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COMMUNITY

Teacher of the Month

Costa makes learning enjoyable: students

No shortage of praise for Holy Rosary 2nd grade teacher

By Steve LeBlanc
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Like most youngsters his age, Michael Cunha is no doubt eagerly awaiting summer vacation.

But as the days tick away toward that much-relished break, the Holy Rosary second grader's excitement is tempered with a somewhat heavy heart — since the school year's conclusion also means the end of his time in Nelson Costa's classroom.

"I will miss him when I go to grade 3. But I hope he will still play with us at recess. I will never forget Mr. Costa," said Michael. "Mr. Costa is special to me because he makes learning fun and I can talk to him about anything."

That type of praise is hardly uncommon when it comes to Costa, June's *Champion Teacher of the Month*.

Added co-nominator Megan Walker, "He does a lot for us and makes me not want to miss even one day of school."

Grandmother Lynn Fraser can certainly attest to that.

"If a seven-and-a-half-year-old has a choice between a holiday in Quebec and going to school and she chooses school, somebody is doing something right, and that somebody is Mr. Costa."

Learning should be fun

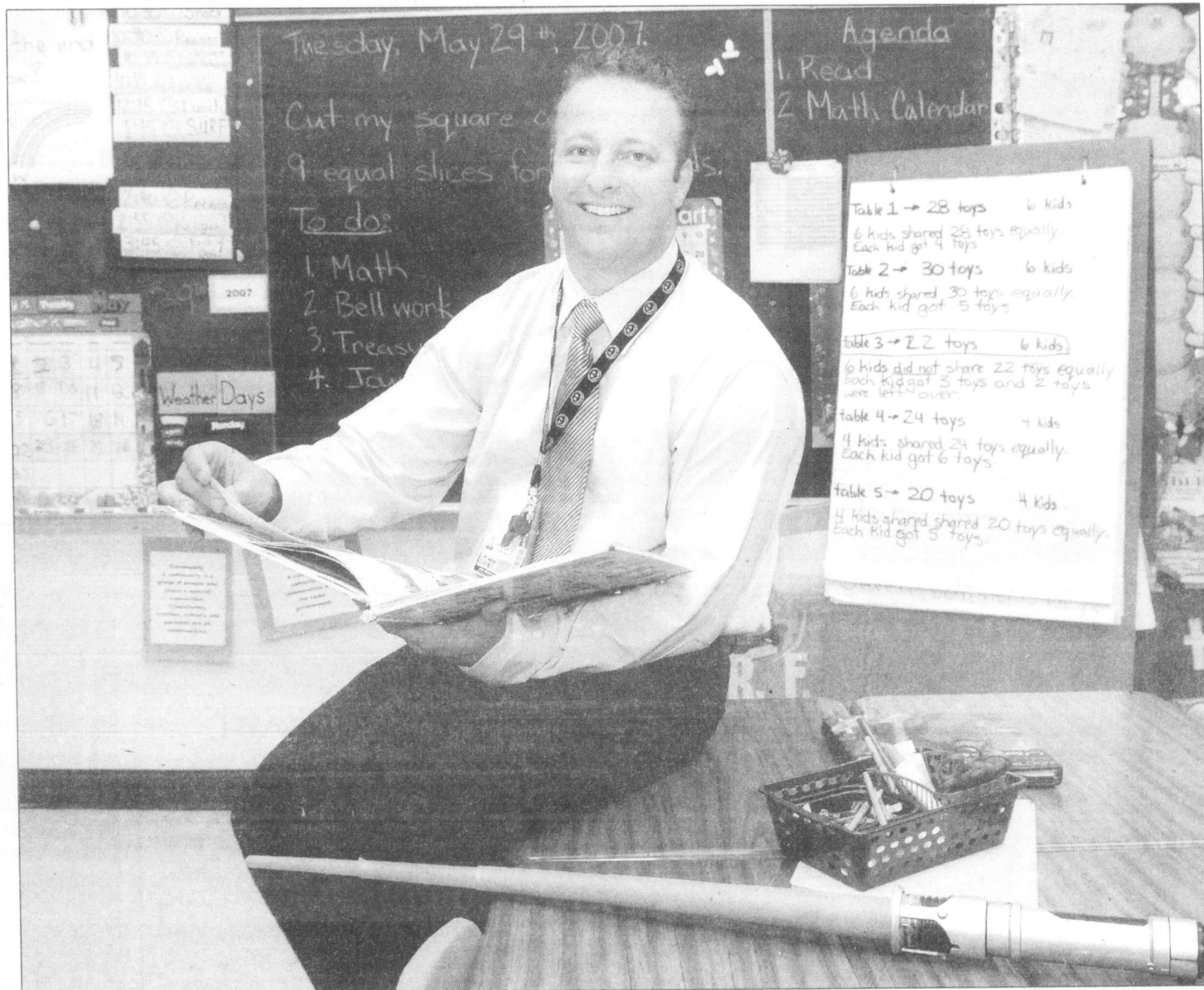
Now about to wrap up his fifth year of teaching — all spent at Holy Rosary, the last three at second grade — 32-year-old Costa said the key is to make learning a joy rather than a chore.

