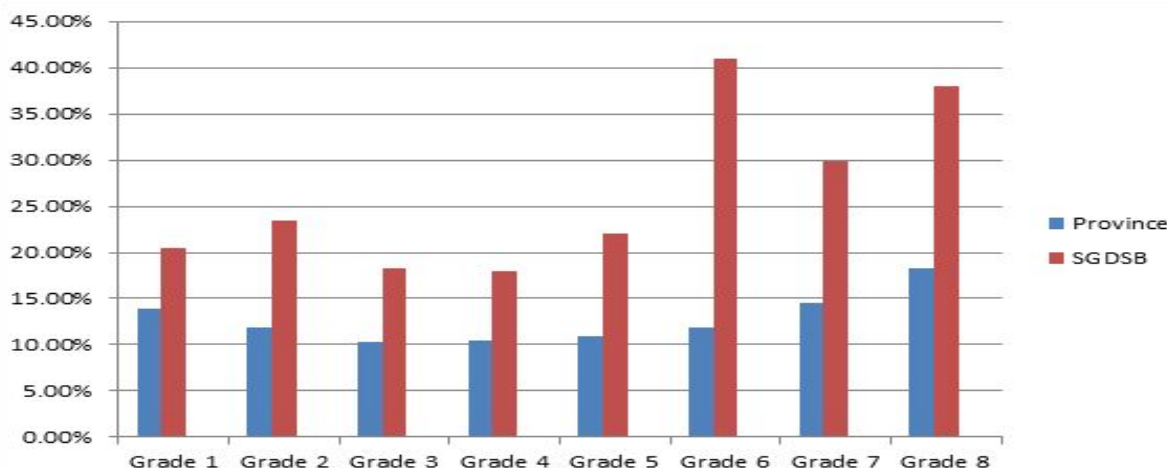


Persistent Absenteeism Analysis, 2013-14 Grade 1-8

By David Tamblyn and Nicole Morden-Cormier



“Every school day counts, every school day is important.” This is the message being delivered by the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor as the Ministry of Education is drawing the attention of all school boards in the Ontario to their 2013-2014 Elementary School Attendance Data. They have defined “persistent absenteeism” as “any student/pupil who has missed 10% or more of school days for any reason, including unexcused or excused absences, over an academic year” (Ontario Ministry of Education, NOEL Conference, February 2016). As there are 194 instructional days in a school year, students are considered persistently absent if they are absent for 19.4 days.

A recent study found that students who missed an average of two days per month in elementary school stood a 60% chance of dropping out in grade nine (Every School Day Counts: Persistent Absenteeism in Ontario, 2016). In addition, when absenteeism was correlated to achievement for this particular school year, there is a direct relationship to achievement on the EQAO assessment for students in grades three and six.

Among elementary school students in Ontario in the 2013-14 school year, 12.8% of students were persistently absent. Among elementary students in the northern regions (Sudbury, North Bay and Thunder Bay), students in Northwestern Ontario had the highest rates of persistent absenteeism at 21.6%. In the same year, the persistent absenteeism rate in the Superior-Greenstone District School Board was 26.7%; the second highest among school boards province wide. One in eight students in Ontario were persistently absent in 2013-2014, while in Superior-Greenstone, one in four students were persistently absent.

In Superior-Greenstone District School Board, grade six students who participated in the EQAO Junior Division Assessment had the highest rate of absenteeism at 41%, compared to the provincial average for this grade level of 11.8%. In 2013-14 the Superior-Greenstone EQAO assessment results for the Junior Division (Grade 6) were as follows;

Reading - 55% Achieved the Provincial Level 3 or 4 compared to the Provincial Average of 79%
Writing - 49% Achieved the Provincial Level 3 or 4 compared to the Provincial Average of 78%
Math - 18% Achieved the Provincial Level 3 or 4 compared to the Provincial Average of 54%



SGDSB March 22, 2016 Small Schools Make a Difference” Director’s Newsletter

SGDSB has the second highest rate of persistent absenteeism in the province at 26.7%

