
Rooted. Growing. Reaching. Transforming.



Reaching out to Transform the World: Ukrainian Bilingual Education

A Nomination by:

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools

for the

**2023 Premier's Board of Education Award for
Innovation and Excellence in Education**

September 2023

Board Chair: Diane Boyko
Director of Education: François Rivard

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About the Project

The Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Board of Education has a long history in supporting and promoting innovative language and cultural learning. This is evidenced in the success of the Cree, French, Michif and Ukrainian language schools. Ukrainian education programming within GSCS has been a priority of the board for over 40 years. The board's understanding of the benefits of a bilingual education, as described within the Ministry of Education's *Bilingual Education Framework*, has allowed for Ukrainian language, culture and faith to thrive.

"Academic achievement is enhanced by access to learning experiences that are meaningful, engaging, relevant, and responsive to the cultural and linguistic background of students and families. The Ministry of Education recognizes the diversity of Saskatchewan families and supports the development of multilingual skills and cultural identity through language programs in provincial schools and heritage language communities." Bilingual Education Framework, Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2014 82988-bilingual-education-integrated-curriculum-K-3.pdf.

Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School is entering its 44th year of providing Kindergarten to Grade 8 Ukrainian bilingual education to the students within Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. Currently, Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School is the only school in Saskatchewan offering Ukrainian bilingual education. The idea of initiating a Ukrainian bilingual program came from members of the Ukrainian community who appealed to our Board of Education. Parents advocated for a school in which Ukrainian heritage would flourish through the learning of language, faith, culture, and tradition. In 1979, the dream became a reality. Ukrainian education began from humble beginnings of 15 students in Kindergarten within St. Maria Goretti School to a current thriving Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School with over 250 Kindergarten to Grade 8 students, as well as high school and online Ukrainian classes. Since the program's inception in 1979, the following elementary subjects are taught in Ukrainian: Ukrainian Language Arts, Social Studies, Religion, Health, Physical Education, and Arts Education. The remaining core subject areas (Math, Science, English Language Arts) are taught in English.

Bethlehem Catholic High School continues the long tradition of offering Grades 9 -12 courses in Ukrainian Christian Ethics and Ukrainian Language Arts. They also offer Core Ukrainian for students in Grades 9 - 12. Students have an opportunity to earn a bilingual certificate from the school recognizing the learning they have experienced in taking a minimum of two Ukrainian credits per year. Prior to 2007, the high school program was supported at E.D. Feehan Catholic High School. Students have also had the opportunity to travel to Ukraine and host students from Ukraine in their high school exchange program. Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has developed Core Ukrainian learning opportunities through our Cyber School, allowing all students in the division, and province, access to learning the Ukrainian language online.

Program Goals

Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School programming is guided by the following goals:

- To provide children with the opportunity to learn to communicate in two languages: English and Ukrainian.
- To develop an understanding and appreciation of the Ukrainian cultural and religious heritage (in the Byzantine rite) in Canada.
- To develop positive attitudes about other languages, cultures and traditions.

Board Influence and Participation

While the spark for the Ukrainian Bilingual Program originated in the Ukrainian community, our Board of Education has fanned the flame for over 40 years. Board members have actively participated at numerous community partnership events that take place regularly as the students, staff and community celebrate the Ukrainian culture. As members of the Ukrainian Catholic community themselves, a number of trustees have been invaluable in helping the division navigate structures of various organizations, build partnerships, grow relationships, and champion Saskatchewan's only Ukrainian bilingual program, establishing it as an important member of the Ukrainian Catholic community.

Partnerships and events include:

- Visits to St. Joseph's Home, Ilarion Residence and St. Volodymyr Villa (seniors' residents in Saskatoon).
- Children's Corner at FolkFest Ukrainian Pavilion.
- Singing at the Legislature for the Holodomor Commemoration.
- Yearly Christmas Concerts and door-to-door carolling (an important part of Christmas celebrations for Ukrainians).
- Singing O Canada in Ukrainian at the Saskatoon Blades Hockey Club (Western Hockey League) game yearly.
- The bilingual program recorded a Christmas CD of Ukrainian music for the 25th anniversary.
- Recorded O Canada in Ukrainian for CBC Radio Canada—an initiative of celebrating Canada 150
- Performing at Shevchenko Concerts every March.
- Singing at Vesna Festival in May.
- Singing the Ukrainian National Anthem for Brainsport's Run for Ukraine.
- Two visits by the Papal Nunzio (the Vatican's official representative in Canada); and
- Hosting numerous VIPs such as five Ukrainian Ambassadors to Canada, Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk (Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), former Minister of Education Ken Krawetz, Ukrainian poet Dmytro Pavlychko, Ukrainian Catholic Cardinal Lubachivsky, former Premier Roy Romanow, former Governor-General Ray Hnatyshyn, and former Lieutenant-Governor Sylvia Fedoruk.

