

# School bells and busses end summer

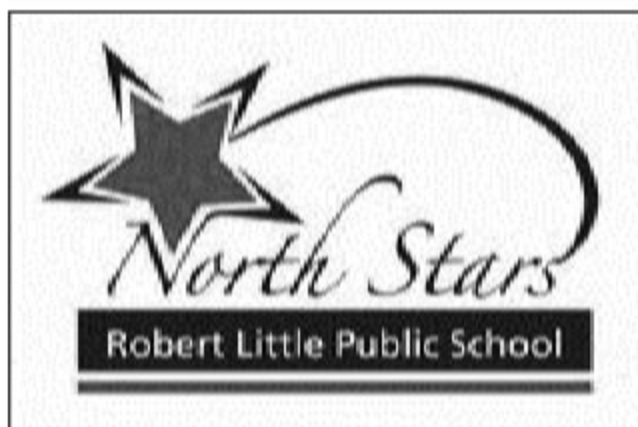
*Local schools go 'steep and deep with technology' mold good citizens and encourage lifelong learning*

There was traffic chaos on streets surrounding several Acton schools on Tuesday morning, but back-to-school went off without a hitch for the 1,851 elementary and 531 high school students enrolled in three Acton public schools, and approximately 460 Catholic students at St. Joseph School.

At assemblies Tuesday, school principals and vice-principals welcomed students, staff and parents to the 2013-2014 school year with high expectations for lifelong learning. They set the scene in recent interviews.

## Halton District School Board Robert Little PS

Principal Carolyn Reist's message to students was "Let your Star Shine", backed up by the school's All-Star logo and a search for "all different ways to make your students shine," Reist said,



adding Robert Little is going "steep and deep" with technology to make learning alive and current.

The school is ahead of its five-year plan to have high-tech white boards in all classrooms, not to replace traditional blackboards Reist said, but to offer another tool for interactive learning. "What the kids are seeing on the screen, they're all apart of creating...it's no longer a dry question and answer - we actually even use the interactive white boards (to teach) Yoga in Kindergarten classes," Reist said.

She said new technology provides teachers with a big learning opportunity to be comfortable allowing kids to take the lead. "We have to know curriculum and know where we're going, but also be hand-in-hand with the students to get there. I've been a teacher for 30 years and that's a real shift, to allow yourself to be one of the big learners in the room, and then your school is a learning community," Reist said.

With enrollment at an all-time high of approximately 500 students, a second portable was added. There are approximately 120 enrolled in Junior/Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK), the second year for the all-day everyday program at Robert Little.

## McKenzie-Smith Bennett PS

Major renovations were done over the summer at MSB for the influx of additional 45 JK/SK students, for a total of 100, for the first year of the all-day everyday program. Six former classrooms at the north end of the school became three JK/SK classrooms. An additional teacher and a fourth



Educational Assistant were hired for the new students.

Principal Lisa Serebrin said along with welcoming those new students, the focus at MSB is to fulfil the vision to inspire the community to hope, lead and achieve. "We're going to continue working on developing our leadership skills with kids, and working on our literacy and numeracy skills for the new year," she said on Friday, adding they've invested heavily in resources to have the appropriate materials in the classroom to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

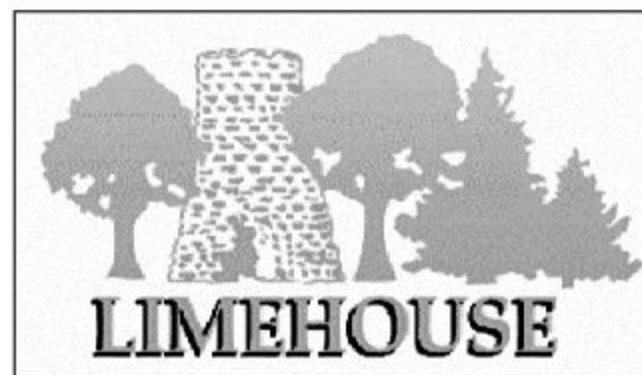
"Leadership is a big thing for us - getting kids to take on leadership, throughout the school, whether it is in sports, intermurals, or leaderships in clubs and activities like student council, student athletic council and reading buddies..." Serebrin said, inviting the community to come to MSB and work as Reading Coaches and help build great opportunities.

She said they continue to embrace new technology as a teaching tool. "We continue to explore our opportunities for how can kids can use (technology) within that learning context," Serebrin said.

With a total staff of approximately 50, Sere-

brin welcomed new Vice-Principal Kim Phillips - formerly a Georgetown VP and teacher at Robert Little - who joins existing VP Tony Churchill.

Reconstruction of the north end parking lot to



add 20 spaces and a kiss and ride area for quick drop-offs as not complete by the first day of school adding to the general traffic chaos on streets surrounding streets.

## Limehouse PS

With a consistent population of approximately 150 students, Vice-Principal Mark Lyall said Limehouse continues to be like a close-knit family, with the sons and daughters of former students now in attendance and a steady staff of 12 with two Education Assistants.

Lyall said with school council help, they spent a "fair bit of money" upgrading literacy and numeracy resources to encourage student engagement. They have interactive white boards in all classrooms to take advantage of new technology, but are still teaching the basics. "We're still teaching reading, writing and arithmetic... (but) kids are very technology-oriented - everything is technology orientated - so we have to meet the kids in their world if we want to reach them," Lyall said.

He said the school's consistently high mandatory test scores show they are "meeting student needs, but meeting them where they are," stressing there is still "an extremely important role" for books and math manipulatives that kids have to see and hold.



**MUSTANG MIGHT:** Grade six student Jamie Vallance, Colin Foster in Grade four, and Adreanna Owen, in Grade six, joined the throngs of McKenzie-Smith Bennett students heading back to class. - Traci Gardner photo