

Vanier Catholic Secondary

16 Duke Road, Whitehorse, YT Y1A 4M2

Phone: (867) 667-5901 Fax: (867) 393-6370

www.vcss.ca

Ryan Sikkes, *Principal* Katrina Brogdon & Jeanette Gallant, *Vice-Principals*

November 2017

Principal's Message

Where are the letter grades!?!

This newsletter is coming home with our first set of report cards for the year—students in Grades 8 and 9 may notice that their report card looks very different from those issued in past years. The most noticeable difference is the absence of any letter grades used to describe performance. Instead, you will find “performance indicators” that indicate how students are doing in terms of meeting the learning expectations for each course.

I will admit that, at first, I struggled with this change. I was a student who was highly motivated by marks and grades and used them to set goals for myself. Looking back at my experiences in middle and secondary school, I

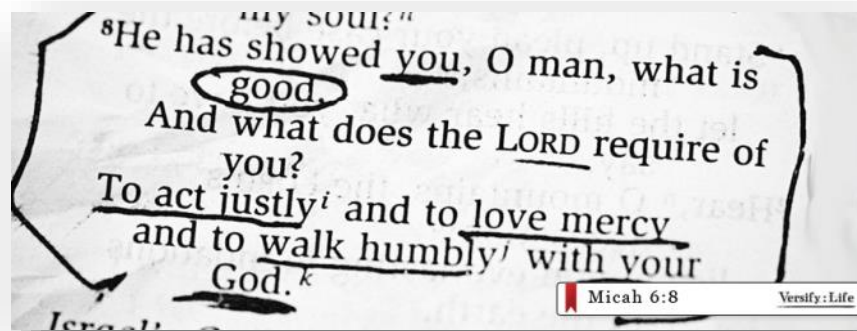
realize that my singular focus on grades got in the way of my learning numerous times. The most common way was that, as soon as I knew that I had achieved the grade I desired, I simply stopped thinking about what I was learning and what was coming next. I was done and ready to move on even though there is always more to learn.

Mathematics, in particular, was a subject where a focus on grades rather than learning put me at a disadvantage after I left secondary school in two distinct ways:

First, I was so focused on getting the “right answer” (which, admittedly, is important!) on the assignments, quizzes, and tests that I spent little time focused on the concepts. I became an expert test writer who didn't really know much about actual mathematics! I learned this the hard way when I took my first university-level mathematics course!

Second, I became terrified of attempting questions that I knew I didn't know how to do. I was terrified of taking a chance, even in ungraded practice work. It took years for me to develop this skill to effectively trouble-shoot my own learning rather than needing someone else to tell me where things were going well or not so well.

My experiences (as a “good student”) are not unique—in fact the research on education shows them to be quite common. The same research also indicates that students who struggle in school are also negatively impacted by the same focus on grades and marks.



The transition away from letter grades to performance indicators that are supplemented with specific feedback from teachers is one that is shown time and time again to improve learning.

For now, Grade 10-12 students will continue

to receive percentage grades. Universities and other post-secondary institutions are finding that secondary school grades are not particularly good predictors of success in their institutions (perhaps for the reasons I shared about my own learning!) so that may change in the future.

Student Led Conferences

An integral part of the learning process is students taking ownership of their learning. Student Led Conferences are a fantastic way for students to demonstrate their skills in this area. We help them through this process by asking them to reflect and share their responses to three questions in each class:

1. What am I learning and why is it important?
2. How's it going with my learning?
3. What are my next steps?

(Continued on page 2)

Dates to note— November-February

The official 2017-2018 School Calendar can be accessed online at the Yukon Education website.



- Wednesday, November 22—Student Led Conferences (3-7 pm) - Dinner will be available for purchase in cafeteria
- Wednesday, November 29— Advent Liturgy & *Share the Spirit* starts
- Wednesday, December 6— Violence against Women Ceremony
- Thursday, December 7 – Pancake Breakfast
- Sunday, December 10—Catholic Schools' Advent Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral
- Monday, December 11 and Tuesday, December 12—Band Concert (with All City Bands) at Yukon Arts Centre
- Tuesday, December 19—Alumni Day & Locker Clean Out
- Wednesday, December 20—Christmas Celebration, Talent Show, and early dismissal (12 noon)
- Thursday, December 21—Tuesday, January 2—Christmas Break—NO SCHOOL
- Wednesday, January 3rd—First day of School
- Wednesday, January 10—Christian Unity Liturgy
- Thursday, January 11—Fine Arts / Applied Skills Open House
- Friday, January 12—Last Day of Classes for Semester 1
- January 15-18 Linear Midterm and Semester Final Exam Week
- Friday, January 19 - Curriculum Inservice Day—NO SCHOOL
- Monday, January 22—First Day of Semester 2 (Term 3)
- Thursday, January 25—English 12 BCPE
- Friday, January 26—Communications 12 BCPE
- Friday, February 23—Heritage Day—NO SCHOOL
- Monday, February 26—Curriculum Inservice Day—NO SCHOOL

School Council Corner

The members of our current council are (left to right in the photo below):

Edith Elder
Valerie Royle
Michael Lauer
Stella Martin
Maureen Long



The Catholic Education Association of Yukon (CEAY) is seeking your input!

