

## APSSP Dufferin-Peel Chapter Presentation to DPCDSB Regarding Board's 2009 Budget

My name is Valerie Lothian and I am a member of the executive of APSSP. As you know APSSP represents our school child and youth workers, psychologists, speech and language pathologist and social workers. We are over 200 members who have the privilege of working each and every day in our schools serving some of our most vulnerable students. We appreciate the opportunity we are given each year to present to you during your budget deliberations.

In the most recent Director's Bulletin Mr. Kostoff, in reflecting on Catholic Education Week so rightly reminded us that it is in our classrooms and schools that the true miracles of Catholic education take place. As school specialists in psychology, child and youth work, speech and language pathology and social work our members are proud to be part of school teams and to witness and be part of the many miracles that occur in our schools.

Just last week one of our members reported that as he struggled to come up with some resources to assist a single parent in getting her children registered for soccer, three smiling Grade 11 students appeared at his office door with a cheque indicating that the World Issues class, with the support of their teacher, had voted to use the proceeds of their most recent fundraising effort to support a family in their own community. On a daily basis our members share in the satisfaction that comes from seeing a student who has benefited from having barriers in the way of their education success removed. This is often the result of unlocking the mystery of a learning disability, a behaviour challenge, or assisting with a student with a family crisis.

It is our view that Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board has always been a leader in recognizing that our students arrive at our classroom doors through not fault of their own with challenges that disrupt their learning. This Board understands the important role that professional student support staff have in ensuring that our students have an equal opportunity to take advantage of education opportunities. However with the continued evolution of province wide collective bargaining it will be critically important that Catholic Education leaders continue to find a way to advocate on behalf of our marginalized students to ensure funding continues to support the critical services provided by our members and others that share this work.

APSSP would like you to know how pleased we were in our own union provincial bargaining team in the last round of negotiations. When faced by the province with the option of signing bonus money in our members pockets or a ministry commitment to enhance services to our students by agreeing to a formula to enhance our staff numbers, our union argued strenuously for increased service to students. We look forward, despite the challenge of declining enrolment to the additional help that will arrive in our schools in September as a result of the agreed staff enhancement. APSSP would like to work with the Board to remove any barriers that may be in the way of moving forward in terms of getting quality staff in place for the start of the school year to serve our students. We look

forward to making progress in dealing with backlogs for psycho-educational assessment and speech and language services, and the increased challenges our child and youth workers and social workers face from the increased demands of Bill 212 and Bill 52.

While government revenues flowing to education may be predictable at the present time we must be conscious of the financial challenges facing our community and many of our students as a result of the present economic crisis and job losses. We know that our entire staff community have always and will always go that extra mile to what they can to provide for those among us who are facing financial challenges. This not only includes our food drives and numerous funding raisers but as well an understanding and sensitivity towards the potential barriers of school fees, school trips, lunch programs and the emotional impacts that interfere with learning.

We wish you all the best in your budget deliberations.