Schools with the lowest PA rate

Schreiber PS	5.3%
Beardmore PS	8.6%
Terrace Bay PS	17.9%
Nakina PS	18.2%
Dorion PS	22.6%



Schools with the highest PA rate

47.2%	Marjorie Mills PS
35.3%	Red Rock PS
34.8%	George o'Neill PS
33.1%	BA Parker PS
24.7%	Margaret Twomey PS

Next Steps

This is a serious issue in our district; as such we need to determine the extent to which absenteeism is a problem. The story behind the elementary (and secondary) school attendance is currently being explored by each school administrator in an effort to determine the nature of the absenteeism over time. Currently this data has to be manually calculated; we are working to find solutions to this so that the information is readily accessible and thus can be used to inform our specific actions. All members of our board leadership team are working together to understand attendance in a deeper way and will be determining an elementary and secondary school improvement strategy for the 2016-2017 academic year. School Attendance Counsellors are engaging in this conversation as well, in an effort to determine best practices around positive attendance.

In the meantime, awareness and education for all staff, parents, students and community partners is the first step to interrupting what may be described as a “culture of persistent absenteeism”. In addition to engaging internal stakeholders including the Parent Involvement Committee, the Native Education Advisory Council, and the Student Senate, this information is being shared with multiple community stakeholders, including Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centers through the Best Start Thunder Bay and District Network, our First Nations partners and in the future, local municipalities and recreation departments. At every table, we will discuss how we can ensure that everyone recognizes that “every school day counts, every school day is important”. The work on positively impacting attendance has just begun.

“WE BELONG”

Everyone Matters Week

April 11 – 15, 2016

The week of Everyone Matters is a week where we celebrate our board’s inclusivity; focus on our wellness, learning, and growth. It culminates with Neurodiversity Day on April 15. In the last two years we have focussed on different themes. In 2014, for example, it was “Think Differently”) and many staff and students still have t shirts.

This year our theme is “WE BELONG”. This is also an acronym standing for **W**elcoming, **E**nvironments **B**rave, **E**ngaged, **L**earning, **O**wnership, **N**eurodiversity, **G**rowth mindset.

We see these elements as the core of what belonging means and we hope that the week will showcase a variety of activities that will help to underscore and highlight those elements. In the weeks ahead, you will see more suggestions of a range of activities in a menu format that each school can consider and most importantly share. These will take the form of creative expression in music, dance, art, and other activities that help us to make belonging come alive in our schools.

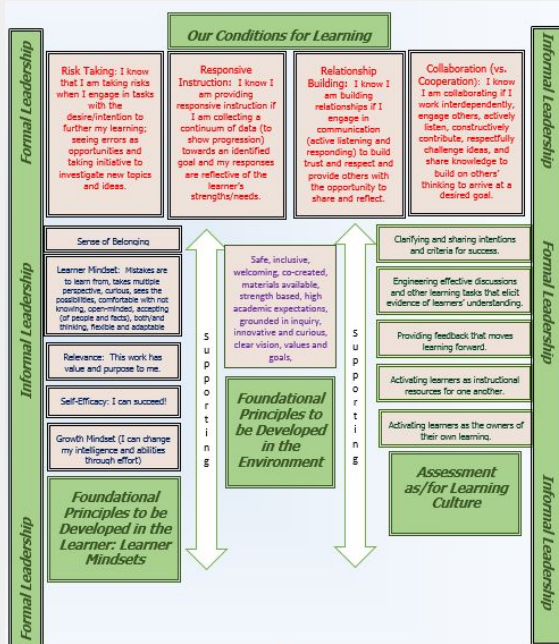
One of the first challenges can even be to come up with your own acronym for “WE BELONG”. The Board Leadership team is there to support and share ideas.

Our Theory of Action: What Do We Really Mean by **BELONGING?**

Submitted by Nicole Morden Cormier, Superintendent, School Effectiveness

If we foster learner centered environments and pedagogy, then learners will possess an increasing sense of belonging and be motivated to learn.

There are two levels to the work that we are engaging in around **Belonging**:



1. Belonging to the School: A strong sense of belonging to the learning environment is critical to ensure that all learners are “available to learn”- that school needs are being addressed. Much of this work is done at a Universal Level (good for all) which includes important school culture work; engaging in celebrations that include the whole family, programs that encourage and reinforce positive behaviour, ensuring that our students see their culture reflected in the school, and the overall tone of our schools (how we interact with the learners). This work is foundational to a positive school culture in which all feel a sense of belonging. We always need to remember that “When students believe that they are valued for their perspectives and respected, they begin to develop a sense of ownership and attachment to the organization in which they are involved” (Mitra 2009). This is belonging to the school and is represented by the Theory of Action focus area Foundational Principles to be Developed in the Environment which can be located at the center of our Theory of Action Graphic.

2. Belonging in the Learning: This level of belonging is much more difficult to achieve. In a student-centered learning environment, students feel a strong sense of belonging in the learning as these environments allow for students to influence the content, activities and the pace of the learning. Learners see their place at the center of this environment; they “own” their learning as they are active participants who understand the relevance (the “why”) and have some control over this learning. By doing this, students feel increasingly engaged, and thus motivation and perseverance result. The culture of the academic setting ensures that “students’ sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers)... and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual” (Goodenow, 1993 in “Sense of Belonging Background Literature”, online <https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=the%20importance%20of%20transitions%20on%20a%20sense%20of%20belonging>, pg 3). When students have a strong sense of belonging to the learning, their well-being increases. This “Belonging to the Learning” work is represented by the Foundational Principles to the Developed in the Learner, the Assessment for/as Learning, and Our Conditions for Learning on the Theory of Action graphic.

Creating a strong sense of belonging is a key goal for our school and board improvement work, leading us into 2018. To achieve this goal, we must have a common understanding of what successful attainment of our target looks like and sounds like, for students and for staff. Ask yourself, if we achieve this goal, what will our students and staff know and be doing differently as the result? Post your thinking to the following Google Doc, so that collectively, we can create our success criteria. <https://goo.gl/TLwgsy>



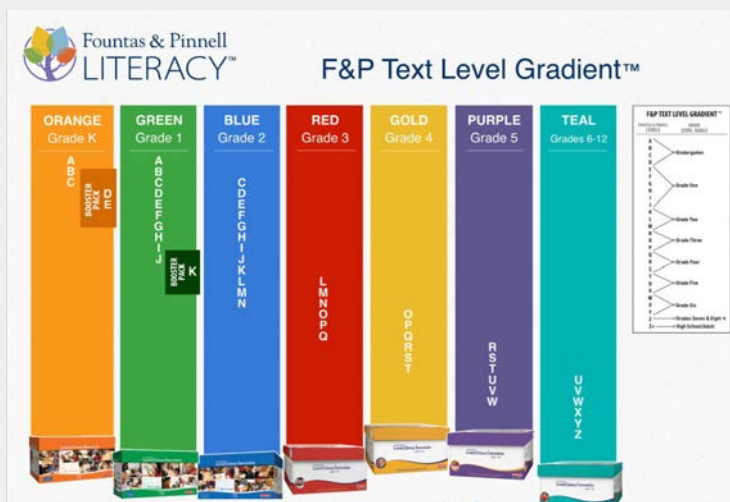
For more of my thinking on this topic, visit <https://nmordencormier.wordpress.com/2016/01/09/our-urgent-need-belonging/> and post your thoughts!

A Responsive Tool for Students: Levelled Literacy Intervention Training

Submitted by Carole Leroux, Student Success Lead, and Nicole Morden Cormier, Superintendent of Education, Elementary Family of Schools

The Board Learning Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being Theory of Action is comprised of four focus areas, one of which is Our Conditions for Learning. This focus area pays specific attention to developing educator awareness of the need to engage in Responsive Instruction, whereby educators collect a continuum of data that shows the progression towards an identified student goal, and to ensure that they are responding to this data throughout the teaching-learning cycle. To support this improvement work, Levelled Literacy Intervention system training engaged a passionate group of sixty educators from both our secondary and elementary panels on March 8th and 9th. The program is one tool that exemplifies this type of responsive instruction for students whose achievement is below grade level in reading and/or writing as it ensures that learning is personalized, precise and specific to the needs of individual students.

Our elementary schools began investing in this program four years ago and have been growing the number of kits in each school since that time. They have been using this intervention program with considerable success. This training was intended to further enhance their practices by offering a deeper understanding of specific strategies and effective delivery methods to offer precise and informed interventions and close learning gaps. The two-day session for the secondary panel was introductory and was designed to give an overview of the system and the benchmark assessment process. Our educators had the opportunity to practice their learning with reading records, discuss lessons and resources and develop plans for implementation within their schools. The training was well received by all participants who recognized the value and importance of this intervention and the potential it has to close the learning gaps of our students. With the support of expert facilitators from Pearson Educational, we hope to continue to refine our skills in using this program to respond to the diverse learning needs of readers who struggle and to increasingly close the achievement gap.



Minister's Principal Reference Group

Kellie Wrigley, principal at George O'Neill Public School, has been selected to join the Minister's Principal Reference Group (MPRG). Established in 2006 principals and vice principals serving on the MPRG have provided invaluable advice to the ministry on a wide range of policy and program matters. Leadership is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes. The MPRG is comprised of only 20 principals and vice principals from school boards across the province which will provide Kellie the privileged opportunity to share her individual perspective at the provincial table. The first MPRG meeting is scheduled for March 30th, 2016.

Student Voice - Speak-Up Projects

The Ministry of Education recently released the list of successful applicants for Speak-up Grants and five SGDSB schools were among the total of 737 project grants that were approved for funding. Below is a list of the schools, the approved dollar amount and project description;

Dorion Public School	\$600	Promote First Nation, Métis and Inuit Perspectives
Lake Superior High School	\$1000	Promote the Development of 21st Century Skills and Knowledge
Marjorie Mills Public School	\$2500	Promote First Nation, Métis and Inuit Perspectives
Schreiber Public School	\$1000	Promote Healthy Schools
Terrace Bay Public School	\$1000	Support Ontario's Renewed Vision for Education

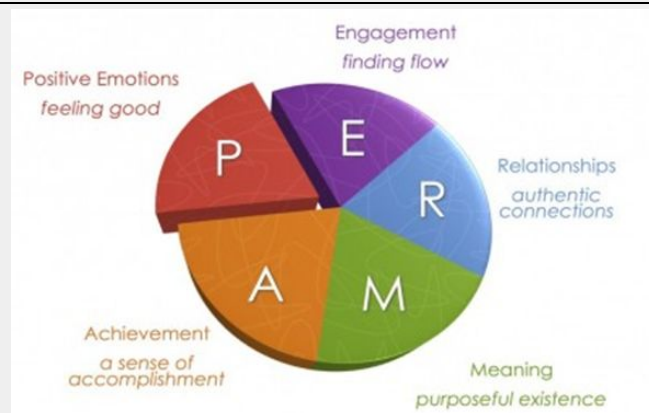
Promoting Well-Being

Submitted by George Drazenovich, Mental Health Lead

One of the leading psychologists in the area of education, Martin Seligman suggests a quick quiz when thinking about well-being in the context of schools.

Question one: in one or two words, what do you most want for your children?

If you are like the thousands of parents polled, you responded, "Happiness," "Confidence," "Contentment," "Fulfillment," "Balance," "Good stuff," "Kindness," "Health," "Satisfaction," "Love," "Being civilized," "Meaning," and the like. In short, well-being is your topmost priority for your children.

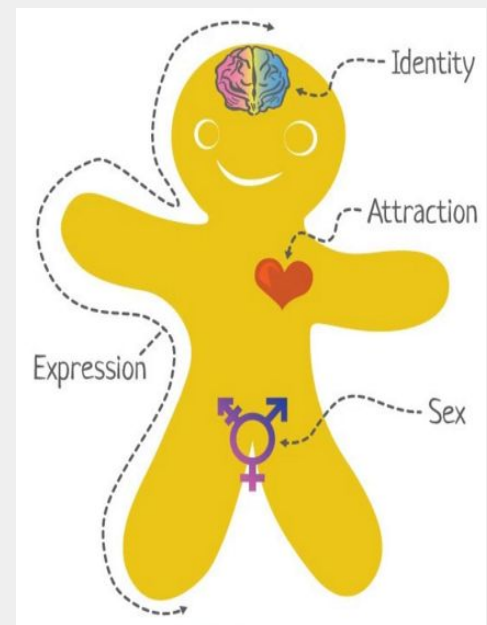


Question two: in one or two words, what do schools teach?

