



St. Mark School Newsletter

January 2024

St. Mark Catholic Elementary School
240 Autumn Hill Cres.
Kitchener, ON, N2N 1K8
Phone: (519) 743-4682

"Growing in skill, wisdom and strength."

Our Mission Statement

St. Mark Catholic Elementary School, with home, Church and community, is committed to nurturing the growth and future success of faith-centered individuals through the pursuit of academic excellence, Catholic values and respect for all.

IMPORTANT DATES

First Day Back to School

Monday, January 8th

PD Day

Friday, January 19th
Full Day

Bell Let's Talk Day

Friday, January 26th

CSAC Meeting at St. Mark School

Tuesday, January 30th
7:00-8:30 pm

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE

Grade 7 Mental Health Presentations

Thursday, February 8th
(Details Forthcoming)

Valentine's Theme Day Red, Pink & White Day

Tuesday, February 13th

Nutritional Free Day No. 4

Tuesday, February 13th

Kindergarten Vision Screening Program at St. Mark School

Tuesday, February 13th

Shrove Tuesday

Tuesday, February 13th

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year & welcome back!! I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone back to St. Mark School, from what was hopefully a very restful and joyous Christmas holiday. Looking back to our final weeks before the Christmas Break, I would like to sincerely thank all staff & students for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to making our **Advent Liturgies & activities** so special and memorable.

As we embark on a New Year, we can certainly consider and reflect on the many possibilities and goals we can set for 2024. I encourage everyone to set reasonable and achievable **goals** for themselves for this year. Remember, when you set your mind to something and mix in some real effort & courage, you will be successful.

Please take a moment to note on your calendar the important dates that appear on the **January – March 2024 Calendar** in the left margin. There is important information in the January Newsletter regarding **Kindergarten Registration**.

We have several staff members leaving St. Mark School including Mr. Sene (EA) who is heading to St. Aloysius CES (K), Mrs. Doerr (EA) who has been assigned to Monsignor Haller CES (K), Ms. Paiva (CYCW) who heads to St. Paul CES (K), and Mrs. Niemiec (LHS) who finishes up many years of work at St. Mark School. We thank them all for their wonderful service and support to our students, staff, and families, and we wish them all the very best. We welcome some new staff members to St. Mark School. We welcome Mrs. Ng (EA), Mrs. Ajenifuja (CYCW), and Ms. Nair (LHS).

Once again, welcome back and best wishes for a year filled with many blessings, joys, and successes.

Sincerely,

Mr. Lankowski
Principal

<p>Valentines Day Wednesday, February 14th</p> <p>Ash Wednesday Wednesday, February 14th</p> <p>Ash Wednesday Mass at St. Mark School Wednesday, February 14th 9:00 am</p> <p>Mount Mary Retreat for Grade 8 Students February 14th – 16th</p> <p>Term 1 Report Card Distribution Day Thursday, February 15th</p> <p>National Random Acts of Kindness Day Saturday, February 17th</p> <p>Family Day Monday, February 19th (No School)</p> <p>Gr. 9 Course Selection Deadline Thursday, February 29th</p> <p>MARCH AT A GLANCE</p> <p>Lenten Reconciliations at St. Mark School Thursday, March 7th 12:45 pm</p> <p>Board Designated Holiday Friday, March 8th (No School)</p> <p>MARCH BREAK March 11th – 15th</p> <p>St. Patrick's Day Sunday, March 17th</p> <p>Catholic School Advisory Council Meeting at St. Mark School Tuesday, March 19th 7:00-8:30 pm</p> <p>International Day of Happiness Wednesday, March 20th</p> <p>CCAT Administration for Grade 4 Students March 20th – 27th</p>	<p>WINTER CLOTHING</p> <p>Please make sure your children come to school with the appropriate winter wear in the next few months. We do send our students outdoors for no longer than 20 minutes on days when the temperature is between -15 and -19 degrees Celsius. Students are kept indoors when the temperature is -20 degrees Celsius or colder. We would also encourage parents/guardians to send an extra pair of gloves & socks with your child/children in case your child's gloves & socks get wet. Thank you for your assistance.</p> <p>HEALTH & WELFARE</p> <p>There are students and staff in the school who have extreme allergies to peanuts and related products such as peanut butter and oil, as well as other nuts and nut products (cashews, pistachios etc.) For some, the allergies are so severe that consumption or even exposure to a nut product (e.g., smell) could be life threatening. Prevention is the best approach and, therefore, we ask families to refrain from sending nuts and nut products to school with the students. Please instruct your child never to share their lunch and recess snacks.</p> <p>PEANUT BUTTER SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>There is a product marketed as School Safe Soy Butter Spread; a food product that looks, smells, and tastes like real peanut butter (but is not real peanut butter). This product will not be permitted in a school, as it places administrators, staff, and volunteers in a position of having to decide definitively if the product is or is not real peanut butter. Board staff members are not qualified food experts and are in no position to make such decisions – particularly where exposure to real peanut butter can be life threatening to someone with a severe allergy.</p> <p>SCENT FREE SCHOOL</p> <p>We are also a scent free school as some staff and students may have allergies to various scents and fragrances. Please be aware and respect that we are a scent free school. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.</p> <p>DOGS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY</p> <p>At St. Mark Catholic School, we absolutely love pets. However, we ask that you please refrain from walking your dog on school property when walking your children to and from school. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation with this safety issue.</p> <p>REPORTING IN & SIGNING OUT</p> <p>If you are bringing your child/children to school after 8:55 am or 12:40 pm, please make sure to report to the main office. The Administrative Assistant will document that your child has returned to school late, give your child a late slip and send him/her back to their classroom. If you are signing your child/children out for the day or for any time during the day, you need to do so in the sign-in/sign-out book in the office.</p>
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<p>Immunization of School Pupils Act (IPSA) Suspension Day for Elementary Schools Wednesday, March 27th</p> <p>Grade 7 Hep B/HPV Meningococcal Vaccinations at St. Mark School Thursday, March 28th</p> <p>Good Friday Friday, March 29th (No School)</p> <p>EASTER SUNDAY Sunday, March 31st</p> <p>APRIL AT A GLANCE</p> <p>Easter Monday Monday, April 1st (No School)</p>	<p>VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL</p> <p>Please remember that ALL VISITORS to the school, including parents, must sign in and out of the office during in-class hours.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: If you are volunteering at the school, you are required to wear a mask and a 'volunteer' badge. If, on the other hand, you are simply visiting the school, you are required to wear a mask and a 'visitor' badge. Both badges are available in the main office. Mrs. Pingos will personally issue one to you if you are either volunteering or visiting the school.</p> <p>SAFE ARRIVAL TO SCHOOL</p> <p>The school day begins at 8:55 am. Teachers and other staff members begin supervising the school yard at 8:40 am. Please do not send your child/children to school before 8:40 am, since they would be unsupervised on the school yard – unless your child is enrolled in our Extended Day Program. If this is difficult for you, please make daycare arrangements for your child/children. Thank you for your cooperation with this important matter.</p> <p>Also, this is just a gentle reminder that if your child is sick or will be late coming to school, you MUST CALL THE SCHOOL AT (519) 743-4682 and inform us of the absence. Please also provide for us a reason for absence. Thank you for helping to keep our students safe.</p>
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<p>PARKING REMINDER FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS</p> <p>Thank you to all parents, guardians and caregivers who have been following the rules for dropping your children at school and picking them up at the end of classes. The safety of your children remains the priority for everyone at St. Mark School. A continued reminder to those who are not following our guidelines:</p> <p>PARENTS/GUARDIANS ARE NOT TO BE USING THE SCHOOL PARKING LOTS TO PICK UP THEIR CHILD/CHILDREN BETWEEN 8:30 AM AND 3:40 PM; Parents/Guardians who have a child enrolled in the Extended Day Program can use the parking lot from 7:00 am – 8:30 am and 3:40 pm – 6:00 pm.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are not to be parking in the handicapped space unless they have a permit or the principal's permission to do so.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are not to be parking in the school zone on Autumn Hill Crescent; we encourage parents to park on the school side of Autumn Hill Crescent when dropping their child/children off to school again, not in the school zone; a city Bi-Law Officer will issue tickets to those who do not comply.</p> <p>PARENT/GUARDIANS ARE ALSO ASKED TO BE RESPECTFUL WHEN PARKING ON AUTUMN HILL CRESCENT; WE ASK THAT YOU DO NOT PARK IN FRONT OF A CITIZEN'S DRIVEWAY, DO NOT PARK, OR DROP OFF YOUR CHILD IN A CITIZEN'S DRIVEWAY, OR USE A DRIVEWAY TO MAKE A 3-POINT TURN – THESE ACTIONS ARE UNSAFE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND OUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURS.</p> <p>When students are dropped-off they are not to be walking through the parking lot on their own – students need to use the sidewalks. Parents are to stay on the city sidewalks when dropping off/picking up their children.</p> <p>Together, let us continue to make our school the safest place for our students.</p>
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KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

It is time to sign up for the 2024-2025 school year – and registering to attend one of Waterloo Region's 43 [Catholic elementary schools](#) has never been easier.

Children born in **2020** are eligible for **Year 1 Kindergarten (JK)**.

Children born in **2019** are eligible for **Year 2 Kindergarten (SK)**

Parents can access the Online Pre-Registration form by clicking on the [Register for School](#) link on the [WCDSB Homepage](#) and then choosing [Kindergarten Registration](#).

To finalize your child's registration, please contact your local Catholic school directly, for individual registration dates and times.

QUICK Facts

When registering your child to attend a Catholic elementary school you must be prepared to provide proof of the child's date of birth and either the child's Catholic baptismal certificate or the Catholic baptismal certificate of at least one parent or guardian.

If you are non-Catholic, but wish to explore a Catholic education for your child(ren), please review the [WCDSB Admissions to Catholic Elementary Schools](#) policy. Our secondary schools are open to students of all faiths.

A complete list of WCDSB schools that will offer the **Extended Day Program** in 2024-25 will be web-posted before the end of this current (2023-24) school year. Please call your school directly for information about the Extended Day Program. A complete list of WCDSB schools currently providing the program is available via this link: [Extended Day Program](#).

For information about **French Immersion** programs in Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge, please click here: [French Immersion Registration Information](#).

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board, representing more than 96,000 Catholic school supporters, operates 48 schools and five adult education facilities serving more than 40,000 elementary, secondary, and continuing education students in Waterloo Region – continuing a 185-year tradition of quality, inclusive, faith-based education. Follow us on Twitter: [@WCDSBNewswire](#) – [#WCDSBAwesome](#).

NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

January is an exciting time in the Library Learning Commons. The **Forest of Reading Programs** will be starting for grades 1-8, and all students are welcome to participate in these programs (Blue Spruce, grades 1-3, Silver Birch Express, grades 3-4, Silver Birch Fiction, grades 5-6 and Red Maple, grades 7-8).

Please stay tuned for more information, or follow this link to connect to the Forest of Reading site if you want a Sneak Peek at the nominated titles: <https://forestofreading.com/nominated-lists/>

Wishing you all a safe and Happy New Year!

Ms. Najjar
Library Technician

NUTRITIONAL FREE DAYS

We can have ten days throughout the school year when we can lower our nutritional guard to include foods of minimum nutritional value.

Our remaining **Nutritional Free Days for 2023-2024** will include the following:

- Pancake Tuesday/Valentine's Day Tuesday, February 13, 2024
- School Fundraiser Event Date TBD (May 2024)
- Student Council Freezie Days Friday, June 7, 14, & 21, 2024
- Grade 8 Graduation Celebration Wednesday, June 26, 2024
- Canada Day/Final Day of School Thursday, June 27, 2024

A schedule of monthly Nutritional Free Days will be included in all school newsletters moving forward.

ATHLETICS 2023-2024

The **WCDSB Elementary School Athletics Schedule for 2023-2024** is included below for your reference. We will provide seasonal updates in our newsletters as reminders. The athletics below are the teams our teacher/coaches have signed up for this year.

Winter Schedule

Girls' Volleyball (Small Schools) late Feb – early March 2024
Boys' Basketball (Small Schools) late Feb – early March 2024

Spring Schedule

Folkdance Festival (KW Schools) May 8, 2024, at Kitchener Auditorium
Intermediate Co-ed Soccer mid – late May 2024, at RIM Park
KW Schools Cross Country June 5, 2024, at Bechtel Park, Waterloo
Regional Track & Field Meet (AA Schools) June 11, 2024, at Resurrection CSS
Junior Girls' 3-Pitch mid – June 2024, at RIM Park
Junior Boys' 3-Pitch mid – June 2024, at RIM Park
Co-ed Ultimate Frisbee (KW Schools) mid – June 2024, at RIM Park

The schedule will be updated and included in future newsletters when dates and locations for certain sports events have been determined. The WCDSB has developed a Code of Conduct for spectators, coaches, and athletes (see below).

WCDSB Athletics Code of Conduct

- Remember that participants play for their own enjoyment.
- Hold realistic expectations. Remember that players are not professionals and cannot be judged by professional standards.
- Respect the decisions of the officials and encourage participants to do the same.
- Understand that mistakes are okay, and that they are an important part of learning.
- Show respect for your team's opponents, because without them, there would be no game.
- Only use positive language with players, coaches, officials, and other spectators.
- Respect the coaches' decisions and encourage open communication with them.



Elementary
Athletics Code of Conduct

Also, we at the school have developed a Team Commitment Form/Code of Conduct we expect from our student/athletes. We anticipate students, who are trying out for teams, have been completing their schoolwork and behaving in the classroom and on the school yard to the very best of their [individual] ability – students who are not may forfeit the opportunity to play on various teams throughout the year. A sample Team Commitment Form/Code of Conduct has been included for your information. Please make sure to discuss this with your child if he/she is planning to participate on a school team this year.



Team Commitment
Form.doc

COUNCIL'S CORNER

Fundraising Made Easy this holiday season!

We are making it so easy to help raise the funds our school needs to support all our students! Below you will find various options to help raise much needed funds for our school and students with things you might already be buying!

FLIPGIVE:

FlipGive helps non-profit organizations by allowing them to earn cash rebates every time you shop online at select stores (hotels, restaurants, building supply & clothing stores -- there are 100's of stores!). You can also invite family members and friends to join and help support out school!

What does this mean for you?

- NO selling of any products!
- NO cost to you at all. It is a rebate program.
- Earn cash for the school on the things you are already buying!
- Just download the app and log in before you make online purchases. It is that simple!

SIGN UP TODAY!

go to :

https://app.flipgive.com/teams/join?branch_match_id=705531803515950135&branch_referrer=H4sIAAAAAAAAAA8soKSkottLXT8vJLEjPLEvVSywo0MvjzMvWL0INzC3Wz8rPzLMHEcn5Kam2Xm6BIU7uAMfmM_yw0AAAA&joincode=JFQTBG&utm_medium=marketing

and enter Team Invite Code: JFQTBG

FlipGive is a free funding app that makes raising money a breeze. Families can earn cash back for St. Mark by buying the things they already need. Funds will be raised whenever you shop, dine out, book hotels or activities!

For more details please visit <https://www.flipgive.com/how-it-works>

MABEL'S LABELS:

go here: https://mabelslabels.ca/en_CA/fundraising/support/

and select "St. Mark Catholic Elementary School (Kitchener)" from the drop down list to support the school when you buy labels through Mabel's Labels!

OLIVERS LABELS:

go here: <https://www.oliverslabels.com/>

support the school when

you buy labels through Oliver's Labels!

Thank you for your support!

You can help support the school ALL YEAR long using the links above!

All funds raised help support the students at St. Mark School.

WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU!!!