Please fill out their quick 4 question survey online and help make our Yukon Catholic Schools better!

tiny.cc/ceay

(Continued from page 1)

More information about Student Led Conferences is enclosed with this newsletter—we hope that all students and parents/guardians can participate in this essential activity on November 22 from 3 until 7 pm.

Long Service Awards

On a completely different note, I would like to congratulate the following staff for their long service with Yukon Education—thank you for pursuing education as your vocation! Russ Tait (30 years), Jud Deuling (25), Jane Londero (25), Janice Durant (20), Tanis Giczi (15), Jeanette Gallant (15), Ryan Sikkes (15), Melanie Bonar (10), and JD Caudle (10). Congratulations!

As always, I am grateful for the support and prayers for our school community.

Sincerely,
Ryan Sikkes, principal

DO NOT MAKE BREAKFAST!



(on Thursday, December 7.) Why not?! It's the day of our annual VCSS Administration Pancake Breakfast to raise funds for Share the Spirit! The doors open at 7:30 a.m. to get hot pancakes, sausages, coffee and juice! See you there!

**Vanier Talent Show...
Students! Keep a look out for
more information on how you
can participate in this year's
Vanier Talent Show on
December 19th!**

Homeroom Comments

Due to problems with our scheduling software, Homeroom classes and comments did not appear on most Report Cards for Grade 10-12 students. Here are the comments for homeroom this term. Please contact the school if you would like to check on the attendance.

Grade 11 & 12 Homeroom Comment

Homeroom for grade 11 and 12 students this term is focused on meeting the outcomes for the Graduation Transitions curriculum, a mandatory graduation requirement. Lessons this term have been focused on: reviewing the requirements for the Graduation Transitions program, goal setting, time management strategies, and reviewing the BC Ministry of Education expectations for high school graduates. Future lessons will include: budgeting strategies for life after high school, financial literacy, in depth career exploration, mental and physical health, creating a career portfolio and preparing for the Graduation Transitions final presentations.

Grade 10 Homeroom Comment

This year the focus of Home Room is on developing students' understanding of 6 core competencies that they will need to be successful citizens. These competencies are: communication, creative and critical thinking, personal/cultural identity, personal awareness/responsibility, and social responsibility. So far, students have participated in team-building activities to help them develop understanding and vocabulary around communication, social responsibility, and the thinking competencies. They are also applying this knowledge by self-assessing where they are in development of these skills.

Cannabis & Fentanyl: *The Straight Goods*

Monday November 20th, 7 p.m. F.H. Collins



Parents and guardians are invited to a one-hour presentation followed by Q & A session:

- **Jayla Rousseau-Thomas**, Prevention Consultant, Alcohol and Drug Services
 - *Understanding Cannabis, Fentanyl and Addiction*
- **Dr. Brendan Hanley**, Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health
 - *The Health Effects and Costs of Teen Substance Use*
- **Youth Substance Use Experiences**

From the Learning Commons

For the past ten years to celebrate National Library Month, a contest is announced at the start of the school year to choose a new school bookmark design. Students have one month to submit a design and “make their mark”. There is much anticipation in the school while we wait for the new bookmarks to be printed and distributed in time for School Library Day on October 23. This year, it was one of our talented, artistic grade 10 students Morgan Iskra whose artwork was chosen. Congratulations Morgan! Thank you for making our reading experiences even more enjoyable!!

(right) Display of the *recto* and *verso* of the “Strength & Beauty” 2017 winning bookmark and above, winners from past years.



(left) Vanier students enjoy the newly-acquired flexible chairs and table, including some cool stand-up ones, as they participate in the always-popular *Speed Dating with Books*. There were some wonderful reading matches made during this activity!

“It was a fun activity and I found *Bone*, a book series that I really like”. Logan

“*Yellow Brick War* was a perfect match for me”. Lucia

“Speed Dating opened my eyes to the different genres of books in the Learning Commons” Greta

“A great way to try new books. I found *Eye of Minds* by James Dashner”. Marshall



Social Justice Club News

Global Craft Fair - Saturday, November 18 -11 am to 3 pm
Drop by at the Old Firehall at the foot of Main Street on November 18h between 11 am and 3 pm and check out all of the great booths. The Vanier SJ Club will be selling our ever-popular art cards. We have many new, beautiful photos, which are perfect for any birthday, graduation, or Christmas greetings! We look forward to seeing many familiar faces visiting the Craft Fair to buy the wonderful wares that support Fair Trade practices worldwide! It's the gift that gives twice!