In 2020, as a part of the 40th anniversary of the school, a committee of parents, staff and community members spent a year reflecting on 40 years of Ukrainian bilingual education in order to plan for sustainable programming for future generations. The committee reviewed current second language research, school goals, and sought parental and community input on current Ukrainian programming. The results of the work were presented to the Board of Education. A summary infographic of the work is

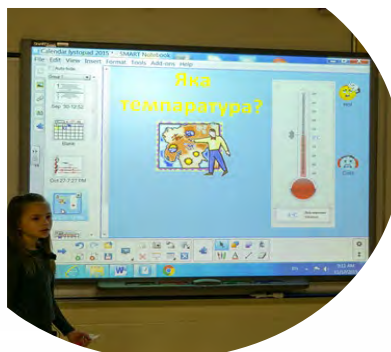
attached (Appendix A). Ukrainian programming, and especially Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School, has helped enrich the faith of everyone in the division by exposing those in the Latin rite to the rich expressions of the Catholic faith in the Byzantine tradition.



Sustainability and Innovations

At the time, creating Ukrainian bilingual programming was very innovative, and the most obvious sign of sustainability is its 44—year history within Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. The current Kindergarten to Grade 8 enrolments at Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School is 271 students. Bishop Filevich serves an integral part within the Ukrainian community in Saskatoon. Students from 52 Saskatoon neighbourhoods and from the cities of Martensville and Warman come together at the school. The student population is currently comprised of a majority number of students new to Canada mixed in with Canadian students all seeking a rich Ukrainian cultural and language learning program. Long-standing partnerships with the Settlement Support Workers in Schools (SWIS) from the Saskatoon Open Door Society are an example of collaborative work done to serve the students who are newcomers from Ukraine in the program.

As the only Ukrainian bilingual school in the province, the Ministry of Education sought the support of the staff from Bishop Filevich to develop resources for the schools in Saskatchewan to support transition of Ukrainian newcomers—caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine—into the community. The resources focus on the demographic, socio-economic, and cultural overview of Ukraine, as well as effective practices and approaches in supporting students and families arriving in Saskatchewan. It consists of the following items: a fact sheet on Ukraine, a recorded webinar developed and presented by Olena Gnyp-Kovpak, an English as an Additional Language specialist, and Stacia Horbay-Ugalde, principal of the school. It also includes a resource for educators to assist in supporting newly arrived learners from Ukraine develop English language proficiency.



Client Support for Innovation

In February of 2022, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the benefits of the unique programming at Bishop Filevich were once again brought to the forefront. Canada's (more specifically Western Canada's) large Ukrainian diaspora made Saskatchewan a natural place for many Ukrainians to find support. The province's only Ukrainian language and cultural program became a school of choice for many families. With open arms, the staff, students and community welcomed over 50 students between May and June of 2022. Over the summer, another 30 students were welcomed. The school saw a growth of over 50 per cent. During the 2022-2023 school year, the school's population rose to over 300 students. Generally speaking, the school has doubled in size since 2021!

The school's support for and within the Ukrainian community came in two significant ways: direct aid for people in Ukraine during the invasion, and support for new students and families in Saskatoon.

As a school community they collected first-aid materials to send to Ukraine. Each class brought a specific item and they delivered three vehicle loads of materials to an organization who was sending it to Ukraine. The school conducted weekly fundraisers: hat day, lucky bucket raffles, bracelets and ribbon campaigns, along with a donation basket. Some of this money was sent to help ship the first aid material to Ukraine. Family connections of staff and parents proved to be beneficial to ensure aid could quickly get to areas and people in Ukraine who most needed help.

With new students arriving, there was great need to help the families joining the Bishop Filevich school family. Once students began to arrive, the staff started to see the need for school supplies and running shoes, and so the collection of material for new students began. Every new registrant from Ukraine since April 2022 until June 2023 was able to choose running shoes for physical education, a backpack, lunch kit and water bottle. Students also received all the needed school supplies to make them ready for their first day of school and be like all other students. All of this was made possible through the school fundraisers, other schools within our division sending school supplies, and financial donations from their school, from churches, as well as the incredible support of the Saskatoon community. The school received countless monetary donation to go purchase the items, as well as the school items themselves. The community donated clothing items and blankets, and organizations donated money to pay for registrations for summer camps and activities.