"I try to making the lessons fun with different games and hands-on activities, rather than just putting pencils to paper," said the popular teacher, who described his sojourn into teaching as an extension of his soccer-coaching days in university. "And at this age they've all got big hearts and are so eager to please that the learning really does happen."

"You see that light switch go on pretty quickly, and that's really rewarding."

For Costa, bonding with students happens as much outside the classroom as in it. Along with coaching soccer, basketball and volleyball, he's only too willing to join in a game of foot hockey at recess.

And the fact that he's a diehard Canadiens



GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

POPULAR TEACHER: Holy Rosary's Nelson Costa sits in his second grade classroom, which students feel is a caring and nurturing environment.

fan makes for some good-natured ribbing among his young Maple Leafs devotees.

"We love to tease each other about hockey," Michael quipped. "He is my best friend. Holy Rosary is lucky to have Mr. Costa."

While certainly flattered when recently characterized as a teacher who's fun, firm and fair, Costa admits it's not always easy to balance the three.

"You can't be their best friend all the time or they'll walk all over you. You have to show you've got a light side, but also bring that professionalism and be able to tell the kids 'That's unacceptable' when they do something wrong."

That's when the school's deep-rooted reli-

gious values can be particularly beneficial, since occasionally the younger students take discipline — however constructive or gently delivered — a little too much to heart.

"There's a real focus on reconciliation and forgiveness in our religion classes. We try to teach the kids that if they're truly sorry and make an effort to do better next time, it's (mistake) done," explained Costa. "We don't rehash anything around here."

As a still relatively new teacher — and newer still at the grade 2 level — Costa certainly isn't suggesting he's got all the answers.

"It's a juggling act and I sure don't have this down pat yet. As a teacher you're con-

stantly learning yourself what works and what doesn't. When something doesn't work you just put it up on the shelf, and maybe take it down later. I'd say what makes a good teacher is just someone who listens and keeps kids enthusiastic while learning."

There's more than a few out there who'd consider that an accurate summation of June's *Champion Teacher of the Month*.

"As a parent, I have never met anyone who has had such an impact on my son," said Michael's mom, Shannon. "I could not even keep him home on snow days. He loves school because of Mr. Costa."

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, June 5 - Monday, June 11, 2007

Tuesday, June 5	Wednesday, June 6	Thursday, June 7	Friday, June 8	Saturday, June 9	Sunday, June 10	Monday, June 11
8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
1:00pm SportsZONE Live	1:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc)	1:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Halton Region Council	1:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)	6:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc)	1:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc)
5:00am - 6:30pm Plugged In! EXTRA	3:00pm - 7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	5:00pm - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	3:00pm - 5:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	2:30pm - 7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)	3:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)
6:30pm Optimist TV Bingo (Live)	7:00pm Simply Halton	6:00pm The War Amps Present...	5:00pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	7:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)	10:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	4:30pm - 8:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
7:30pm Plugged In!	7:30pm - 9:00pm Plugged In!	7:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)	8:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA		8:00pm SportsZONE Live
8:00pm Auto Experts (Live)	9:00pm Milton Council	7:30pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Live)	9:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA			9:00pm Milton Ward 2 By-Election Candidates (Replay)
9:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc)		9:00pm Halton Region Council				10:30pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA		11:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA				