

## New Director of Education wants to continue Board's ongoing successes



**By Brock Weir**

The new job is not about change, it is continuing the road the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) has been travelling, according to J. Philip Parappally.

Mr. Parappally was formally appointed as the new Director of Education for the YRDSB on May 27, succeeding Ken Thurston. His appointment will take effect on August 1.

Having been with the Board since 2000, Mr. Parappally, 45, says he has said the mission has always been about the 'importance of student achievement and well-being' and this is a vision he not only inherits from Thurston but shares with his predecessor as well.

'It is not about change, it is continuing the road we have been on,' he says. 'Leading up to August, I am talking to as many individuals as possible. It is a great team that we have in York Region and I am doing my best to connect and continue on with the good work.'

Student achievement and well-being have been the watchwords of Mr. Thurston's tenure as Director. In recent years, Mr. Parappally says the public board has had the opportunity to revise their mission, vision and values as a 'collective undertaking' and the feedback they received in the process from all stakeholders will hold the Board in good stead for the future.

'It is about public confidence in public education,' says Mr. Parappally, when asked how he defines success. 'It is about the conversations students have with one another. It is the conversations parents and guardians have with students and it is about ensuring that the YRDSB is the destination of choice for all those who live in York Region for their schooling.'

'It is making sure that the individuals come into our school system, at whatever grade or level, graduate and are able to contribute to the world. They are engaging and caring citizens of the world and public education is at the cornerstone of that mandate.'

Mr. Parappally serves as a Superintendent of Schools for the YRDSB, based out of their Thornhill learning centre. He has held the post since 2008.

Although he began his career in education over 20 years ago, serving the YRDSB since 2000, his love of education stems back to his childhood.

?I was a product of the public school system,? he says. ?It was a matter of always being connected with the public school system. I remember very fondly the opportunities I had going to school where they exposed me to things my own family could not. When I finished university, I went off to teacher's college and I would say I never really worked a day in my life in the sense that I really love what I do.

?I get to surround myself with wonderful people and I think it is just a great privilege to work with the students that we have. If anyone ever wants a dose of reality, just step into one of our kindergarten classes and see the great work that is happening there. There are kids that are curious, adventuresome, and they will talk to you about any topic.?