

**Ontario Innovation Funds  
Director's Report  
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board**

**May 31, 2016**

The Director and members of the senior administrative team participated in the Ontario Innovation in Action-Texas Tour that was coordinated by Apple Canada. This rich experience allowed visitation with district, school and student leadership teams and presented the opportunity to witness, discuss, share and reflect on innovative learning and teaching environments. The tour centred on problem-based and challenged-based learning environments and highlighted the necessity for visionary leadership, innovative teaching practices, the importance of ongoing professional development, flexibility in the learning process and measuring success.

The Ontario Innovation Tour has challenged the senior team to look at new ways to support the four goals that guide ministry and sector efforts to achieve excellence, ensure equity, promote well-being and enhance public confidence. At each of the sites that were visited in Texas, members of the senior team witnessed critical thinking and problem solving, innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, self-directed learning, collaboration, communication and global citizenship. Much follow-up dialogue has occurred around the possibilities of incorporating what was witnessed in Texas into the Ontario context and specifically into the strategic direction of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board.

Most recently the Board of Trustees approved recommendations for school consolidation that will see the launch of two new middle schools in September, 2016. At each of these sites the Board will be rolling out the Middle Years International Baccalaureate Programme. Much promise exists to be able to incorporate aspects of problem-based and challenged-based learning into these environments as they align well with the International Baccalaureate focus. A fundamental decision to expand a 1:1 pilot technological initiative at the Board's inaugural middle school was approved at these two new sites to support student and teacher learning. Plans are currently being finalized to provide ongoing professional development support that will be required to enhance the learning opportunities for all at each location.

The Board is also sending members of the senior team to the International Society for Technology in Education Conference. This conference is globally recognized as the most comprehensive educational technology conference of its kind. The conference provides an array of educational sessions and hands-on learning environments to build content knowledge while learning new strategies and gaining exposure to timely and relevant topics and trends in educational technology. The Board will be focusing on sessions dealing specifically with

computer science and coding courses as the Board seeks to build capacity throughout the system in this area.

Using dedicated resources from the Technology and Learning Fund, the Board began a pilot initiative in February, 2016 with the assistance of Apple Canada in the area of iOS app development in “Swift”. The Board views the ability to write computer code and develop apps as an increasingly valuable asset for future employment opportunities and wishes to expose more students to this discipline. The Board believes that introducing students to basic coding and computational thinking principles across the curriculum at every grade level can be built into current curriculum expectations and is committed to exploring these opportunities.

The Board wishes to thank the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and the Ministry of Education for their support of the Technology and Learning Fund as well as the Innovation Fund that has allowed the investigation, analysis and implementation of creative and innovative learning opportunities. The funding has been utilized to strengthen the vision articulated by senior administration and endorsed by the Board of Trustees. The Board looks forward to continuing to work together with all stakeholders in the province of Ontario in the common quest to achieve excellence and transform educational opportunities throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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