St. Michael Catholic School Advisory Council (CSAC) 2025-2026 End-of-Year Report

Introduction

The 2025-2026 school year has been one of growth and continued commitment to enhancing the learning environment for the students at Saint Michael Catholic Elementary School. This report highlights the key activities, discussions, and accomplishments of the Catholic School Advisory Council (CSAC) over the past year. With a strong focus on student engagement through STEAM initiatives, community involvement, and infrastructural development, the council has played a vital role in supporting the school administration and the wider school community.

CSAC Membership and Meetings

Executive Team:

- Co-Chairs: Brenda Resendes & Samantha Esmeralda
- Treasurer: Miranda Jensen
  - Secretary: Pam Copat
  - Principal: Missy Routhier
- Community Representatives: Katelyn LePage, Laurie Brown, Monica Zhou, Danielle Fox, Samanta Martinez, Sandra Huskinson, Sandra Barwell, Dave Gibson, Vanessa Eugenio, Erin Specker

Throughout the year, the CSAC held regular meetings in September, October, November, December, February, March, April, May and June, fostering productive discussions and decision-making on various school-related matters. Meeting minutes are located here.

Budget and Financial Overview

The financial health of CSAC was a priority, with several reviews of the budget and expenditures taking place during the year:

- **Budget Approval**: In October 2025 the council voted to pass the 2025-2026 budget. The budget was revisited in early November to adjust allocations according to inflation and based on the amount raised by the Dance-a-thon (approximately $ 9,000.00- dance-a-thon plus leftover amount from 2024)
- **Fundraising and Grants**: Successful fundraising efforts, such as the Dance-a-thon ($7780 raised) and Mission Day ($2483.58 raised for Food For Kids), generated revenue for 2025-2026 projects. CSAC also received grants, including the PIC grant ($500), ProGrant ($400). St. Michael's School received a Catholic Charities Grant for $2500 to support STEAM projects like our craft, folk dance and drama clubs.
- **Expenditure Highlights**:
  - Support for graduating class initiatives (e.g., field trip, retreat, class composite, etc. $50 per student)
  - Support for school bus funding for trips ($14 per student) and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Computer items and Chromebook cart, Christmas Craft supplies) and Healthy Active Living initiatives (outdoor equipment- annually, cooking club kitchen rental, support of rewards)

Key Projects and Activities

1. Student Engagement and Support through STEAM

- **Home Reading Program:** Sylla Sense Home Reading program was purchased for grades K-2. Books for FSL were also purchased.

- **Outdoor Equipment**: funding was allocated for the purchasing of outdoor sports equipment for the recess cart.

- **Experiential Learning**: funding was allocated to classes to provide experiential learning opportunities, including trips and guest speakers (e.g., Scientists in the schools). Cooking Club at Langs was also funded.

- **STEAM Items**: Classroom purchases to support STEAM were made throughout the year as educators used a wish list to fund these items (e.g., Science challenges, Christmas Crafts, etc.)

2. **Community and Faith-Based Projects**

- **Food For Kids**: Funds raised from Mission Day contributed to this cause.
  - **Toy Mountain (Toy Drive):** This toy drive was well received by families and staff.
- **First Communion and Confirmation**: The council supported sacramental events, with 16 students receiving First Communion and 23 students confirmed.
- **University of Waterloo STEM Night**: CSAC collaborated with the University of Waterloo to plan and facilitate a family STEM night in November.

- **Mr**. **Gibson's Festive Feast:** CSAC planned and facilitated a turkey luncheon for the entire school community.

- **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast**: CSAC planned and facilitated a pancake breakfast for the entire school community.

- **Family Movie Night**: CSAC collaborated to plan and facilitate a family movie night in May.

- **Hot Chocolate Treat:** CSAC provided a Hot Chocolate Reward Day for our school community.

- **Improved Transportation and Safety in the St. Michael's Neighbourhood**: CSAC met, collaborated and facilitated information gathering (traffic audit, family surveys, etc.) with STRW to improve the parking and traffic situation in our immediate school area. These activities included meetings with Hayat Shariff, in which she led learning about the drive-to-five map, research on changing patterns and healthy modes of transportation, traffic audits, and survey results. Hayat also presented information to the school community regarding parking constraints at Langs.

2. School Communication

- The council actively worked on improving communication channels between the school staff and parents. This included regular principal newsletters, surveys and updates via SchoolMessenger.

3. Parent Engagement

- **Workshops and Events**: Parent engagement remained a priority. The University of Waterloo STEM night in November, as well as a Family Movie Night were significant steps towards building community involvement. This growth was evident in our Mission Day event in June which saw an increase in attendance and positive survey results.

4. School Improvement Projects

- **Micro Forest Grant**: The Micro Forest project was cancelled due to an inability to regularly water plants. Project designers did not feel our situation was conducive to keeping the trees alive.

Events and Fundraising

1. Dance-a-thon: Held in October 2025, the Dance-a-thon was a successful fundraiser that raised significant funds for school initiatives. This event also received positive feedback from students.

2. Spring Mission Day: Mission Day, held in June 2026, was another major fundraising event. Mission Day aimed to raise $ 1,500 to contribute to our local charity, Food 4 Kids. We surpassed our goal!

3. Toy Mountain Toy Drive: CSAC helped to organize and promote this event. It was very successful and well-received by the community. We will continue with this initiative.

3. Safety and Leadership Programs-Sidewalk Smarts Program: Students in grades 3 and 4 completed the Sidewalk Smarts Program. We will continue to implement this program for grades 3 and 4 students.

Tim Horton's Leadership Camp- Grade 5 and 6 students completed this program. While it was a positive experience, staff reviewed this program stating that it was not worth the time allotted (discontinue).

SHYFT Program- This program was geared towards grade 4-6 girls and focussed on self-esteem and leadership. It was well received by staff and students and we will continue with this free program.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While CSAC made notable progress, certain challenges were encountered:

- **Parent and Staff Participation**: Despite the efforts to engage parents and staff, attendance at some council meetings and events was lower than expected. Moving forward, the council plans to continue to shorten the length of meetings, integrate engagement opportunities with existing school events, and continue to plan events with staff and parent schedules in mind.

- **Parking and Safety Concerns in the Community**: Despite our best efforts to bring awareness to the community regarding safety concerns in our community parking areas, behaviours did not change over the course of the year. We will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders to improve this situation.

Looking Forward: 2026-2027 Initiatives

As we look ahead to the next academic year, several priorities have been identified:

- **Gaga Ball Pit**: Begin the design, planning and installation of a new Gaga Ball Pit for the Primary yard.

- **Parent and Student Engagement**: Continued focus on increasing parent involvement through more family-friendly events. The University of Waterloo has been contacted to secure another STEM night in the fall of 2026.

- **Fundraising for New Projects**: Initiatives like the STEAM items (including tech items like a camera for yearbook), experiential learning opportunities and replenishing of classroom outdoor equipment remain top priorities for staff and students (classroom bins with age-appropriate outdoor equipment).

- **Improved School Safety in Parking Areas**: collaboration with Student Transportation Waterloo Region will include a Sidewalk Smarts program (Fall 2026) and a Bike Rodeo at our next Mission Day to improve community awareness. These learning opportunities will hopefully have a positive impact on the community observance of traffic safety laws and parking regulations. Changes made through the Region will also be pursued.

Conclusion

The 2025-2026 school year was marked by resilience, collaboration, and meaningful contributions from the Saint Michael Catholic School Advisory Council. Through various initiatives, the council has significantly impacted the student experience, school facilities, and parent engagement. As we prepare for the upcoming year, CSAC remains committed to its mission of supporting and enriching the Saint Michael's Catholic School community.