Message from COO, International Education Services

I have the opportunity to visit various countries and meet interesting people around the world in Asia, Europe, South America, the Middle East, and each country has unique cultures and characteristics. Many people that I encounter in my travels are interested in studying in a Canadian school, experiencing, and being immersed in, a safe and prosperous country with its own unique, multicultural, environments. I am always proud when I hear that Canadians are considered friendly, welcoming, people and when our international guests share with me the beautiful and varied landscapes they see across the country.

This time of year, we all become aware that our community enjoys four seasons... the leaves on the trees have recently changed colour, the days are shorter, and soon winter and the Christmas season will be here. Winter is time for warm coats and boots but it is also a time to enjoy traditions and unique winter activities. We hope our international guests will take the opportunity to experience all that is offered through our Waterloo Catholic School communities.

Vic Degutis
COO • Research & Development/International Education Services
Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Social Media

The International Education Services Department is expanding on Social Media! Messaging will include day-to-day information from the schools and other information pertinent to homestays. This will include important dates, fun photos and other relevant information relating to our students! Click on the links to follow us on Twitter and Facebook! For those of you that don’t have Twitter, sign up today; it’s easy! Sign up here.

https://twitter.com/WCDSB_Intl
https://www.facebook.com/wcdsb.intl/?ref=bookmarks

Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 25, 2017-January 5, 2018</td>
<td>Christmas Holidays-No School</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 8, 2018</td>
<td>All Classes Resume</td>
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<td>January 26, 2018</td>
<td>PD Day: Only Elementary Schools</td>
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<td>January 26-February 1, 2018</td>
<td>Secondary School Exam Days</td>
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<td>February 2, 2018</td>
<td>PD Day: Secondary Schools</td>
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<td>February 15, 2018</td>
<td>Elementary Report Cards Sent Home</td>
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<td>February 19, 2018</td>
<td>Family Day-No School</td>
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<td>March 12-16, 2018</td>
<td>March Break-No School</td>
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Global Youth Forum

The Global Youth Forum is an annual one day conference organized by the Centre for International Governance Innovation. Approximately 250 high school students attend the event from around the Waterloo region. The goal of the day is to expose the students to local, national and international issues, groups and initiatives. The goal of the GYF is to show the students different ways to become involved in “making the world a better place” from a local standpoint as well as nationally and internationally.

Last year, students engaged in a variety of learning venues including a plenary address entitled “Climate Refugees” - an address by Simon Dalby from Balsillie School of International Affairs and the Wilfrid Laurier University Geography Department. It featured speakers that discussed Economic, Legal and social implications and responses to climate change. Teachers also had the opportunity to engage in a simulation exercise around environmental issues, with the intent of bringing their learning back to their classrooms to share with their students. Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and organizers, the theme of “Climate Change & Sustainability in a Global Context” will continue this year. Please contact our office for more information regarding this event. It is a great chance for people to learn more about our International Certificate Program!

International Student Highlight - Wenjie Ma

Hello, my name is Wenjie Ma and I am from Beijing, China. My Canadian name is Sunny. I’m so lucky to have a wonderful homestay family, a great school and good friends. I’m studying at St. Mary’s High School, in grade 11. I came to Canada in August 2016 for grade 10. Last year, I joined the badminton club, where my skills improved greatly; earning me an award for most improved female. On Saturday mornings I do volunteer work in a school where parents bring their small children to learn Chinese.

One big difference between the school system here compared to China, is in China we have a big exam that decides our final mark for a semester. However, in Canada the average mark from every test and quiz is used to make up our final mark. Second, students in China don’t have spare time after school; they are completely focused on studying. In Canada, students have a lot of free time after school to do what they want to make life more interesting, like hanging out at the mall. I know that I have to work very hard on my studies so I will get good marks, because it costs my family a great deal of money for me to study here in Canada. I want to make them proud!

For recreation on the weekends, I go with my homestay family to Laurel Creek Conservation Park. I still remember the first time I saw my homestay families’ trailer and if I had to use one word to describe it, I would use the word “huge”. It has a living room, a kitchen, a bathroom and even a small bedroom. Besides the trailer, the park is also a really beautiful place; it has trees and grass everywhere. You can swim, bike and kayak in the daytime and at night, we have fun sitting around campfires. My homestay dad Jim said kayaking is his favorite sport and I have learned the basics from him. I felt so excited about it since it was my first time in a kayak! Jim and Dot explained what to do to stay safe. Once you are in the kayak and get your balance, the feeling is quite peaceful. It was funny because at first I couldn’t control the kayak, it always wanted to go right when I wanted to go left. Jim taught me to be patient. Although I had a great experience, my poor arms were really sore the next day from all the paddling. This fall I prepared Thanksgiving dinner for the whole family, with coaching from Dot, my homestay mom. It turned out wonderful!
The School Board welcomed students from Colombia to participate in the International Immersion Program at our local Catholic elementary and secondary schools from September 15 to October 28, 2017. These students learned about Canadian culture, participated in cultural and recreational activities, and experienced education in our Catholic schools. The students also got to visit the African Lion Safari, Canada’s Wonderland, and Laser Quest!

We would like to thank the staff from Sir Edgar Bauer, St. Luke’s, and St. David’s for providing our Short Term students with a fun and welcoming place to learn during their stay in Canada! The students are looking forward to coming back, and they hope they get the chance to further their studies here in Canada! WCDSB looks forward to seeing these students again.

Are you speaking English?

Don’t forget to use English when you are out of school! Here are some free apps you may find helpful: Duolingo, Memrise, and AccelaStudy.

Practice Makes Perfect!
Hosting an International Student - “No Ordinary Six Weeks”

As a parent of an only child, I hoped the experience of being a host family would be positive for our daughter (grade 5) as well as the student who we would be welcoming into our home. What I didn’t realize is how it would impact me.

From the moment that Silvi (grade 7) entered our home she became a sister to our daughter, Gabriela, and a daughter to me and my husband. It’s difficult to explain in words but it was as if God chose her to be a member of our family. Gabriela and Silvi instantly connected. They were two peas in a pod. It was as if they had known each other all their lives. Our home was filled with activity. Whether it was hours of making slime, time spent on the karaoke machine, watching their favourite show, or just the evening giggles—our home was alive.

We quickly became family. I no longer had one child, I now had two. I can honestly say that we treated her just like our own. Silvi followed the house rules and indulged in all our family activities, including an outing to the Toronto Blue Jays game. There was no distinction in my eye. I saw it as my responsibility to be Silvi’s mom away from home—so that’s what I was. Silvi was with us for six weeks, but the impact she made on our lives will last forever. I know that we will be united again. But until then we remain connected through technology and the memories of our wonderful time together.

Important Information

The Waterloo Region is home to many Christmas and Holiday celebrations. Some of which include skating, parades, Christmas Markets, train rides, shows and performances, Christmas light festivals and much more! Bingeman’s hosts a ‘Gift of Lights’ show, as well as many other Christmas related events. You can visit their website by clicking here. Waterloo Park in Kitchener, has a huge light show set up with horse-drawn carriages! Click here to learn more about this fun family event.

Visit Kitchener’s City Hall to experience a real German Christmas! Dating back to 1434, Christkindl is a unique and fun experience for all. This is the biggest German-Christmas celebration in all of Canada!

Watch the Bingeman’s ‘Gift of Lights’ video here! https://youtu.be/psG7Ls6svoA

Enjoy the Holidays and Happy New Year!

From the International Education Staff at the Research & Development Office.