If you are like other parents, you responded, "Achievement," "Thinking skills," "Success," "Conformity," "Literacy," "Math," "Work," "Test taking," "Discipline," and the like. In short, what schools teach is how to succeed in the workplace.

He then goes on to invite the reader to notice that there is almost no overlap between the two lists. The good news is that schools are now positioning themselves to promote well-being as a focussed, explicit, and specific objective of public education. On April 7, 2014, Ontario's Ministry of Education released "Achieving Excellence – A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario." **Promoting Well-Being** is one of the four key goals for the province and is also an important part of the work that we are doing as a board. Mental health in the context of schools is integrally connected to well-being. However, what well-being looks like in the context of the school and how to we know we are promoting it is an important question raised by this increasing emphasis.

A useful way to think about well-being is to break it down into its composite part using a theoretical model developed by Martin Seligman and summarized by the acronym PERMA. The specific acronym stands for: **Positive** emotions, **Engagement**, **Positive Relationships**, **Meaning**, **Achievement/Accomplishment** and is illustrated in the graph below. Each of these areas can be further unpacked, explored, defined and measured in the context of schooling and schools are in a good position to help build in these qualities for students and staff do that every day already. In subsequent posts, I will select one of these areas and expand on it is with a view to explore how schools can facilitate or build some of these qualities and components into students.



Egale Canada Tours SGDSB High Schools: February 22 - 26

Submitted by Carole Leroux, Student Success Lead

Each of our secondary school communities were fortunate to have presentations from two dynamic and informative presenters: Alyx and Sookie, from Egale Canada. To begin the tour, we started at LSHS with the GSA and Diversity clubs from LSHS and MRHS. The students had a morning of activities that inspired sharing and discussion around what their clubs are doing in their schools and the fears, cheers and unclairs identified by the students or educators in the room. The sharing in the room was powerful, supportive and encouraging. By the end of the session students had made new contacts and visibly felt more comfortable. Many of the students expressed their gratitude for the opportunity and their want and need for more opportunities like this.

Following the club session, each school participated in a whole school presentation, followed by a student session and then an educator session. All sessions had overwhelmingly positive feedback and reaction from each of their respective audiences. The conversations had during the student and educator sessions have already had a positive impact on the thoughts and actions of our educators, system leaders, students and community members. We are very proud to share that from this tour each of our high schools now has a Safer Schools Club, however it may be titled: G.S.A, Diversity Alliance, etc. And, on May 26th, we will be hosting a leadership day for these clubs to come together with Alyx and Sookie to do some learning on how to 'rock' their clubs and to be responsive to the needs of the students in their school communities.

Thank you to the planning team who helped make each of these days possible.

“64% of LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school.” ~ Egale Human Rights Trust, 2011

5 Ways Educators Can Support Inclusive Schools:

- 1) Use gender inclusive language such as “everyone” or “students” instead of “boys” and “girls” or “guys”. Know and teach that there are more than two pronouns and that the pronoun “they” can be singular.
- 2) Work proactively to ensure your school has at least one easily accessible all-gender washroom.
- 3) Support your school’s Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or Safer Space Club - be an advisor, attend a meeting or event and talk about the club with your students.
- 4) Introduce lesson plans that create space for discussion of gender, sexual and cultural diversity. Check out the great resources @ www.MyGSA.ca/educators/lesson-plans-resources
- 5) Be aware of bias and assumptions about family structure, gender, sexuality in the curriculum (e.g. family tree activities, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day activities, health education) and create learning activities that celebrate all families, sexualities and genders.

