure activities you do together to the higher principles you value. Feeling like a part of something bigger helps us start to establish our sense of purpose.

Start purpose month by brainstorming together, all of the things that you value most as a family. You can do this on a white board or a big sheet of paper that allows space for everyone to write in their ideas. A few questions you can reflect on are: What characteristics do I have that I am most proud of? What brings me joy? What have I done lately that makes my life feel meaningful?

Here are a few examples that came up in my family: seeing the world, having new experiences together, enjoying healthy delicious food, supporting our friends and family, using generosity and kindness as much as we can. Once you have everyone's ideas down, reflect on the ones that resonate most with everyone and put them somewhere your family can regularly see them.

The more multi-generational, the better, so don't forget to include grandparents if they are able. If not, just take a few minutes to reflect on their sense of purpose as well. Culture can be passed down for many generations. In my family a great example of this is generosity. Although my



grandfather is no longer with us, he left a legacy of generosity and this family exercise has been a great way for me to share that with my children. Focusing on generosity helps me feel purpose in my day to day life and also makes me feel like part of something bigger that my family contributes to the world.

A child's sense of purpose will continue to evolve over their lifetime, so this exercise should be fluid and open to change and input from your child over time. Remember, when children are committed to a culture/home they feel part of, they will want to help shape it in ways that will help them to excel. When identification with that group is lost they can feel frustrated and withdraw, a situation seen often in teens. Make sure your child's voice is heard when you work on your shared family culture.

PURPOSE TIP #2

Make your child a participating member of the family

The ultimate goal of parenting is to help your child develop into a person who can independently self-regulate, make good decisions for their wellbeing and care for themselves without you. Like it or not, when your child becomes an adult, they will have the independence to make whatever choices they want for their lives. A big part of our role as parents is supporting the development of our child's capacity for good decision making.

One of the best ways to guide your child to healthy independence and purpose is to give them a voice in your family as early as you can. Here are some examples of how you can make their voices heard:

1. **Ask them how to best solve the parenting difficulties you face.** Here's an example of this from my life: How can we get out the door in the morning without me having to give the kids so many reminders? Their solutions: No leisure reading until all morning tasks are complete, checklists on the fridge with everything that needs to be done, getting dressed for the day before coming downstairs. By getting kids involved, they are learning to solve problems, are more likely to comply and feel more like participating members of our family.
2. **Get them involved in travel planning.** This one can be a lot of fun. If you are a family who likes to travel, start to include your child in the decision making. Tapping into kid's intrinsic curiosity about the world builds purpose and really helps them to feel engaged. You could alternate through each family member getting to pick your final travel destination (after narrowing down the list to reasonable options) or let them plan one of the days while you are away. If you don't travel, you can use this when planning out your weekend or weeknights when you have family time. Make sure everyone feels like they have a say.



3.

Giving kids a voice is empowering and feeds the development of their sense of purpose. When everything is planned, scheduled and reinforced for them they miss out on the development of some of these critical skills.

PURPOSE TIP #3

Help your child set their own goals, and follow through

Following through is key to developing purpose. We all have great ideas that would help with developing purpose. Unfortunately, busy school and activity schedules keep these ideas from realization.

Many of the expectations of education confine kids to a set of goals that aren't their own. Mandatory projects, studying, and school expectations dominate kid's time. This leaves little time in the day to develop a sense of purpose and follow through on those optional goals.

Make sure you check in with your child to learn what they care about. Prioritise their personal, optional goals at the same level as the mandatory ones. Help your child learn to set their own goals. Then, break these goals down into small, manageable steps that will fit into their schedules.

PURPOSE TIP #4

Share your purpose with your children

Children are fascinated by the adults around them and love to hear stories about everything from our childhood fears to our happiest moment and everything in between.

As we wrap up this month, take some time to reflect and share what gives you a sense of purpose. For most of us, there are many things that would qualify as our purpose so don't feel you need to limit yourself to one. For example, I get that feeling from helping others lead healthy, happy lives, building wellbeing for the next generation of children and giving unconditional love to those around me amongst many other things.

Here are some questions to reflect on:

What gives your life meaning?



What happened in your life to help you develop your purpose?

What are you doing to live out your purpose?

How does your purpose help you overcome tough times?

The conversations we have with our kids build their perspective on the world. Share your answers with your family and help your children see the world from the lens of purpose.

See this blog for a more detailed look at coaching children through the challenges of building purpose: <https://umbrellaproject.co/category/purpose/>

Health and happiness,

Dr. Jen Forristal

Founder of the Umbrella Project

drjen@umbrellaproject.co



Parent Night with Dr. Jen Forristal

N.D, Founder of The Umbrella Project

Parents play a very important role in helping their children develop the skills they need to navigate life's uncertainties.

The Umbrella Project is dedicated to helping you and your children learn these skills of emotional wellbeing in a fun, easy to implement way in order to help your family thrive in all of life's weather.

This event is sponsored by St. Anne Catholic School and St. Bernadette Catholic School. We are hoping you can join us. The event will take place at St. Anne School.

Saint Anne Catholic Elementary School

250 East Ave., Kitchener, ON

Thursday, February 20th @ 7 pm

Hot Apple Cider and baked goods will be offered on behalf of Saint Anne Parent Council. You are encouraged to bring your water bottle to use at our filling stations.

Please RSVP by emailing albert.simoes@wcdsb.ca by Feb. 18th to indicate number of adults that will be attending.