

Via the Seine

Creativity, caring and commitment | *A message from Mike Borgfjord, Superintendent*

Perseverance is a word that comes to mind when I think about how we are all navigating through these challenging times. I'm impressed and inspired by the resilience and determination shown by our teachers and staff, as our community adapts to the constant changes impacting the ways we're accustomed to doing things. Nearly a year after our world and our school division was turned upside down by this pandemic, we are still moving through this new temporary reality.

I want to extend my gratitude to the parents and guardians of our students, who have gone above and beyond to ensure their children can continue to be present in class, help them learn from home when needed, and simply encourage them to stay positive and engaged as we all work through these unprecedented

ways of learning. Our students have also shown their resilience as they continue to show up for school – even if it's from home – ready to learn and to make the best of the situation.

The stories in this issue of Via the Seine share some ways our students and staff are continuing to be creative, work together and support each other – as well as people in our community – when it's needed more than ever.

It will be important in the coming months to find new ways to continue to build community for everyone's well-being. As we prepare to move onto the next phase, we will all be faced with tough decisions as we plan how we will move forward with fewer resources. We are determined to persevere – our students' continued success depends on it. ●

Working together to stay apart



● The ELI gym has turned into a large, collaborative classroom for all three Grade 3/4 classes.

This year more than ever, collaboration has been key to ensuring our schools are providing students with what they need to learn and thrive.

At École Lorette Immersion (ELI), collaboration between teachers, administration and support staff has been not just crucial, but embraced as they ensure students are spaced two metres apart for social distancing, says ELI Vice Principal Christian Leclerc.

"Our staff room, music room, gym – all our space from one corner of the school to the other is being used as a classroom," Leclerc says.

Grade 7/8 students rotate daily between in-school and at-home learning. All three Grade 3/4 classes make up one large classroom in the gymnasium, where three teachers work together in an integrated teaching model. And students in K-2 and Grade 5/6 are split into groups of 10 to 12 per classroom – where Educational Assistants (EAs) work parallel to teachers, swapping rooms back and forth to provide equal instruction to students.

"I'm basically mirroring what's going on with the teacher," explains EA Nicole Gesell, who works directly with the Grade 5/6 classes this year. "It's great to be able to help the students

in the classroom and build better relationships with them."

The EAs have been part of the planning process more than ever, which helps classes run more efficiently, Leclerc says. He adds he's impressed with the flexibility and team approach taken by staff at ELI and in the whole division, with divisional staff being redeployed, teachers doing things outside their normal job descriptions and custodians taking on extra tasks.

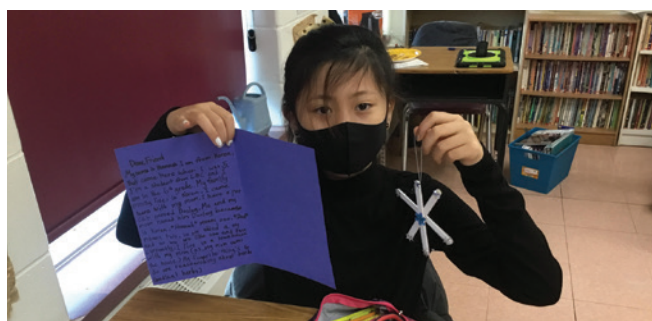
"I think this experience has really taught people that we are all here to educate students, no matter your title or your place in the school." ●

Writing with a purpose

Students at La Barrière Crossings School (LBC) have been putting pen to paper to help lift the spirits of community members who have been isolated during the pandemic.

Before Christmas, students in the four Grade 5/6 classes at LBC wrote cards and letters, plus made ornaments, to send to seniors living in personal care homes who have been missing their families. The students partnered with a "Cards for Care" initiative being run by a local radio station to distribute the cards.

In January, the class began to work on creating Valentine's Day cards to send to people with developmental disabilities who live at St. Amant.



Grade 6 LBC student Hannah P. shows the card she wrote and ornament she made for a personal care home resident.

"Our school goal is all about practicing writing in various curricular areas. The students need a purpose for why they are writing, and this was a great opportunity to give them that motivation and an authentic audience," says Grade 5/6 teacher Ria Pirie. "It also helps them empathise and put themselves in someone else's shoes."

Before making their Valentine's cards, students joined an online video conversation with a St. Amant representative to learn about the organization and its role in the community.

"It makes me happy and proud to know that I'm lifting people's spirits with my writing," says Grade 6 student Hannah P.

A cool idea for Phys. Ed.

With Physical Education classes being held outside, teachers at Collège Lorette Collegiate came up with a cool solution to keep students engaged as temperatures dropped: a huge backyard ice rink.

Students now spend their Phys. Ed. Classes skating, playing hockey and even curling on the rink, which teachers Kevin Mamchuk and Michelle Marinelli created behind the school in late December. A few students also helped with shoveling and building the wall of the 50-by-100 foot rink.

"The students are missing the badminton, volleyball and basketball we usually do this time of year. This gives us something else we can do outside, and the students have been very excited to use the rink," Mamchuk says.

The gift of literacy

"I'm going to read my book on the bus."

"I'm going to read it to my baby sister."

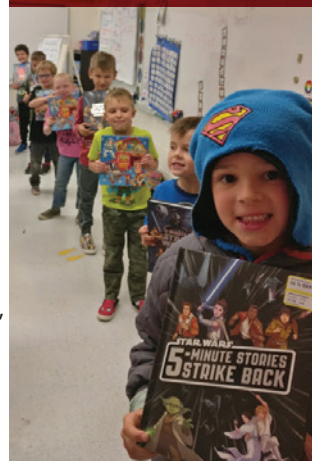
"I'm going to ask my Mom or Dad to read it to me!"

These are just some of the plans the Grades 1 and 2 students at Arbogate School (ARB) had for the brand new books they were each gifted in the fall, as part of a program to encourage reading.

Every student in the school, from Kindergarten to Grade 8, chose a free book from the hundreds sent by First Book Canada, a non-profit organization whose goal is to improve access to equal, quality education across the country.

"This was an excellent means to support our families with new resources they might not have access to on their own," says Donna Leveille, ARB Literacy Support/ Reading Recovery teacher. "We hope these books will inspire students and their parents to want to read more at home, and ignite the sparks that fuel better readers."

Grade 2 student Luke S. and his classmates love their new books.



Students use milk jug "rocks" to learn curling basics during Phys. Ed. class on CLC's ice rink.



Building new skills at school and home

How do you teach a hands-on class when the students can't be in the room?

Woodworking teacher Colin Massaroni has had to find ways to keep Grade 9-12 students at Collège Lorette Collegiate (CLC) engaged in projects when they are at school and on distance-learning days.

The wood shop is located at École Lorette Immersion, and CLC students travel there by bus. During the first semester, the shop only had space for about half a class at a time, meaning many students only set foot inside it once or twice a week.

For students at home, Massaroni taught shop safety lessons by inserting quizzes into YouTube videos using the resource edpuzzle.com, and gave student credit for helping

CLC students Cam (left) and J.J. (right) show off the custom skateboards they designed in woodworking class with their teacher Colin Massaroni (centre).



with home renovations or building projects, and measuring things around their house.

When they did get to be in the wood shop, Massaroni makes sure to

provide fun projects, such as building a coffee table, boat-shaped shelf or Adirondack chair.

"It sparks a lot of interest and boosts participation when you can give the students freedom to choose something they like," Massaroni says.

Grade 11 students designed and built their own custom skateboards, and also created a brand and a website to promote it.

"Some of the skateboards they were creating were out of this world!" Massaroni says.

"I know this year's been hard for students, so I want to give them a fun learning experience and let them be creative while also teaching them skills that will be useful later in life." ◉

Learning through play, in a new way

Art centres with colouring tools, sensory tables with sand and water, a whiteboard with markers – spots where students gather together to learn and refine their fine motor skills through play-based tasks are common in Kindergarten classrooms. But with the need for social distancing, teachers have had to switch these common areas into individual versions – and students aren't just adapting, they're excelling.

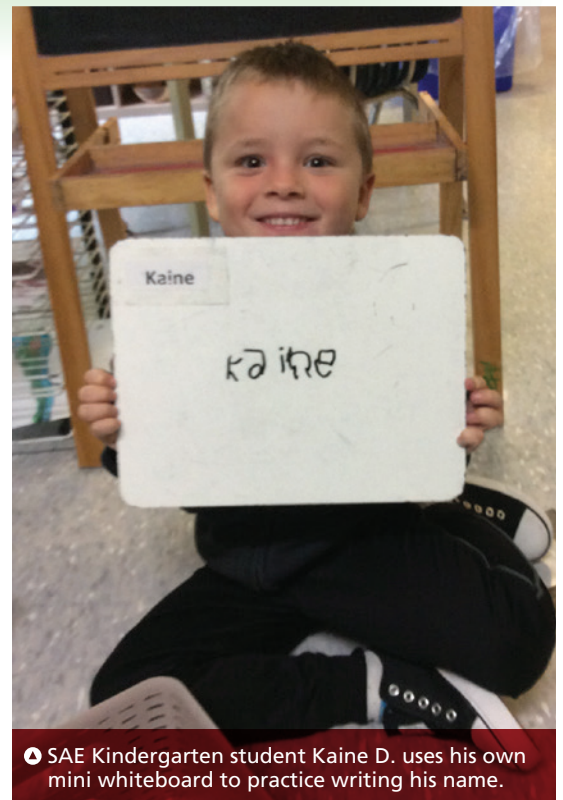
In Brandi Wait's half-day Kindergarten class at Ste. Anne Elementary School, each child now has their own basket of tools that help develop hand-eye coordination and build strength in hands, fingers and wrists, which in turn helps with writing skills.

"Each student keeps their basket at their table, where they store their own coloring tools, mini whiteboard and whiteboard marker, and their individual containers of Play-Doh and sand," says Wait. She assembled the baskets together with Nadine Lidgett, who runs the Kids at Play program, which Kindergarten students attend in their classroom during the other half of the day.

"Students have many fine motor tasks at their fingertips. They don't need to wait for a spot to open at a centre to play with something," Wait adds.

The students' first job each day is to write their names on their whiteboards, and the practice has made a difference.

"Students were writing their names on their own earlier this year than they were last year," Wait says. "They also get a sense of independence from having their own whiteboards and other supplies." ◉



SAE Kindergarten student Kaine D. uses his own mini whiteboard to practice writing his name.