

Director's Report – October 25, 2016

1. Olympian Melissa Bishop Addresses SHSM Students

On October 12, 2016 over 360 grade eleven students attended a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) learning day in Cobden. This third annual event welcomed students in grade eleven from each of RCDSB's seven high schools to the SHSM program and engaged them in obtaining their first certification towards earning a SHSM Red Seal on their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. At this year's event students were addressed by Olympian Melissa Bishop. Melissa's message to the attendees was, "life begins at the end of your comfort zone". Following the keynote address, students participated in certifications related to their chosen SHSM sector. Eighteen certifications were offered and included; Wilderness Survival Skills, Leadership, Pruning and Trail Management, Bear Safety and Chainsaw safety awareness, digital photography, propane handling, dance, non-violent crisis intervention, watershed management, habitat restoration, First Nation art, sign language, stress management, drumming, cooking, personal trainer/coach, powder actuated tools, fire extinguisher use and lock out/tag out. Events took place across the village of Cobden as well as at Shaw Woods and Opeongo High School.

2. Outdoor Classroom at Opeongo High School

On Wednesday, October 19th the Character Development Committee was given an engaging tour of Opeongo High School's newly constructed outdoor classroom. OHS is located on a picturesque parcel of 50+ acres of land. The rear 40 acres consists of an abandoned agricultural field, a lowland cedar wetland, a mixed wood forest, and two small ponds. The outdoor classroom is located in the middle of this wilderness area and will provide students and community members with a home base where they can access this outdoor education and recreation area. The outdoor classroom committee is made up of individuals from the school, the school board and the community. Meetings took place throughout last school year to develop the idea and plan the construction of the structure. Committee members include: Tim Demmons; Brent McIntyre; Bill Murray; Angela McGregor; Mary Cahill and Terry Hoelke. Outreach and Fundraising Coordinator Mary Cahill accessed funding for community use equipment through various grants, including TD Friends of the Environment, and the Healthy Kids Community Challenge. The Township of Admaston/Bromley was instrumental in helping to purchase snowshoes and Nordic poles for the community. The Ontario Teachers' Federation provided funding to support the design of a locally developed wildlife and research facility which will use the outdoor classroom as its home base. The facility will be used for classes including OSPREY (Opeongo's Special Program in Research Ecology for Youth), environmental science, native studies, biology, physical education and more. In addition to enhancing curricular activities (eg. Ecosystem studies in Grade 9 science classes), it will allow students in a variety of courses to conduct hands-on research and learn about environmentally friendly practices and sustainability. It will provide students with the ideal location to learn about environmental issues while surrounded by their natural environment. The outdoor classroom will also be accessible to community members when they access the trails for hiking, bird watching, Nordic walking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Retired OHS teacher and carpenter, Marc Hamel, has been hired to supervise students to work on the project. A group of hard working senior students with an interest in construction have been an instrumental part of the classroom's progress. OHS teacher, Mike Sinclair will be working with students in his welding classes to design and create seating and work spaces for the structure. OHS is grateful for the many partnerships and businesses who have contributed to this project.

3. New Pedagogies for Deep Learning

New Pedagogies for Deep Learning is an international program involving schools from as far away as South America, Europe and Australia. The program looks to address a key educational challenge: how to design teaching and learning systems that lead to more successful lives for all students. The goal of NPDL is Deep Learning. Deep Learning occurs when students are engaged in rich tasks where skills such as Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Citizenship, and Character (the 6 C's) are interwoven in the curriculum. These are skills each and every student needs to achieve and excel in, in order to flourish in today's complex world. Currently, McNab, Queen Elizabeth, Central and Eganville public schools are involved in this collaborative inquiry project. To date, these schools have participated in two sessions. Last June, the Technology Enabled Teaching and Learning Contacts (TELT-Cs) hosted an information session where the project details were shared, and in September of this school year the TELT-Cs hosted an event where the schools participated in a highly engaging challenge-based activity highlighting deep learning design. The early stages of this project have seen students starting to engage in learning activities that are rooted in problem solving and connected to larger community issues. These connections place learning in a context that is meaningful to them.