Please consider joining upcoming council meetings, all are at 7:00pm at St. Mark School dates below:

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Thank you

School Council

ECO SCHOOLS UPDATE

We have some exciting projects planned for every month in the new year. For January the ECO Club will be running an ECO Colouring Contest for all grades. Stay tuned for more details.

And here are 10 kid-friendly ECO resolutions to choose from as we start a new year:

1. Turn off the lights when leaving a room to save energy.
2. Use a reusable water bottle instead of disposable plastic bottles.
3. Use a reusable lunch box and bag to reduce waste from single-use plastic containers.
4. Plant a tree or help take care of a community garden.
5. Learn about and participate in efforts to protect local wildlife and habitats.
6. Reduce, reuse, and recycle by properly disposing of trash and finding new uses for old items.
7. Use public transportation, walk, or ride a bike instead of driving to reduce air pollution.
8. Learn about and support efforts to combat climate change.
9. Educate friends and family about the importance of protecting the environment.
10. Help conserve water by turning off the tap when not using it and taking shorter showers.

<https://nature-watch.com/blog/2023/01/03/10-earth-friendly-new-years-resolutions-for-kids/>

Have a Safe and Happy New Year!

The St Mark ECO Club

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO WOMEN IN COMPUTER SCIENCE (WICS) OUTREACH**Technovation Girls (girls+ ages 13-18)**

[Technovation Girls](#) is an annual 12-week global technology challenge dedicated to inspiring girls, young women, and those who identify as trans, non-binary, or gender-fluid (girls+) to pursue studies and careers in technology and entrepreneurship. Teams of girls+ start with no prior programming experience and progress through the entrepreneur's journey of identifying a problem, presenting a business case, building either a mobile app or AI project (using Scratch-based languages such as MIT app inventor and Thunkable,

though experienced students could create an app using Java or Swift), and creating a pitch for their project. Teams generally work through the program with a mentor or pair of mentors following the curriculum designed by Technovation. (Interested boys have access to the entire Technovation online curriculum – they simply cannot submit their project to the Technovation Challenge competition.)

WiCS is serving as the Waterloo Chapter Ambassador (for our seventh consecutive year!), wherein we act as a hub and support system for local junior (ages 13-15) and senior (ages 16-18) teams. As Chapter Ambassador, we support teams by helping students to form teams and find mentors, running monthly workshops that help the teams to stay on track in the program, and hosting a regional live pitch event at the end of the program. Our monthly workshops will be in person and will run from January through April. They will provide students with extra presentations on key aspects of the challenges and give teams access to coaches and additional mentors, who can answer questions and provide feedback. These workshops also provide a forum for participants to get to know each other, to see what other teams are working on, and to interact at greater length with university-student and industry mentors.

The impact of participating in Technovation is impressive: 58% of alumnae enroll in computer science courses (compared with the 23% national average of women enrolled in computer science).

Timeline: January – April 2024. Submission date for the competition is April 24, 2024.

Student commitment: Approximately 4-5 hours per week during the program from January-April

Cost: This program is 100% free to all participants.

Register for Technovation Girls: <https://technovationchallenge.org>

Register for Technovation Girls Waterloo Chapter:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/women-in-computer-science/youth-programs/technovation-girls-waterloo>

How to get involved

Our Student Flyer is attached – feel free to print this or disseminate it digitally to your students, (posting on your Google Classroom is a great idea!)

Students, parents, and those interested in volunteering (as mentors, as coaches) can find more information including registration links on our website: <https://uwaterloo.ca/women-in-computer-science/youth-programs/technovation-girls-waterloo>.

For the beginner students (ages 8-12), the Technovation Montreal chapter is running weekly online sessions for this division. The chapter ambassador is Stéphanie Jecrois (sjecrois@technovationmontreal.com). Here is the link for registration to share in the above letter. <https://www.technovationmontreal.com/student/en>

Any questions about Technovation can be directed to technovation@uwaterloo.ca

Your support is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Joanne Atlee



Professor, Director of Women in Computer Science
David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science
Chapter Ambassador, Technovation Waterloo
University of Waterloo