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Max and Kyla Freedman get a hug from mom Pam as they head off for the first day of school at Park Public School Tuesday morning. It was Kyla's first day at school as she entered junior kindergarten while Max is starting Grade 1.

Photo by Herb Garbutt

Busy year planned for students at both local school boards

Not that this comes as news to any parent, but the 2005-2006 school year got under way yesterday (Tuesday) and both Halton boards welcomed thousands of new and returning students.

The Halton Catholic District School Board anticipates an overall growth in enrolment of approximately 500 students.

The projected enrolment figures indicate that 27,630 students (19,000 elementary and 8,630 secondary) will be returning to the board's 36 elementary and seven secondary schools on opening day, compared to 27,132 last year.

At the Halton District School Board, approximately 46,000 students headed back to class. Updated enrolment figures were unavailable from board officials.

With that many young people on the move, both boards are reminding all motorists that, with the start of the new school year, children will be travelling on our streets during the morning and afternoon rush hours.

Exercise caution when driving near school zones, crosswalks and school buses with flashing lights.

The second part of the equation, of course, are the teachers.

The Catholic board employs 2,225 teaching staff (1,099 elementary, 632 secondary and 495 occasional) and 928 support (non-teaching) staff. The total number of new teachers hired to date for this year is 104 (70 elementary and 34 secondary).

To date, the public board has hired approximately 223 new teachers (90 new secondary and

133 new elementary teachers).

The 2005-2006 school year marks a fresh start of another sort at the public board with the hiring of Wayne Joudrie as Director of Education.

Formerly Director of Education with the Grand Erie District School Board, Joudrie will join the Halton District School Board this October.

"We are very pleased to welcome someone of Wayne's calibre and integrity as our next director—an experienced educator and current director who is extremely well regarded by his peers, staff and community," said board chair Paul Tate.

The school year will be filled with a variety of special events and activities and during the week of Oct. 3-7, many schools in the Halton District School Board will participate in "International Walk to School" activities.

In Ontario, more than 1,000 schools are expected to participate on Wednesday, Oct. 5 in "International Walk to School Day" or IWALK—a day where students and their families, together with school staff and community leaders, will walk to school together.

IWALK is an annual event designed to motivate children and parents to adopt more active ways of travelling to and from school.

Thinking ahead, the last day of instruction for elementary students will be Friday, June 30, 2006 and for secondary students the last day of instruction will be Thursday, June 29, 2006.

—By Howard Mozel, special

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