



# St. Alexander – Newsletter



*St. Alexander Catholic Elementary is proud to be part of the Notre Dame Catholic Family of Schools*

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Principal: Mr. M. Venzon  
Vice Principal: Mrs. C. Pozzobon  
Superintendent: Ms. Kim Kinney  
Parish Priest: Fr. Paul MacNeil

## **MARCH 2025**

### **FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK**

#### **Called by Name: "Come, Follow Me"**

Speakers often ask, "Do you follow me?" to make sure you understand. You can hear someone speaking, but to truly understand them, you have to listen. We often hear the words of Jesus in the Bible, at school, and during Mass. But are we taking the time to really follow what Jesus is saying? Jesus calls each of us to follow Him. Part of following Jesus means listening to His words, understanding His message, and living it out each day. What's one way you can follow Jesus more closely? How will you start building that habit today?

We look forward to a continuing reflection and celebration together as a Catholic School Community as we continue to navigate this Lenten Season.

Mr. M. Venzon

***WE BEGIN THE LENTEN SEASON - ASH WEDNESDAY –  
MARCH 5<sup>th</sup> (School Mass 10:30am at St. Alexander Parish)***

***May Lent be a time of grace,  
mercy and hope that unites  
us more fully with Christ***



***Please take a few minutes to watch this short video that is all about Lent***

<https://bustedhalo.com/video/watch-lent-3-minutes>

## **Looking ahead - Class Placements for the 2025/26 School Year**

During the months of April and May, staff will be meeting to discuss and create student groupings for next year. We do our best to place students where they will be most successful. A great deal of time and effort is spent determining the composition of classes. When organizing class groupings, attention and diligence is required by the classroom teachers, resource teacher, vice principal and principal. A variety of factors are seriously considered when establishing classes.

Creating a successful learning environment for all students is a goal we aim to achieve. Some of the criteria considered include: abilities, individual needs, behaviour, work habits, age, learning styles, class size and boy/girl ratio. Please note that requests for specific classroom teachers will not be considered.

**HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?** Talk positively to your child about next year. If your child is with a different group of students, please discuss relationship building and new friendships.

### **REPORTING STUDENT ABSENCE—BUS CANCELLATION**

On days when there are bus cancellations and schools are open, parents/guardians of students who normally ride the bus should report, using the electronic Safe Arrival program, their child(ren) as absent if they are not sending them to school. It is only if schools are closed, by the Director of Education, due to inclement weather or any other reason that student absences do not need to be reported. The system will contact parents/guardians who have not reported their child as absent.

### **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING**

As a reminder for families who are familiar with the process outlined in our *School Operations for Inclement Weather and Workplace Closure AOP* – and as information for those who are new to the school in Niagara or Niagara Catholic – the decision to cancel buses is made by Niagara Student Transportation Services very early in the morning, based on the current **and** forecast conditions to ensure students are safe throughout the day. NSTS makes its decision with bus companies and consults agencies such as Niagara Regional Police about whether buses are safe on the roads. They communicate the decision to the local school board directors of education, who decide whether to open schools or keep them closed for the day. Niagara Catholic communicates decisions about bus and/or school cancellations by 6 a.m. You will find the information in the following places:

- On the Board website – a red banner appears on the main page when buses and/or schools are cancelled
- The Board's [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) pages
- Local radio and TV stations and newspaper websites

Most often, buses are cancelled but schools remain open. If you choose to keep your child at home due to inclement weather, **you must report their absence using the appropriate code through Safe Arrival**. We advise parents that Niagara Region Public Health continues to caution against mixing cohorts, which means that we cannot put classrooms together this year to ensure proper supervision of students. If, for some reason, a school does not have adequate coverage in place to ensure the safety of students while at school, an individual school *may* be closed.

Please keep in mind that driving a car is much different than a bus, and even though roads seem fine to drivers in personal vehicles, the conditions (such as snow drifts) may make it impossible for school buses to navigate through neighbourhood streets, particularly if they are not ploughed.

As well, we remind families that buses can be cancelled if the temperature falls to a point where stop arms and other mechanical parts required for the safe operation of the vehicle may freeze. We understand that may be frustrating for parents on a bright, cold, snow-free day, but the safety of students is the top priority of the school bus companies, NSTS and Niagara Catholic and if the buses cannot operate safely due to the cold, transportation will be cancelled.

Living between two lakes can mean completely different weather in parts of Niagara. Occasionally, that leads to bus cancellations or school closures in one part of Niagara due to weather, while the rest of the region is unaffected. We encourage you to please check our website and social media feeds for accurate information to ensure that what you are reading online applies to you.

If the entire system is shut down, we will call, email and text your family using School Messenger by 6 a.m. to advise you it's a snow day. You do not need to report your child's absence from school, as schools are closed.

Although weather systems do blow through without warning, we usually have some idea that bad weather is coming and we encourage families to be prepared for this, especially if parents have to go to work while children are at home.

If your child is staying home due to a bus cancellation or a school closure, they will have the opportunity to participate in asynchronous learning from home. Click [here](#) for a link to for Primary, Junior, and Intermediate literacy, numeracy, and other subjects for students to keep up with work if that is what you choose to do. Please note that participating in this work is voluntary and should be considered as revising or reach-ahead work, rather than teacher-led new learning. Secondary students may also review any classroom work or reach-ahead where possible if they choose to do so.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at St. Alexander.

### **WINTER WEATHER**

Going out for recess during the winter season will be a normal thing each day. In extreme weather cases, children will remain indoors. Proper attire must be worn, i.e., boots, gloves, hats, scarf, etc. As is always the case, it is important that we all emphasize the dangers of throwing snow in any form. Snow is lovely to look at, but while at school it should be left on the ground. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

### **CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL**

Our next Catholic School Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 5:30pm here at St. Alexander School. All parents are welcome and there is no experience necessary - just a desire to make St. Alexander Catholic School the best that it can be!

### **SHROVE TUESDAY + ASH WEDNESDAY**

As we prepare for the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, we will be serving students a pancake snack on Shrove Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>.

\*We will have 1 pancake station that will be completely gluten free and Celiac safe, including a separate cooking pan and utensils being used. Please let us know at [st.alexander@ncdsb.com](mailto:st.alexander@ncdsb.com) if you would like for your child to have gluten free pancakes on this day.

On Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, we will be having a mass at St. Alexander Parish that will begin at 10:30am. Please join us if you can!

## **DENTAL SCREENING**

Niagara Region Public Health Dental Program will be offering [dental screening](#) to grades JK, SK, 2, 4 and 7 on March 3-4, 2025.

A registered dental hygienist will take a quick look in the child's mouth using a sterilized dental mirror and light.

The [Healthy Smiles Ontario](#) program may financially assist children who do not have access to dental care.

**If you do not want your child(ren) to take part in the dental screening, you MUST complete the online [School Dental Screening Opt-Out Form](#) or call the Dental Health Line at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7399 [each school year](#).**

[If your child\(ren\) is not in one of the grades listed above, they may have the opportunity](#) to participate in the dental screening. If you would like your child to be screened, please complete the [School Dental Opt-In Form](#).

## **Niagara Region Public Health School Health Newsletter**

**March 2025**

### **[NEW Quit Vaping Program for Youth](#)**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is excited to launch [Youth-Vaping, Substance use, and Technology \(VAST\)](#). Youth-VAST is a program for youth in Ontario who are using vaping, substances, or feel like technology is taking up too much of their time. This program brings together existing and new resources across CAMH to deliver virtual services directly to youth and their family.



- Program offered for youth ages 12-21 years.
- Appointments are offered virtually for youth all over Ontario
- Youth will be assigned a care coordinator to create a customized treatment plan
- Individuals can self-refer directly into this program, no physician referral required.

To refer, visit [Youth-VAST](#) to book an appointment or email [youth.vast@camh.ca](mailto:youth.vast@camh.ca) for more information.

## World Sleep Day – March 14<sup>th</sup>

Sleep is important for physical and mental health, yet many children and youth just don't get enough. Lack of sleep may cause a number of health problems and have a big impact on your child's school performance,



behaviour and mental health.

### How much sleep does my child/youth need?

AGE	RECOMMENDED SLEEP
Ages 3-5 (Preschoolers)	10-13 hours per day
Age 6-12	9-12 hours per day
Ages 13-18	9-10 hours a night

Source: Recommended amount of sleep for pediatric populations, from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2016

### Here are a few tips to consider that may help youth sleep better:

- **Limit naps** – some kids are really tired when they get home from school. A short nap can be helpful, but long naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. Consider keeping after school naps short, no more than 30-60 minutes.
- **Spend at least 1.5 hours outside during daylight hours** – natural light from outside helps set the body's internal clock. This is also important for helping a child's eyes develop properly and prevent nearsightedness.
- **Have an electronic curfew** – it can be helpful to have any electronic screens turned off 1-2 hours before bed. Avoiding screens will reduce blue light and help the brain produce melatonin, a hormone that controls the sleep-wake cycles.
- **Have a regular bedtime routine** – typical routines can include brushing teeth, having a bath or shower, putting on pajamas, going to the bedroom and doing relaxing activities such as reading, drawing, writing, or listening to calming music.

For more information, visit [caringforkids.ca - healthy sleep](http://caringforkids.ca - healthy sleep)

Source: <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P5643E.pdf>

## Nutrition Month 2025

March is [Nutrition Month](#)! This annual campaign has been created by the [Dietitians of Canada](#) to highlight the importance of making informed food choices and developing both balanced eating and physical activity habits. Adults have a unique opportunity to help youth learn that healthy eating is more than the foods they eat. Below are some helpful resources to encourage healthy behaviours in children.



- [Building Healthy Eating Habits | Support Your Picky Eater](#)
- Visit [unlockfood.ca](http://unlockfood.ca) for recipes, food allergies, [menu planners](#), and to find a Dietitian
- Check out this [free downloadable e-recipe](#) book from a previous Nutrition Month
- For more support around healthy eating, visit [Healthy eating for parents and children - Canada's Food Guide](#)