

Colchester North school named among the province's elite

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Having the week off for March Break isn't the only reason staff and students of Colchester North Central Public School are celebrating.

Out of 2,812 elementary schools, Colchester North's level of improvement ranked among the top one per cent in the Education Quality and Accountability Office's province-wide assessments over the past five years.

Students in grades three and six are tested every spring in math, reading and writing, and their levels of achievement are measured against provincial curriculum expectations.

News of Colchester North's rapid and consistent achievement in the tests came as a "pleasant surprise" to principal Barb Chevalier.

Chevalier says teachers don't often monitor their students' achievement compared to other schools across the province. Instead, they concern themselves with their own improvements, she said.

"We just want to beat our own scores," Chevalier said. "But we knew we were



Teachers and staff at Colchester North Central Public School are celebrating this week as their students' level of improvement was ranked among the top one per cent in the Education Quality and Accountability Office's province-wide assessments over the past five years.

making good ground."

Chevalier credited the Greater Essex County District School Board for being part of the students' success.

"Our school board is focused on achievement," she said. "We're focused on the future."

Chevalier also attributes

student success rates to efforts of the entire staff.

With professional development opportunities, regular staff meetings and an implemented student improvement plan, Chevalier said all the pieces are in place to help improve the students' ability to learn and improve their skills in

the classroom.

"It has to be an effort of the entire staff because a teacher of the older grades will eventually be getting students taught by teachers in younger grades," she said. "So it's the interconnectedness that benefits our students."

Chevalier will be joined

by teacher Melissa Sweetman for the presentation of the Garfield Weston Awards for Excellence in Education in Toronto March 20, where Colchester North will be recognized among the province's most elite schools.

The awards will be presented by the Fraser

Institute, an independent research and educational organization with offices in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver.

The institute researched the EQAO test scores of more than 2,000 schools across the province to determine the best in improvement, academic achievement and overall achievement.

It is important that a top school has rapid and consistent improvement, said Peter Cowley, director of school performance studies for the Fraser Institute.

"Each category speaks to a different aspect of academics," Cowley said. "The improvement category is really important because what else could you ask of a school but for their students to improve?"

The Weston Awards started in British Columbia and Alberta in 2000. They were first offered to Ontario schools in 2005.

"The awards are a celebration," Cowley said. "It's the thing that gives me the most pleasure in the entire year. It's intended to recognize outstanding schools. These are the folks that drive excellence."

Community Living holding draw for trips, cash

Community Living Essex County is now offering its Prize of the Month Lottery tickets for this year until March 31.

The cost of each ticket is \$50, giving each buyer 12 opportunities to win trip vouchers, cash prizes, Devonshire Dollars and much more. Each ticket's order form includes the

entire list of prizes that are available.

Each winning ticket is also re-entered into the draw for a chance to win the remaining prizes.

Community Living Essex County's manager Tony DeSantis says the tickets make great gifts for birthdays or anniversaries. Each purchase also con-

tributes toward providing "the highest levels of supports to more than 500 people with an intellectual disability and their families throughout Essex County," DeSantis said in a news release.

To reserve tickets, contact DeSantis at 519-776-6483 ext. 246.



A BEAUTIFUL DAY – Ten-year-old Katie McMullan of Cottam boils maple sap during the maple syrup festival held at John R. Park Homestead, March 11.



BACK IN TIME – Essex resident David Nitschke, a volunteer at John R. Park Homestead, demonstrates the art of the blacksmith, during the 'Maple - First Taste of Spring' maple syrup festival, March 11.

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