

Via the Seine

Our continued commitment | A message from Michael Borgford, Superintendent

I just want to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to our staff and students. If I had to think of a theme for this school year so far, it would be *resilience*. Our staff have shown incredible work ethic, dedication and commitment as they work to provide safe learning opportunities for our students, both at school and at home. And our students deserve a huge amount of credit – they have had to make a lot of sacrifices this year, and we commend them for their cooperation, understanding and all the ways they are truly stepping up.

I want to remind everyone that education is a human endeavour and our normal routines of both curricular and extra-curricular programming have tested our resolve. We know that we will eventually return to more normal circumstances and that the lessons we are learning and sense of community we are establishing now will allow all of us to appreciate the opportunities that will arise in the future.

In the spring, we brought you several online editions of *Via the Seine* to share stories from our schools during our three months of remote learning. We are back with a new issue that explores some of the interesting and creative things that are happening in our schools, both to adjust to the realities of the blended learning model we've been in, and to ensure our students are provided with rich learning opportunities. It's important for us to continue to communicate with you, and to acknowledge and celebrate the good things.

We have all learned to expect the unexpected, and we don't know what next week or next month will bring. Whatever happens, we are continuing our commitment to doing our best for our students, while striving to keep everyone safe. We all have to do our part, and we appreciate the patience and understanding of our school families as we navigate these uncharted waters. ☉

A virtual connection

Teachers have found a new way to be present in the classroom – even when they're not actually there.

When they are well enough to teach, but need to isolate at home, teachers are staying connected by entering the classroom remotely and interacting virtually with students. With a substitute teacher or Educational Assistant in the room, the teacher connects through video chat on the room's smartboard or screen.

"With the help of the covering teacher, we were able to have an almost normal teaching and learning day," recounts Esme Harrar, a Grade 3/4 teacher at Dawson Trail School.

"The students were happy to see me and communicate in real time. I think



▶ DTS teacher Esme Harrar connected with her Grade 3/4 students virtually when she couldn't be in school.

it's a great solution to allow teachers the opportunity to work from home if we have to stay home due to mild symptoms, are awaiting test results or are being asked to quarantine – we can stay connected and don't have to use our sick days."

When Arborgate School Kindergarten teacher Sara Palson had to isolate because she had been in contact with someone who tested positive for

COVID-19, she continued to visit her classroom through the Smart Board.

"Every day I would meet with the students, for a quick hello and a chat, to read a story or to teach a lesson," she says. "It has been amazing to see their smiling faces, and it's great that it allows the students and I to continue creating that important relationship and connection." ☉

Flipping for French conversation

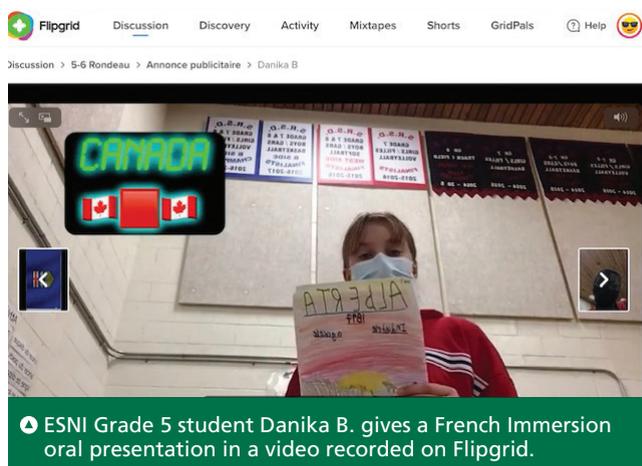
French Immersion teachers at École St. Norbert Immersion (ESNI) are flipping for an online communication platform that is helping encourage students to practice their *Français*.

ESNI is one of several schools that started using Flipgrid during remote learning in the spring. Teachers post an assignment on the platform using a video intro, then invite students to post their own short videos in response. Teachers can provide feedback on Flipgrid and even grade the assignments.

At ESNI, teachers in Grades 5 to 8 have continued to use the free resource this fall, says Principal François Rémillard.

“Flipgrid can be a powerful tool for Immersion teachers who continuously search for ways to engage all students into a discussion in French. Students who are shy or avoid speaking in class can share their thoughts with the teacher in a way that may be less intimidating to them,” Rémillard explains.

The tool also allows the teacher to ensure all students are practicing speaking in French, and to assess linguistic competencies taught or practiced in class, he adds.