*most of these have been taken directly from resources provided by Egale Canada



Ziisbaakdoke Giizis = March (Maple Sugar Moon)

Mdaaswi shi niiwin = Fourteen (14)

Naadmoshin = Help Me

Naadmaadzan = Help yourself

Wijiwshinaang = Go with us

Wisdoopmishnaang = Eat with us

Wiisnidaa = Let's eat

Ntaa jibakwe = He/she is a good cook



Marathon High School Sr. Girls hosted the NWOSSA Volleyball Championship and invited local singers to open the tournament with a song. MRHS students Linus Kwisswa and Wesley Jacobs are pictured with singers from Biigtignong Nishnabeg and Pic Mobert.



Residential Schools

WITH THE WORDS AND IMAGES OF SURVIVORS

LARRY LOYIE

with

Wayne K. Spear

Constance Brissenden

A NATIONAL HISTORY

Dr. Pamela Toulouse of Laurentian University will provide PD on April 18th to all grade 10 history teachers in how to teach about the residential school legacy, per Call to Action #62(i) of the TRC:

*We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to make **age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for K to 12 students.***

SGDSB has purchased copies of the Loyle book (left) for use in all schools.

We've been hearing awesome feedback about the singing, drumming and leadership of Native language teacher Peter Shebegabow at Geraldton Composite High School, who is working to bring all the students together to learn Anishnabe teachings. He's welcoming everyone that wants to learn to sit around the drum.

Miigwetch for your leadership and inspiration.

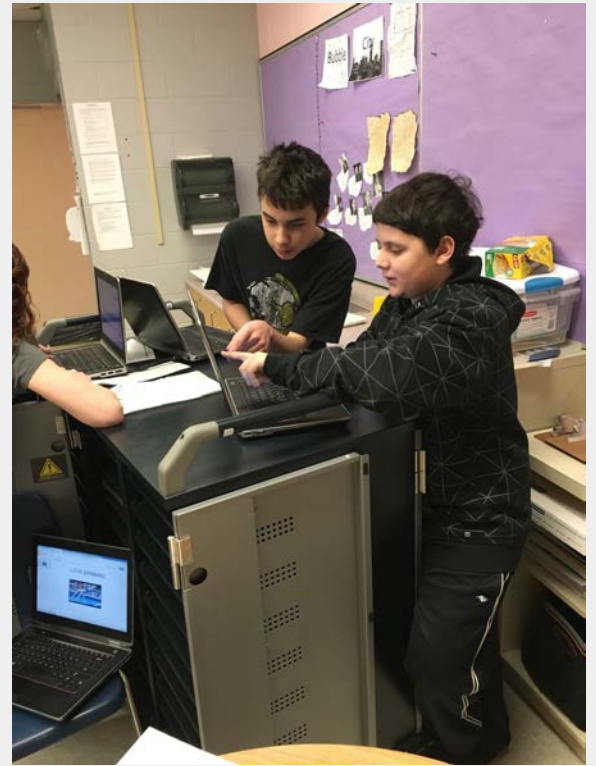


Kindergarden Students from Marjorie Mills Public School were among the first to colour submissions to the SGDSB Woodland Style Colouring Book! Students coloured floral designs and moccasins.

Over 250 submissions were received and over 120 line drawings will be published in two volumes. All artists have been contacted and provided a small honorarium for their contributions. Artists from Lake Superior High School and Beardmore Public School will be featured. The Colouring Book is set to be sent to the publisher by early April. Stay tuned for more information.



Thank you to Christina Murphy, Native Language Teacher from Beardmore Public School for sharing your students handiwork. Students created shields sharing information about their clan and their family, and are learning to bead. Nishin! Very nice work.



Sydney Schwantz and Maisie Lloyd helping each other create Google Slides. Gabriel Michano and Chase Broom-Bourgeois sharing what they have learned to do with Google!

Gr. 7 Students at Margaret Twomey Public School get Googley!

Students at Margaret Twomey Public School recently had the opportunity to activate their Superior-Greenstone District School Board Google accounts and learn all about the powerful learning tools they can access with Google Apps for Education.

