



HALTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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Office of the
Director of Education

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Keeping You Informed About Halton's Best Start Program

In July, 2005, the Province announced that Halton Region will receive \$23.12 million from the provincial *Best Start* initiative to expand, over the next three years, child care capacity in the Region by over 600 spaces for children age 0 – 6 years. This is a very positive step for Halton as it helps build on the plan, *Our Vision for Children*, and creates more child care spaces and community hubs.

Ontario's *Best Start Program* is a comprehensive, evidence-based early learning and care strategy. It aims to increase child care spaces, improve access to fee subsidies for services for children with special needs and improve the wages of child care workers. Furthermore, *Best Start* will support the *Our Kids* hubs in Halton, which provide a one-stop shopping opportunity for families to access information about services for children 0 – 18 years. In our Board, a hub has been established at Holy Rosary School in Burlington, and a second one at Our Lady of Victory School in Milton has been approved and is in the process of being established.

In essence, *Best Start* is intended as a system of services that seamlessly supports families with children from their birth through to their transition into Grade 1. These services run the gamut from newborn and infant screening to hearing programs and speech and language therapy that help identify and provide support to children who need extra help for healthy early development. They include quality child care, public health and parenting programs that help parents help their children to be successful in school. And they put families in touch with other services that they might need.

(Source: Ministry of Children and Youth Services – Implementation Planning Guidelines for Best Start Networks, 2005: pages 4, 10)

More information about Halton's *Best Start Program* is available through the Region's website at www.region.halton.on.ca/scs/cs.

At the November 1, 2005 Regular Meeting of the Board, our trustees approved and strongly endorsed the implementation of this initiative, which is designed to respond to the identified need for additional child care facilities to be located in our elementary schools.

The 'Halton Best Start Network', led by the *Our Kids – Early Years Committee* and a partnership of the Halton Catholic District School Board, the Halton District School Board, the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest and Halton Region's Children Services, has identified schools throughout the Region that will serve as *Best Start* host sites.

I am pleased to announce that approximately 260 of these new child care spaces will be allocated,

over the next three years, at the following seven elementary schools, across our system:

<u>Burlington</u>	St. Elizabeth Seton School St. Timothy School
<u>Halton Hills</u>	St. Catherine of Alexandria School
<u>Oakville</u>	St. Bernadette School St. Dominic School St. James School St. Marguerite d'Youville School.

Although the next steps of the implementation and consultation process of Halton's *Best Start Program* continue to progress, I wish to advise you that, at this time, the Region has been informed by the Province that any renovations, which may be required at *Best Start* host sites, will likely take place during the summer of 2006 to provide the least disruption to children, families and school communities. It was previously expected that the startup of the *Best Start Program* would occur during mid-March, 2006.

An information session, in January, 2006, is being planned for principals, primary teachers, child care educators, as well as members of school councils and parents to discuss the *Best Start Program*. Final details and the location of the session will be communicated, when confirmed.

If you have any questions about our Board's *Best Start Program*, please contact your respective School Superintendent of Education.

Sincerely,



Lou Piovesan,
Director of Education

c.c. Trustees
Superintendents
Mary Beth Jonz, Director, Halton Region Children's Services