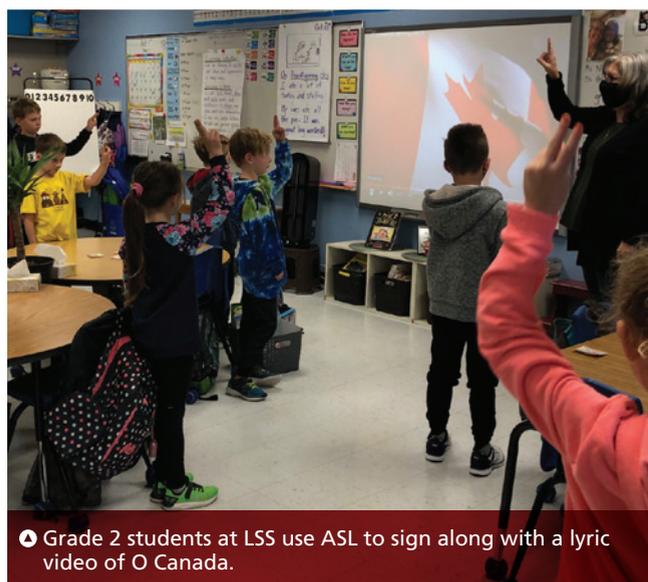
Grade 5/6 teacher Veronica Rondeau says using Flipgrid helps motivate her students.

“They practice their words and their presentations several times, to speak with fluidity and expression. They also enjoy using the special effects on Flipgrid, like templates, filters and pictures,” Rondeau says.

To help motivate students, Rémillard has introduced a weekly oral speaking challenge to send in video responses in French to a particular topic. He chooses winners based on participation, creativity and level of French. 🟡

Signs of the times

You won't hear voices singing O Canada at school right now due to COVID-19 guidelines, but peek into the Grade 2 classrooms at La Salle School and you'll see students belting it out – with their hands.



The students in Cathy Normand and Debbie Howard's classes were some of the first in the Division to find a way to continue to “sing” our national anthem each morning, using American Sign Language (ASL).

“As the first week of school unfolded, we were all so happy to be in each other's company again – but I felt the absence of our morning tradition,” Normand recalls. “I have always enjoyed exploring and teaching our National Anthem in both English and French. This year, we would listen to our morning announcements... and then silence.”

Students practiced signing the anthem's lyrics along with a video in class, and they can now sign the whole song, while reading the lyrics on a Smart Board.

“I have enjoyed having a challenge and something different first thing in the morning,” says Grade 2 student Whitley B.

“It's so important to a young person's education to teach citizenship and history, and to talk about the freedoms that come with being a Canadian,” says Normand. “Singing the anthem with ASL fits into the Social Studies curriculum and is in the spirit of tradition and respect to our morning school routine. It has also been a valuable vocabulary comprehension study.” 🟡

Finding art inside the body

Livers, brains and eyeballs, oh my! Those are just a few of the internal organs students in Michelle Hancock's Grade 5/6 French Immersion class at École Île des Chênes School sculpted in clay as part of their study of the human body in October.



Grade 5/6 students at EIDC sculpted internal organs as part of their study of body parts.

The students first shaped the body parts, which also included the spinal column, heart and pancreas. After the sculptures dried, they were fired in a kiln, glazed, then fired again, leaving them glistening, explains Gabrielle Doll, the division's Visual Arts Consultant.

"Students had to think critically to sculpt from a two-dimensional reference photo, then transform it into a 3D model, adding texture and things like tubes and veins. This helped them learn what these organs actually do," Doll says, adding that the students had to be patient with the project's many steps, which took about three weeks from start to finish.

"It was interesting to see how vast the circulatory system is, and that it works together with the respiratory system," says Grade 6 student Abby S. 🟡

Here comes the pattern parade

There are patterns all around us. The Grade 1 and 2 students at Richer School embarked on a quest one warm September day to find as many patterns as they could out in the community, as part of a fun math project.

"We walked from school to the Richer Rodeo Park, where the students found several patterns in the structures and buildings," explains Grade 1 teacher Lesa Chapman.

The students then gathered items like stones, leaves and acorns to create their own patterns.

"Patterning is a stepping stone to working with numbers, and it's a huge part of the Grade 1 and 2 math curriculum. This lets them take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it to the real world, in their own environment," says Grade 2 teacher Frances Gauthier.

"I found a pattern on the skating rink boards, and I liked making my own pattern out of leaves, acorns and the tops of nuts," says Grade 2 student Liam F. 🟡



Grade 1 RCH student Tru L. created a pattern using fallen leaves and stones.

Easing a stressful transition

Grade 9 students at Collège St. Norbert Collegiate (CSNC) are getting some extra support coping with the stress of starting at a brand-new school in the midst of a global pandemic.

"Because of COVID-19, there has been very little transition support possible for the Grad 9s – no welcome barbecue, no dedicated 'Grade 9 Day' at the start of the year, and less opportunity to interact with their peers," explains Kayleigh Sieffert, CSNC's Grade 9 Student Support Teacher. Sieffert and School Social Work Clinician Rebecca Abraham have teamed up to deliver weekly stress management workshops in Grade 9 classrooms.

The sessions focus on coping tools and stress-management strategies, and help the students create a positive learning environment for their part-time at-home learning.

"I've learned to manage and even appreciate my stress. Things won't always go well, and it's ok to be stressed about them," says student Julianna A.

A bonus benefit, says Abraham, is the connection she and Sieffert are making with the entire grade group.

"Having face time with these students right at the start of the school year, they can all see what our roles are and that we are here for them. We're seeing less stigma around asking for academic and mental health support." 🟡