Students in Mr. Skworchinski class learned all about Google Drive, Google Docs and Google Slides as well as the importance of being good digital citizens. Students appreciated the real time features of the tools and the fact that their work is continually being saved for them. This means there will be no more lost work! Mr. Skworchinski and the students will be able to provide feedback to one another to improve upon their work and learning. Not only is Google Apps for Education a fantastic learning resource but it will also help the class go paperless which will have a positive impact on the environment.

Sydney Schwantz stated that she “loved learning the new ways of organizing and connecting with friends” and she thinks that “adults, students, and teachers would benefit from learning about the Google tools!

Gabriel Michano is a grade seven student in Mr. Skworchinski class. He said that Google Apps for Education is a “pretty awesome service that I’ve found enjoyable and fun, especially the fun you can have with the slides and documents.” It is always great to hear a student ask “if they can do this at home tonight!” It was a great day of learning for everyone and I can’t wait to see where the learning takes these students!

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO)

"I will talk about these trips all year in my classes. For so many of my students, my description of my travels will be the only exposure they will have to other countries and other ways of life." - Social studies teacher Michael Baldwin, who's first time traveling abroad was with GEEO.

Travel the world, earn professional development credit, and bring global understanding into your classroom!

Founded in 2007, [Global Exploration for Educators Organization \(GEEO\)](http://www.geeo.org) is a 501c3 non-profit organization that has sent over 1300 teachers abroad on adventurous travel programs. With GEEO educators can earn professional development credits while seeing the world. GEEO's trips are 7 to 21 days in length and are designed and discounted to be interesting and affordable for teachers. In addition to amazing tour leaders, many of the programs are accompanied by university faculty that are experts on the destination. GEEO also provides teachers educational materials and the structure to help them bring their experiences into the classroom. The trips are open to all nationalities of K-12 and university educators, administrators, retired educators, as well as educators' guests.

GEEO is offering the following travel programs for 2016: Bali/Lombok, Bangkok to Hanoi, China, Costa Rica, Eastern Europe, The Galapagos Islands, Greece, Iceland, India/Nepal, Southern India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Morocco, Ethiopia, Myanmar (Burma), Peruvian Amazon, Peruvian Andes, Portugal/Spain, Heart of the Silk Road, Southern Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Vietnam/Cambodia, Western Balkans, Moorish Spain (Spring Break), Morocco (Spring Break), Morocco (Winter Break), The Philippines (Winter Break) and Mt. Kilimanjaro (Winter Break). The registration deadline is June 1st, but space is limited and many programs will be full well before the deadline.

Detailed information about each trip, including itineraries, costs, travel dates, and more can be found at www.geeo.org. GEEO can be reached 7 days a week, toll-free at 1-877-600-0105 between 9 AM-9 PM EST.

March is National Nutrition Month!

The Nutrition Month 2016 campaign's goal is to support people in making small changes to their eating – one meal at a time. The slogan for the campaign is *Take a 100 Meal Journey: Make Small Changes, One Meal at a Time*. Think about it: We eat almost 100 meals each month. Throughout March, this calendar offers inspiring ideas to make small changes and doable strategies to help make those changes stick. We are encouraging you to *Take a 100 Meal Journey* and make small changes to improve your health, one meal at a time by taking a pledge at <http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-Month/Nutrition-Month.aspx> and participating in the challenge.

At the end of the month, count the number of tips tried this month and reflect on what worked to keep you moving toward your healthy eating goals. *For a workplace award certificate, please send the company name, number of employees participated to Heather.Martin@TBDHU.com.*

Up Coming Events

- March Break - 14-18
- March 25 - Good Friday – no school
- March 28 - Easter Monday – no school
- March 29th - George Couros
- March 31 - OSSLT
- April 15th - Neurodiversity Day
- April 18th - Pamela Toulouse Workshop
- April 22nd - PD Day
- **Education Week May 2-6 - Achieving Excellence - Promoting Wellbeing**
- **Jean Clinton event "Celebrating Our Children"**
 - Monday, May 9, - Marathon (including Manitouwadge)
 - Tuesday, May 10 – TB/Schreiber
 - Wednesday, May 11 – Geraldton
 - Thursday, May 12 – Nipigon/Red Rock/Dorion



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@SGDSBoard, or
@tamblyn_david

