

Firefighters tell kids to know two ways out



From left, Bancroft firefighter Morgan Moore, firefighter Jason Smith, Capt. Tom Rollins, co-op student Michael Mochulla and fire prevention officer Matt Musclow head back in from the playground at Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School to talk fire safety. / SARAH SOBANSKI Staff

By Sarah Sobanski

North Hastings Fire Service and Bancroft Fire Department visited five area schools to teach students about fire safety.

Fire prevention officer Matt Musclow said the prevention team visited around 1,000 students between Oct. 9 and 13. They dropped in with Sparky at York River Public School, Bird's Creek Public School, Hermon Public School, Maynooth Public School and Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School.

Bancroft This Week went with the team to OLM to see what kids need to know to stay safe if there's a fire.

First, in a kindergarten class, Bancroft Fire Department Capt. Tom Rollins told students about 9-1-1.

'It's not a number to play games with. It's only when you absolutely need it,' he said. He also explained the dangers of smoke.

Some of the students said they would plug their noses or go get clothespins from outside to stop from breathing in the smoke.

'And stay outside, right?' asked Rollins. 'We don't want you guys going back inside.'

Moving to a Grade 4 and 5 class, Rollins met up with Musclow. Just like the kindergarten class, this class was prone to testing the team with 'what-if' scenarios and telling them ways they could beat fires.

Musclow asked the class, 'What's something you don't do when there's a fire in the middle of the night?'

Eager and engaged, the class threw their hands into the air. One boy said, 'Don't grab anything valuable.'

Musclow nodded. He explained that when he was a kid, he had a Sylvester cat, but to the students he said 'you guys probably wouldn't know who that is anymore, so it was a stuffed cat that I went everywhere with.'

He added, 'I don't want anyone going back for Sylvester.'

The prevention officer also showed the class the importance of having a meeting spot by drawing a fire scenario on the classroom whiteboard. He said it was important to have an escape plan with their families and to get out of the house instead of hiding.

Later, Musclow told the paper that every year students know more about fire safety. They see changes in the students from year to year as they get older.

The end of the day saw the team block off an exit during a fire drill. This year's theme was Knowing Two Ways Out.

OLM students proved they knew their way around and were out within minutes.

'All the schools have done really well this year,' said Musclow.

On its website, North Hasting Fire Service lists tips to develop an emergency fire plan and asks, 'If a fire occurred in your home tonight would your family get out safely?'

Some of the tips include:

Test your smoke alarms by pushing the test button. Smoke alarms should be installed on every storey and outside all sleeping areas. Sit down with everyone in your home and discuss how each person will get out in a fire. Practice your escape plan with everyone in the home.

Know two ways out of each room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows leading outside open easily.

More tips and worksheets to print with your family to develop a plan are available **here**.

Musclow encouraged students to stop by the station to learn more.