As enrolments increased, so too did the need for English as Additional Language teachers and classroom teachers. When new families would join the school, it took a team of people to ensure they were comfortable. The EAL teacher, office coordinator, and administration would tour students around the school, take them to pick their supplies and answer any questions they had about the school. The caretaker would ensure we had enough desks for the new students and kept very close watch on the inventory. The classroom teachers were welcoming new students daily with open arms.

In the weeks immediately following the Russian invasion, our Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools' Tragic Response Team supported the school community. Extra counselling support was also provided to ensure that the mental and emotional needs of members of the school family were supported. The Catholic School Community Council supported all endeavours within the school, to include new families in school events, as well as purchased supplies when we needed them. The entire school came together to do what was needed to ensure a soft landing for our new students.

The culturally sensitive supports and atmosphere wrapped around newcomers to help them feel welcomed are a testament of the strong partnerships developed over the more than four decades of Ukrainian education within Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. Support letters from parents and community members are attached in Appendices B-D.

“Sometimes we take the words ‘warm’ and ‘welcoming’ in our division’s mission for granted. It’s what we try to do day-in and day-out, so maybe it becomes a bit mundane. Being the school of choice for so many families escaping conflict in Ukraine has been a humbling experience, and it has really invigorated our purpose to be a warm and welcoming place—a place where students and families can immediately feel like they belong, fit in, and grow. It has really strengthened our sense of community and purpose.”

Stacia Horbay Ugalde, Principal Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School

Evidence of Improved Student Achievement

Ukrainian language curriculum in Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools has been on a journey of renewal since 2014 beginning with Kindergarten to Grade 3. In 2014, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education developed a Kindergarten to Grade 3 Bilingual Education Integrated Framework which has been used to support primary Ukrainian language acquisition in Kindergarten to Grade 3 over the past eight years. In 2021, the division began to develop renewed Ukrainian language curriculum for Grades 4-8. Draft curriculum was developed by a division team and is now being piloted by teachers at Bishop Filevich in order to gather feedback for revision and finalization. The development of renewed curriculum was supported by French immersion curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The renewed curriculum updates the previous curriculum developed in 1995. Supporting resources for these grade levels also include language portfolios, inquiry units with essential questions for students to explore, and a grammar scope and sequence.

Current curriculum renewal for Ukrainian 10-12 is currently in use in draft form. This curriculum includes Core Ukrainian 10, 20 and 30, typically used for Bishop Filevich students who attend high schools other than Bethlehem Catholic High School and is provided online within our Cyber School. Grade 10-12 Ukrainian - English Bilingual Education: Ukrainian Language Arts draft form will be available for use in the second semester of this school year.

Student success in the Ukrainian bilingual programs is evidenced in a strong academic program, permeation of Ukrainian culture, language and faith, as well as a robust community service and partnership focus. The very existence of the Ukrainian program has facilitated the Ukrainian language culture and Byzantine faith to thrive. A high proportion of students graduating from the Ukrainian bilingual program are graduating with honours.

Conclusion

Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School and the Ukrainian language programming within Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools are unique and innovative programs within Saskatchewan. The Board of Education, the Ukrainian community and the province of Saskatchewan have mutually benefitted from this programming. The continued success of the Ukrainian programming has played an integral role in developing a stronger community built on cultural diversity. With recent global events, the school, program and community are well-positioned to serve and strengthen communities.

Appendix A: Summary infographic

Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School School Goals Feedback Summary

Reflecting on 40 years of Ukrainian bilingual education prompts us to look forward to ensure we provide a sustainable program for future generations.

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KEY FINDINGS

104 FAMILIES SURVEYED

54 SURVEY RESPONSES

Ukrainian Bilingual Education in Saskatchewan

Celebrating 40 років Святкуймо

Української двомовної освіти у Саскачевані

Important Themes and Aspects of Bishop Filevich



Language Learning



Celebration of Faith



Maintain Heritage and Culture within Canada



Welcoming Community



Connecting to Ukraine



Providing Future Opportunities

IN YOUR WORDS...



Coming to Saskatchewan, we have experienced such an overwhelming feeling of inclusion, of being part of the community that is proud of its language, religion and culture. The Ukrainian bilingual program is what keeps this community together while teaching young generations to treasure their roots.

Вивчити мову без вивчення культури просто неможливо. Культура, традиції, релігія, мова - це все одне ціле і ми не можемо і не маємо права порушувати цей зв'язок. To learn a language without learning about the culture is challenging. Culture, traditions, religion, language—it is all one whole.

Learning an additional language is good for a student's cognitive development. It expands their general understanding of communicating with other people. It expands their understanding of how language is constructed.

This program allows students to become proficient in a second language, so children have an appreciation for other languages and the differences. I also think it creates a greater connection to our history if we can speak the language.



MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

To ensure a sustainable Ukrainian bilingual school community, we need to work on:

- Supporting both fluent Ukrainian speakers and students learning Ukrainian as an additional language;
- Teaching contemporary Standard Ukrainian while respecting traditional or geographical variations;
- Building Ukrainian cultural identity in Canada;
- Being present in the community; and
- Growing, adapting and keeping a global perspective.

Thank you to all the families who took time to complete the survey and share your thoughts and opinions!

Щиро дякуємо вам за участь.

Appendix B: Letter of Support - Eparchy



UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF SASKATOON
Українська Католицька Єпархія Саскатун
214 Ave. M South, Saskatoon, SK, S7M 2K4 CANADA
Tel: 306-653-0138 Fax: 306-665-2569

Web: skeparchy.org/wordpress E-mail: admin.skeparchy@sasktel.net

September 14th, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Слава Ісусу Христу! Glory be to Jesus Christ!

On behalf of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon, please accept this letter of support for Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School, as they apply for the Premier's Award for Innovations and Excellence. The Ukrainian Bilingual Program in Saskatoon has achieved many important milestones throughout the years, as it is the only program of its kind in Saskatchewan.

For over forty years, the Ukrainian Bilingual program has helped families and their children preserve their faith, language and culture. We recognize that at this time more than ever, their school community has gone above and beyond in ensuring new families are welcomed into their school. Bishop Filevich School are an integral part of the Ukrainian community and an essential partner with the Eparchy. We have enjoyed the close relationship that has been developed with the Bishop Filevich community over the last four decades.

The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy congratulates Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School with their continued work of deepening faith, growing language, and preserving culture in the Ukrainian community. We pray that God continues to bless their endeavors for the next forty years!

In Christ,

Viktoriia Marko
Youth and Young Adult Minister
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon

Appendix C: Letter of Support – UCC



Конгрес Українців Канади – Саскатунський відділ
CONGRES UKRAINIEN-CANADIEN SUCCURSALES DE SASKATOON
UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CONGRESS – SASKATOON BRANCH

PO Box #1592, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3R3

September 15th, 2023

Ms. Stacia Horbay Ugalde
Principal
Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School
125 105th St W
Saskatoon, SK S7N 1N3

Re: Premiers Award Application Letter of Support

Dear Selection committee for the Premiers Award for Innovation and Excellence,

On behalf of the UCC - Saskatoon Branch, please accept this letter of support for Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School's application to the Premiers Award 2022. As the only Ukrainian bilingual program in Saskatchewan, Bishop Filevich provides a creative, culturally relevant, and innovative learning environment and community for their students from kindergarten to Grade 8.

Since the first Ukrainian immigrants settled in Saskatchewan in 1891, Ukrainian language was, and continues to be, a cornerstone of our culture and is essential to Ukrainian identity. Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School is deeply committed to ensuring the passage of Ukrainian language, culture, and faith to our children and is a source of pride for the Ukrainian community in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan.

The school has achieved many great accomplishments both academically and culturally in the province and has created friendships and partnerships within the Ukrainian Community. The school takes pride in helping the children culturally and providing opportunities to deepen their faith. With their work, they have strengthened the personal bonds within the community ensuring that the Ukrainian bilingual program continues to thrive as an essential part of Saskatoon.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Saskatoon Branch (UCC - SB) congratulates Bishop Filevich Ukrainian Bilingual School on their nomination and offers our support for many more years of bilingual education in our city and province.

Sincerely,

Ukrainian Canadian Congress — Saskatoon

Pat Tymchatyn
President

Appendix D: Letter of Support-Parent Letter

Sept. 15th, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I have been a parent of students at Bishop Filevich for over 10 years and have been blessed to be a part of the school family. The school has created a place to learn, gather and a community like no other.

When we came to Canada from Ukraine, Bishop Filevich was our first experience of education and community. We were blessed to have our traditions, culture, language and faith practiced and taught. We were welcomed and made to feel like this was more than an educational institution, but a family that appreciated and loved all children who walked through their doors.

Though this has been a very challenging and emotional year for our community, the school has done incredible things to welcome, include and educate. They have given our new students and families an incredible place to be. All families I have spoken to, cannot say enough about Bishop Filevich School.

The education that the school provides is done in a matter that excites learning, stretches all student's minds and creates a safe place to be. The teachers and administration recognize the importance of the whole child, both academically and socially. I am so proud to say my children have attended and attend Bishop Filevich and cannot imagine a more deserving school for this recognition.

Sincerely,

Nataliia Garmasar
Parent at Bishop Filevich School