

Our Catholic Schools

A FRAMEWORK FOR REFLECTION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| About HCDSB | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Catholic Learning Environment | 7 |
| Ethos | 8 |
| Physical Environment | 10 |
| Catholic Community | 12 |
| Home-School-Parish And Community | 14 |
| School As Worshipping Community | 16 |
| Catholic Curriculum | 18 |
| The Ontario Catholic Curriculum | 19 |
| Religious And Family Life Education | 20 |
| Learning For All | 24 |
| Catholic Social Teaching: | |
| Service, Citizenship And Vocation And Career Development | 27 |
| Catholic School Staff | 30 |
| Pastoral Care | 32 |
| Leadership In Our Catholic Community | 34 |
| References | 38 |



ABOUT HCDSB



Our Mission

The Halton Catholic District School Board, **in partnership with home and Church**, is dedicated to providing excellence in Catholic education by developing **Christ-centred** individuals **enabled to transform society**.

Our Vision

The Halton Catholic District School Board is a model learning community, widely recognized as **distinctively Catholic**, providing **exceptional education**, while **nurturing the call to love and to serve** as a people of faith, living out God's plan.

Our Values

At the Halton Catholic District School Board, **we value**:

Our Catholic Faith and aspire to be models of Christ through our actions of love, forgiveness, compassion, and acceptance.

The Whole Child and create conditions that support the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional well-being of all students so that they may fulfill their God-given potential.

Excellence in Learning and provide opportunities that meet the needs and aspirations of all learners in a supportive, creative and innovative learning environment.

Relationships and Partnerships and recognize that our success is reflective of the healthy and vibrant partnership of staff, parents, pastors, and members of our broader community.

The Importance of Contributing to Our Communities and respect diversity, celebrate multiculturalism, honour individual rights, and embrace the social values of collective responsibility and the common good.

Acknowledgments

The Halton Catholic District School Board acknowledges, with thanks, the contributions of the many stakeholders who have played key roles in the promotion, nourishment, and defense of our Catholic Schools as valuable contributions to our Faith Community in Halton, and to the Ontario society as a whole.

From the first Catholic Elementary School, St. Mary's in Oakville (1856), to 55 elementary schools and 9 secondary schools (in 2018), there have been numerous staff, trustees, parish staff and community partners that have helped guide the journey for Catholic Education in Halton. We acknowledge the work that they have done to build this document which is a culmination of the many years of thoughtful reflection on our distinct Catholic system in Halton.

We acknowledge the work of our original Project Manager (2010 – 2011), Michael Pautler, and our original Project Writers (2010 – 2011), Andrea Bishop and Ed Podgorski. We also acknowledge the review team of 2017-18 under the direction of Lorrie Naar and Katharine Stevenson (2017 – 2018).

We also wish to acknowledge:

The Catholic Education Service (The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales) for permission to adapt sections of their document, *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Catholic School*.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board for permission to adapt sections of their document, *Learning With Faith: Our Catholic School Identity*.

The work of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, whose pastoral letter, *Renewing the Promise*, weaves through this document.

The Vicar of Education for the Hamilton Diocese, Fr. Con O'Mahony, and the Dean of Halton, Fr. John Van Hees, for their guidance and input on the revisions to this document.

Introduction

As a Catholic school system, we are proud of our reputation for delivering excellent programs that are rooted in faith, and delivered by dedicated, knowledgeable, and caring staff. We take great pleasure in knowing that we are fostering and energizing Catholic learning communities that are centred on the Gospel values, founded in good instructional practices, and rooted in the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

In 2012, the Halton Catholic District School Board created and published *Our Catholic Schools: A Framework for Reflection*. This document was developed as a resource to help guide the work of staff and enhance our effectiveness as a Catholic school district.

During the 2017-2018 school year, we undertook a review of the *Our Catholic Schools* resource document to ensure that it is still consistent with our current Strategic Plan. We also updated the document to reflect **Renewing the Promise**, the pastoral letter for Catholic education released by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario in 2018.

In their pastoral letter, the Bishops use the scriptural account of the Road to Emmaus to frame their reflection, encouraging all who share responsibility for Catholic education to nurture and strengthen Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and in deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are called to nourish the spiritual and cultural dimensions of our Catholic schools as essential components towards realizing the vision we hold for Catholic education.

I invite you to explore this updated version of the *Our Catholic Schools* document. I think you will find it provides a valuable resource that is both relevant within the context of our work as Catholic educators, and meaningful to our mission as disciples of Jesus and members of our extended faith community.

Pat

Pat Daly
Director of Education

Catholic Learning Environment



A Catholic school is an extension of the family and the Church, and as such, embodies the values and teachings of Jesus Christ. This is highly visible through prayer, through its symbols and liturgies, and through the interrelationships which respect the dignity of each student.



Within the context of Catholic education, the promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic Schools.

Renewing the Promise, page 4



Ethos



People often comment that when they enter a Catholic school they feel a special presence. This does not come from the building or even the religious symbols that are an important witness to our faith. The presence comes from Christ who is proclaimed by word and example, and is evidenced in the way people care for one another...

Renewing the Promise, page 9

Ethos is the characteristic belief and spirit of a given community. Because of this, all aspects of the Catholic school such as relationships, priorities, curriculum and discipline have potential to speak of God's presence in the school's life. Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise within the Catholic school. With constant reference to the Gospel and frequent encounters with Christ, the Catholic school strengthens its purpose. The whole existence of a Catholic school, its curriculum, relationships, priorities, aims and objectives, pastoral care and discipline, activities, both academic and otherwise, should resonate with the message, the values and the very presence of Jesus. Indeed, all aspects of the Catholic school have the potential to speak of God's loving care for the individual. In our Catholic schools, the ultimate goal of the curriculum is that students have a daily experience of God at the centre of the learning process.

Thomas Groome's understanding of the distinctiveness of Catholicism, which in turn grounds the distinctiveness

of Catholic education, is helpful in our understanding of ethos. These characteristics include:

- a vision of the human person as created in the image of God and as inherently good.
- a sacramental view of life.
- a community emphasis on human and Christian existence.
- a commitment to tradition as the source of the community's story and vision.
- an appreciation of the gift of human reason and of the ability to learn.
- a commitment to personhood, justice and inclusiveness.

While the school's ethos becomes apparent and is realized through daily action, its development has to be promoted and encouraged by practical means, since it rarely emerges by accident or by chance. It is



the responsibility, therefore, of every member of the school community to contribute to the creation and implementation of its declared ethos.

Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*.

Considerations

- 1. Each school has a process that enables the community to develop or revise a Vision and Mission Statement.
- 2. The Mission Statement calls to action a vision of:
 - the human person as created in the image and likeness of God and held in existence and relationship by God.
 - a sacramental view of life.
 - a community emphasis on human and Christian existence.
 - a commitment to tradition as the source of the community’s story and vision.
 - an appreciation of the gift of human reason and of

- the ability to learn.
- a commitment to personhood, justice and inclusiveness.
- the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.
- 3. This Mission Statement influences all aspects of school life (e.g., atmosphere of welcome, concern and respect for people, language and conversation within the school that reflects Gospel values, norms established with the goal of building community).

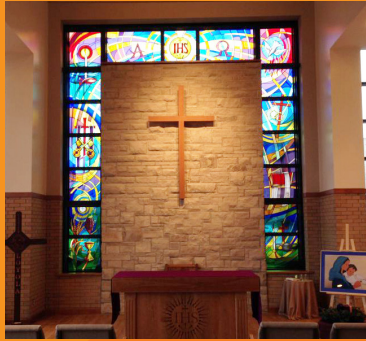
Physical Environment

This environment, in which the school community lives and learns, makes non-verbal statements about the ethos or moral tone of the school, as well as its values and priorities. These are evidenced by such things as religious symbols, student work and respect for persons and property.

Considerations

- 1. Christian signs and symbols permeate the school and classrooms, illustrating the living faith of the school.

- 2. Each classroom is a sacred space with a dedicated prayer centre that is used to develop reverence for prayer.
- 3. Where facilities allow in an elementary school, a chapel or quiet space is available for students and staff to provide quiet time to cultivate and encourage a closeness with Jesus.
- 4. The chapel in each secondary school is a welcoming place that is used for liturgical and private prayer.
- 5. The Patron Saint or namesake of the school and the school’s associated parish(es) are honoured and celebrated.
- 6. The liturgical seasons are recognized and celebrated throughout the school year.
- 7. The school practices and promotes a Catholic understanding of stewardship of creation (e.g., green bin/recycling initiatives, Earth Week activities with Christian connection).
- 8. An understanding of the human person, created in the image of God, guides concern for the well-being, dignity and security of all members of the school community and is intentionally reflected in the design of the physical environment and in the implementation of:
 - Safe School Policy
 - Health and Safety Procedures
 - Equity and Inclusive Education Policy



Catholic Community



We are a community committed to acting morally and legally as a people formed in Catholic traditions. We witness Catholic Social Teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.



Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing Jesus walks with us.

Renewing the Promise, page 7

Catholic Community

In 2018, the Bishops of Ontario offered to all in the Catholic educational community a pastoral letter entitled *Renewing the Promise*. The Bishops call upon all partners in the Catholic community to renew the promise “that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools” (*Renewing the Promise, page 4*).

Using The Road to Emmaus as a scriptural foundation, our Bishops call for our Christ-centred Catholic schools to be:

- a community that accompanies;
- a community that builds relationships;
- a community that encourages engagement and instils hope; and
- a community that forms joyful disciples.

Our faith tradition tells us that all decisions, innovations, difficulties, and celebrations must happen in community. Collaboration is not merely a strategy to improve effectiveness; it is a powerful demonstration of our commitment to living and working in community. Through community, we experience Jesus in an intimate way, calling us to love and to serve, especially those most vulnerable among us.

We will know that the school community is truly encountering Jesus each day when we experience a sense of belonging, love, forgiveness, healing, compassion, and peace. It is not enough to call ourselves Catholic without living the Gospel values and witnessing to the fact that the Christian community in our schools is alive and well.

Home-School-Parish And Community

Catholic education is a collaborative task shared by home, school, parish and the wider community as all contribute to the development of the whole person.

Parents are the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith. The **home** is the place where the love of Christ should be revealed and nurtured. Parents should consider their own faith formation to be an important part of their involvement in their children's education.

The primary task of the **school** is to assist the home in educating the child. Catholic schools share the

prophetic mission of the Church to bring about a just and loving society. In the **classroom**, through the taught curriculum, especially the Religious and Family Life Education curriculum and Catholic Social Teaching, students come to know that Jesus Christ gives meaning, purpose and direction to life. "Staff practise the *art of accompaniment* by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ" (*Renewing the Promise*, page 6).



The work of Catholic schools involves initiating, facilitating and maintaining trusting relationships with and among the Catholic educational partners. A sense of respect for the unique expertise and strengths of each and generous cooperation that acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of all is essential to develop the mutual trust that nurtures effective working relationships.

Renewing the Promise, page 9

The **parish** builds upon and extends the work of both home and school in the development of faith. Clergy, religious, parish workers and others participate in the life of the school, through classroom visits, liturgies and sacramental preparation.

Involvement with the **community** at large is important since it is the background for the home, school and parish. Interaction with other schools is an effective way of being in touch with peers within the same community. Contact with local community organizations and businesses can provide a mutually beneficial relationship.

Mutual respect, trust, and open communication among all the partners in education are essential in witnessing to the Gospel values of love, peace and justice. "On a daily basis, Catholic schools demonstrate the joy of believing and witness the Good News to the communities that they serve" (*Renewing the Promise*, page 13).

Considerations

1. Parents are involved in school and Board programs and committees.
2. Parents are encouraged to be involved in Catholic School Council.
3. Strategies are in place to ensure effective communication among parents and the Board and the parish.
4. Regular, intentional conversation occurs among members of the triad (e.g., for planning purposes, setting direction).
5. The voices of students and parents are sought to assess needs (e.g., coffee chat, town halls, Catholic School Council, CPIC, OAPCE, SEAC, student and parent focus groups, parish councils).



Catholic schools are places where the 'New Evangelization' can take root by inviting students and their families into a deeper relationship with Christ. The experience of community within the school can gently fan the embers until they burst into a flame of faith.

Renewing the Promise, page 8



- 6. There are strategies in place to ensure collaboration between the parish and the Board/school based on the expressed needs of students, parents, staff and the parish (e.g., catechesis and faith development, the shared role of parish and school in sacramental preparation, games night, recreational activities, *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* Parish Portal).
- 7. Opportunities for service in the parish community and the larger community are promoted.
- 8. Adult Faith Formation Program opportunities are offered to members of the parish team and members of the Catholic School Council.
- 9. Schools collaborate with other schools, especially those in the parish and Family of Schools to promote faith development and a common mission.
- 10. Relationships with community groups and businesses are governed by Gospel values and Board policy and procedures (e.g., sponsorship, co-op programs, fundraising and speakers).
- 11. Parents and guardians are made fully aware of the practices related to prayer, communal worship and the reception of the sacraments.
- 12. Parents engage in spiritual practices that students learn and experience at school (e.g., Christian

meditation, the Rosary, St. John's Bible, *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* Home Portal).

- 13. Partnerships are fostered with Catholic partners (e.g., Youth Ministry of the Diocese, Catholic Universities, Institute for Catholic Education, Catholic Curriculum Corporations).
- 14. Staff participate in opportunities offered through the Hamilton Diocese Catholic Education Partnerships.

School As Worshipping Community

Worship is an essential part of religious experience and is an integral part of daily life in our Catholic schools. Because it is important to promote and recognize our present encounters with the Lord, prayer, worship and liturgical celebration are central to our Catholic tradition. It is imperative that sound educational and pastoral principles determine the ways in which these are experienced in the school community. It is not sufficient to simply provide opportunities for such experiences; it is the task of the school to educate and promote the development of, the appreciation of, and the active participation in prayer, worship and liturgy. This should be recognized as a gradual process which takes into account the age and stage of the personal, social and religious development of students.

For prayer, worship and liturgy to be real educational experiences and to contribute successfully to the development of faith in each individual in the community,

participation in the preparation of the action of these experiences is of prime importance.

A Catholic school must encourage the practice of saying prayers and must itself become a place of prayer. There are different means of prayer and it is important to distinguish between “prayer” which can be described as “an attitude a person has towards God and before God,” and “saying prayers.” Both should be encouraged in a Catholic school. The Mass is the greatest prayer, but traditional prayers and other devotions such as the active observance of the liturgical seasons, the commemoration and celebration of feast days and lives of saints are all part of the rich Catholic heritage that nourishes the spirituality and strengthens the Catholicity of a school and should be encouraged. It is good for students and staff to pray together.

Schools are made up of a rich variety of cultures, traditions and backgrounds. Those preparing prayer, liturgies and assemblies should be sensitive to the personal, social and religious needs and abilities of everyone.

Considerations

- 1. The elementary school Pastoral Animator and the secondary school Chaplaincy Leader, in collaboration with the parish, assist in providing opportunities for prayer, liturgy and worship.
- 2. Staff teach and model traditional prayers and devotions, including the responses to the Mass and to other liturgical celebrations.

- 3. Liturgical seasons, Church feasts and the feast day of the Patron Saint of the school and local parish are celebrated and observed.
- 4. Students and staff have opportunities for renewal and retreat experiences.
- 5. Students are guided in their exploration of a variety of private and communal methods of prayer in both formal and informal styles and settings (e.g., traditional prayers, Christian meditation, the Rosary, *visio divina*, examen, Liturgy of the Hours, Taizé prayer).
- 6. Daily acts of worship are part of the school day and all community gatherings (e.g., prayers during morning exercises, before lunch, at the end of the day, at assemblies, Advent and Lenten reflection, staff meetings, prior to games).
- 7. The staff prays together (e.g., prior to meetings, retreats, Faith Day, site-based adult faith formation in response to critical incidents).
- 8. Staff and students explore various spiritual practices for leading a contemplative life and are provided regular opportunities for practice (e.g., Christian Meditation).
- 9. Staff and students participate in Catholic ministry training to support training as lectors and Eucharistic Ministers.



The joy of believing is manifest in the hearts and lives of those who faithfully follow the Lord. Catholic schools play an important role in proclaiming the joy of believing.

Renewing the Promise, page 13

Let the pattern of the Eucharist guide you as you help to shape and animate a Catholic school culture where the love of God is found in an encounter with Christ Jesus: gather your school community, tell the story, break the bread, and help to bring hope to the world.

Renewing the Promise, page 19



Catholic Curriculum



A Catholic school teaches the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum with a difference – grounded in Religious and Family Life Education. Catholic attitudes and values permeate each individual area of experience and learning in our schools.



Catholic schools are places where staff and students are encouraged both to enter into scripture, doctrine and worship, and are invited to actively express their faith through acts of love toward their neighbours.

Renewing the Promise, page 11



Curriculum, however, is much more than policy documents and support materials. At its core, it reveals fundamental beliefs and values about the nature, task, and specific character of the educational enterprise... curriculum is best described, in its broadest sense, as a worldview shaped by the Catholic conversation about life's meaning and purpose. It is a distinctive worldview committed to the enterprise of educating the soul.

Educating the Soul, page 12

The Ontario Catholic Curriculum

Catholic educators are charged with implementing the Ontario Catholic curriculum. The Ontario Bishops also remind educators that, "You are powerful witnesses to the presence of Jesus in the lives of our students, and you provide the good soil each school day for the roots of faith to grow in our students" (*Renewing the Promise, page 17*). In Catholic schools there must be a balance between the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, and the development of those habits of mind that will enable our students to develop a Catholic view of the world so they may participate as responsible, transformational citizens. As Pope Francis states, "Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture" (*Renewing the Promise, page 13*). Catholic educators deliver Ontario "Catholic" Curriculum when the Ministry of Education's curriculum expectations are taught with a Catholic worldview (i.e., through the integration of Scripture and Catholic Church teaching).

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations provide a vision of the learner. Guided by this vision, educators purposefully plan instruction so as to foster the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable each student to become:

- a discerning believer;
- an effective communicator;
- a reflective, creative and holistic thinker;
- a self-directed, responsible, lifelong learner;
- a collaborative contributor;
- a caring family member; and
- a responsible citizen.

Considerations

1. At each grade and in each subject area, the Ontario curriculum is taught intentionally from a Catholic faith perspective (e.g., integration of Scripture and Tradition, integration of grade level Focus on Faith themes across the curriculum, students connect own experience to our Catholic story).

2. Assessment and evaluation of student learning is guided by a recognition of the dignity of each student, created in the image of God (e.g., *Growing Success* viewed through a Catholic lens, differentiated instruction recognizes each student's God-given strengths and interests).

3. Teachers assess and evaluate the Ministry of Education *Growing Success Learning Skills and Work Habits* in light of the *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations* and Catholic Social Teachings.

4. Appropriate resources are used to ensure the delivery of a Catholic curriculum (e.g., *Many Gifts*, Health and Physical Education supports from ICE, Catholic Curriculum Corporations, HCDSB
- resources, *Growing in Faith*, *Growing in Christ* for cross-curricular connections).

5. The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations are used to plan for instruction (i.e., purposefully planning tasks that enable the acquisition and demonstration of these expectations).

6. Program Services staff are available to support embedding Catholic content and themes across the curriculum.

7. Administrators provide resources to support the implementation of the Ontario Catholic curriculum.

8. Teachers integrate the Board's Theological Theme and the Grade Level Focus on Faith Themes across the curriculum.

9. Teachers and administrators integrate theological learning from Adult Faith Formation (AFF), Theological Education for Leaders (TEL) or HCDSB Religious Education AQ Course sessions into educational practice.

Religious And Family Life Education



The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils.

Pope Saint John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #69



It is important to appreciate the central role of Religious and Family Life Education for a Catholic school. This commitment to the aims, values, and teachings of the Catholic faith influences the whole of the curriculum, shapes the daily pattern of school life, and distinguishes the identity of the Catholic school.

The development of both Ontario Religious Education and Family Life Education curriculum policy is overseen by the Institute for Catholic Education, as mandated by the Education Commission of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario. All Catholic teachers responsible for teaching Religious Education and Family Life Education courses are expected to implement the grade-specific course curriculum as outlined in the policy documents.

In addition, HCDSB uses the Focus on Faith framework from K to 12 to highlight Catholic Social Teachings for each grade. These teachings are themes that teachers use to make Catholic connections across the curriculum.

Accompanying students at their stage on their journey of faith while also challenging students to grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith and to grow in their Religious literacy are the important purposes of Religious and Family Life Education.

It is important to recognize that not all of students in our Catholic schools are baptized Catholics and that their religious identity must be respected. Opportunities

for interreligious dialogue with students allows for celebration of our shared beliefs and values while we continue to witness to our own faith in Jesus Christ.

Considerations

- 1. In elementary schools, teachers are guided by the *Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document, Grades 1-8: Religious Education* and the *Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document, Grades 1-8: Family Life Education*.
- 2. Currently in elementary schools, teachers use *In God's Image (K)* and *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* (1-8, as grade-level resources become available) to deliver the Religious Education curriculum.
- 3. In elementary schools, teachers use the *Fully Alive* (1-8) program to deliver the Family Life Education curriculum.
- 4. In secondary schools, Religious Education courses follow the *Ontario Catholic Secondary Curriculum Policy Document, Grades 9-12: Religious Education*.
- 5. In secondary schools, Religious Education is

currently supported by the Ontario Catholic Secondary Religious Education Resource developed by ICE.

- 6. The use of other resources is regarded as supplemental to Religious and Family Life Education.
- 7. Elementary timetabling of Religious and Family Life Education should reflect a minimum of 30 minutes daily instruction of Religious Education, with one day per week for Family Life Education.
- 8. In secondary schools, all students participate in a mandatory course of study in Religious Education in each year of their secondary school program.
- 9. The Ministry of Education directives regarding Levels of Achievement, and the use of letters, grades, and anecdotal comments guide assessment and evaluation in Religious and Family Life Education.
- 10. The *Fully Alive* (1-8) program is used as a primary resource to:
 - A.) teach the Human Development and Sexual Health topic of the Healthy Living strand of *The*

Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education curriculum; and

B.) teach other topics of the Healthy Living strand of the Health and Physical Education curriculum (e.g., Healthy Eating; Personal Safety and Injury Prevention; Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours).

- 11. Teachers have the appropriate qualifications to teach Religious and Family Life Education (e.g., AQ courses, ABQ courses).
- 12. Teachers are supported in their delivery of Religious and Family Life Education (e.g., Instructional Coaches, HCDSB resources, HCDSB Religious Education AQ Course, Catholic Learning Communities, Health and Physical Education Supports from ICE, Catholic Curriculum Corporations, theological education opportunities).





Learning For All



Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

We are called to place a high value on ensuring that “instruction that both responds to the various needs of a diverse group of students and is precisely tailored to the unique needs of each student can be achieved on the basis of the principles and guidelines of three instructional approaches: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and the tiered approach to prevention and intervention.

Learning For All, page 13

Jesus is our ultimate model of the way in which we are called to accompany others, build relationships and care for those who are marginalized. The Gospel shows Jesus ministering to diverse groups, demonstrating inclusion, and witnessing to God’s love so that everyone felt included in the communities He created.

Jean Vanier teaches that our true communal strength is revealed when we embrace, support and celebrate the weakness of others. This allows us to build trust and strengthen our communities. We exemplify God’s love when we recognize Christ in our vulnerable students. We are called to assist all to become their most authentic self. The Catholic worldview holds a place of honour for

the vulnerable and the marginalized. Our students with special education needs require schools that affirm their God-given dignity and support their full flourishing.

The Ministry document, *Learning For All K-12*, is the integrating framework for assessment and instruction in our Board, schools and classrooms. Its foundational principles are consistent with Catholic Social Teaching and the vision of the learner articulated by the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

It is important to understand that inclusion does not simply mean educating all students with exceptionalities in the regular classroom with their age-appropriate peers. Students must still be provided with appropriate educational programming in the most appropriate educational environment possible. While it is preferred that the regular classroom be the first placement option for students with exceptionalities (perhaps with instructional methods and curricula that are considered modified) it would be inappropriate to say this arrangement is the only alternative. It is essential that educators clearly recognize that in order to effectively meet the specific needs of some students, specialized assistance may be required.





Considerations

1. The curriculum promotes the God-given gifts and talents of all students and nurtures the development of the whole student: physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.
2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and the tiered approach to prevention and intervention, supports student success in recognition of the dignity of each student, created in the image of God.
3. Principles and guidelines are used to uphold the dignity of each student throughout their learning journey, to facilitate the expression of learning and to establish classrooms where high expectations are the norm.
4. Principles and guidelines are used by teachers to ensure the dignity of each student by forming the foundation for planning and by ensuring that high expectations for learning prevail in the classroom.
5. The Individual Education Plan is recognized as an instrument of dignity ensuring the rights of access to and quality in the planning, execution and evaluation of learning.
6. Resources and instructional strategies used are in accordance with Catholic teachings and values and are in compliance with the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code with respect to the prohibited grounds of discrimination; show people of different races, genders, and ages in non-stereotypical settings, occupations, and activities; explore the roles and contributions of all peoples in Canada.

Catholic Social Teaching: Service, Citizenship And Vocation And Career Development



The Christ-centred mission of each school, by its very nature, contains a call to service in the greater community. Catholic schools form disciples with a social conscience who put their faith into action.

Renewing the Promise, page 10



Our Catholic schools help to form joyful disciples as hearts and minds are opened to the transforming love of God and to the flame of faith in action. On a daily basis, Catholic schools demonstrate the joy of believing and witness the Good News to the communities that they serve.

Renewing the Promise, page 13

Catholic schools should encourage young people to reflect on their vocation and consider how they will make a positive contribution, not only to the community to which they belong but also to the wider world. Students need help in becoming aware of, and in developing their future contribution and service to family life, to the Church community, to the workplace, and to the wider community. Efforts should be made to integrate Catholic Social Teaching across the curriculum and all Board policy and procedures that support it.

One of the primary goals of any educational system is to assist students in assuming their rightful role in society and to become contributing members of society. Catholic Social Teaching assumes a significant role in our Catholic schools, outlining the values and attitudes that Catholics should espouse as they enter the realms of social, economic and political life. Catholic Social Teaching can also aid students immensely in making vocational or career choices and provide them with the values that they should bring into the world of work.

The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church should be

evident in the classroom and then permeate the entire life of Catholic schools and Catholic school boards. The most visible way that Catholic schools can live out the Gospel call to love one's neighbour is through extending a helping hand to those in need. Christian service should be available to afford staff and students opportunity to put what they learn into practice in order to promote social justice. While both need to be encouraged, it is important to remember that charity addresses the immediate needs of people and communities while social justice seeks to address systemic social justice concerns.

Considerations

1. The Catholic Social Teachings of the Church are regularly incorporated in professional learning opportunities for all staff, including the Board's AFF and TEL Programs.
2. Curriculum planning across grades and subject areas incorporates the Catholic Social Teaching

of the Church using the Focus on Faith grade level themes.

3. In elementary schools, Theme Five of the *Fully Alive* program is used as the primary resource for service and vocation, to help prepare students for their Christian mission in the world of work and public life.
4. Students learn about Catholic organizations and are encouraged to participate in their work (e.g., pro-life movements, Development and Peace, KAIROS, St. Vincent de Paul, Good Shepherd, Chalice).
5. Student voluntary service is understood as a call to love and serve others (e.g., secondary volunteer hours, Confirmation preparation, student-led service initiatives).
6. Thoughtful, critical, faith-based reflection precedes student action (e.g., partner with Diocesan Office, use the Diocesan "Conscious Giving" graphic, educator/administrator training).
7. Reflective opportunities are provided following experiential learning and service activities to enable students to create meaningful connections to faith and community.
8. The Board and schools respond to the call to serve others by supporting charitable and justice oriented organizations, both financially and through student/staff involvement.
9. Social awareness groups that exemplify and promote Catholic Social Teachings are present and are encouraged in the Board and school.
10. Catholic Social Teaching is explicitly referenced when formulating all Board and school policies and decisions, including all business and contractual negotiations and obligations.
11. All Board and school-sponsored activities for social justice and charity are grounded in Catholic Social Teaching.



Catholic School Staff



HCDSB staff share a common focus on faith and take pride in openly demonstrating and celebrating that faith through their teaching and service to all students, to each other and to the greater community.



You are powerful witnesses to the presence of Jesus in the lives of our students, and you provide the good soil each school day for the roots of faith to grow in our students.

Renewing the Promise, page 17

Staff members are an integral part of the Catholic school community and seek to promote and maintain its ethos which is foundational to the teaching and learning processes and practices of every classroom. The school community is characterized by a culture of collaboration supported by structures such as the Family of Schools and Catholic Learning Communities.

Considerations

1. Professional development opportunities at the school, department, and system level reflect an environment that demonstrates a Catholic ethos, and include a Catholic perspective related to content.
2. Staff appreciate, embrace and uphold the distinctive nature of Catholic education.
3. Teaching staff demonstrate in their work and in their lives, the teaching, tradition and heritage of Catholicism (e.g., in communion with and participation in the life of the Church).
4. Staff reflect a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching.
5. Professional development opportunities for teaching staff in Religious and Family Life Education are available on an ongoing basis.
6. Professional development and adult faith formation opportunities are available on an ongoing basis to all staff (e.g., HCDSB Adult Faith Formation (AFF), HCDSB Theological Education for Leaders (TEL), HCDSB Religious Education AQ Course, Religious Education in Catholic Schools AQ Course, reimbursement for Theological Education at a Masters or Doctoral level, Hamilton Diocese Educational Partnership, St. Jerome's University Partnership, When Faith Meets Pedagogy Conference).
7. Faith Formation offerings include a focus on Prayer, Scripture, Content, and Reflection and are designed to be personally meaningful and ecclesiastically faithful.
8. Staff actively engage in personal faith formation opportunities.
9. Teachers' Annual Learning Plans (ALP) include professional growth goals and strategies for Catholic Curriculum to bring about improvements in both teaching practice and student achievement in our Catholic schools.
10. Administrators create faith formation opportunities for staff, and support and encourage staff to participate in system opportunities.



Pastoral Care



Staff practice the art of accompaniment by helping students realize that their own unique story is given greater meaning and purpose in knowing and living the story we share in Christ.

Renewing the Promise, page 6

The story of Emmaus recounts a very human experience. The disappointment and despair experienced by the two disciples on the road is not unlike the challenges frequently faced by young people today. The message is clear; hope, courage and resolve can be found through a loving encounter with Jesus.

Renewing the Promise, page 10

Pastoral care ministry is threefold – affirming, strengthening and healing. Its purpose is to serve the spiritual needs of both staff and students. While Christ’s presence should clearly be reflected in all aspects of the school’s life, it is His ministry as shepherd that should be most apparent in the school’s approach to pastoral care. The school community affirms each person’s unique God-given abilities, strengthens each individual’s sense of belonging and promotes healing by emphasizing the importance of justice and reconciliation.

As a Catholic community, we are called to be Christ for one another. The school community shares Jesus’ ministry as shepherd, caring for and strengthening one another so all may have a sense of belonging. By coming to appreciate the diversity of human qualities and attributes within the school, an atmosphere of tolerance and openness is created wherein people reach out in

mutual acceptance and celebration of one another. The school community supports each person’s God-given development in soul, mind and body.

As God’s children, we have been given the strength and grace necessary to understand the ministry and teachings of Jesus and to give witness to them in our lives and practices within the school community. Pastoral care makes use of Board-approved agencies, the parish, the Diocese and the larger community. This wider community might have expertise and resources which the school itself does not have. By making use of external support agencies, pastoral care may better assess and more effectively reach out to the particular needs of the members of the school community.



Considerations

1. The Catholic Education Centre has a System Chaplaincy Leader who serves as an adult faith animator to the Board staff.
2. Each secondary school has a Chaplaincy Leader to support the formation, spiritual transformation and healing of staff and students.
3. Each elementary school has a volunteer Pastoral Animator who offers the ministry of presence to colleagues and creates opportunities for liturgies and faith-based activities.
4. All members of the community are called to recognize the dignity of each person, created in the image of God, by promoting an equitable and inclusive environment where all are safe to learn and to work.
5. Catholic Values Training is required for outside agencies working in Catholic schools (e.g., Halton Public Health, SAVIS, Halton Region Police Service).
6. The Compassionate Care and Crisis Response Team provides pastoral care in times of crisis and traumatic events, grounded in our hope and faith in Jesus Christ.

Leadership In Our Catholic Community

In a Catholic board, the understanding of leadership should be set in the context of Christian values, inspired by the love of God and exercised in the spirit of that love. Our Catholic tradition acknowledges that each person has particular gifts and a responsibility to share these gifts, as a way to recognize and celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. There are some who have specific qualities and competencies that lend themselves to provide leadership in our Catholic community. The motivation to develop and nourish these qualities and competencies springs from a deep sense of vocation and mission to create a genuine Catholic school community in the spirit of servant leadership.

Considerations

1. Professional development opportunities in Catholic leadership are available on an ongoing basis through the HCDSB *Leadership Journey Program*.
2. Administrators support Catholic leadership development by providing opportunities for staff to demonstrate the following competencies:
 - Demonstrates a strong, active personal faith and is knowledgeable of Church teachings and faith traditions.

- Nurtures Catholic faith, community and culture, models a commitment to Gospel values, and to the promotion of a Catholic school culture.
 - Builds a shared vision for a model teaching community that is distinctively Catholic, provides exceptional education, and nurtures the call to love and serve as a people of faith.
 - Helps establish and foster a culture of continuous improvement, the acceptance of group goals, and communicates and monitors high performance expectations based on a belief that all students are created in the image and likeness of God, and that all students can learn.
 - Acts with openness and integrity, and strives to foster trusting and collaborative relationships with all staff, parents, and all members of the broader school community in response to our call as disciples of Christ.
 - Guided by Gospel values, the leader demonstrates a commitment to effective and respectful working relationships, and teamwork with students, families, and communities.
 - Demonstrates an acceptance of responsibility for school climate and student outcomes, and works to establish a culture of shared responsibility that empowers all staff to effectively contribute to a positive school climate supporting high levels of success for all students by building relationships which nurture body, mind and soul.
- Has a transformational style of leadership which reflects Catholic discipleship, personal and professional integrity, and a commitment to serving the needs of others.
 - Is committed to ensuring success for each student, celebrating the inherent dignity of each person created in the image and likeness of God, and fostering a culture of inclusion while responding to the diverse learning needs of each student.
 - Is knowledgeable and effective in implementing school improvement planning processes in support of student achievement and faith formation.
 - Accepts responsibility for upholding human rights as defined by Catholic Social Teaching, and sustaining a safe, secure and healthy school environment.
 - Is committed to the success of our students, accepts personal responsibility, and nurtures a culture of individual, team, and whole school accountability for the development of each student as articulated by the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.
3. Faith formation opportunities provided for current leaders across the system are reflective of the experience and needs of participants and relate to the specific role that they are in (e.g., Theological Education for Leaders, Senior Leadership Reflection series).



We believe that those entrusted with leadership positions in Catholic schools must be conspicuous for their goodness, sincerity and attachment to the faith. In other words, they are men and women who demonstrate in practice the very reason for the Catholic school's existence: an integrated Christian maturity inspired by the Gospel and lived in authentic freedom and commitment.

Fulfilling the Promise, page 4



We look to the future of Catholic education with great hope because we are blessed to have so many committed and faith-filled educators and leaders whose witness to faith provides a compelling example to our young people. The Catholic education community is encouraged to support opportunities for faith formation for all members of the community in ways that are inviting, engaging, and purposeful.

Renewing the Promise, page 24



Catholic Learning Environment

A Catholic school is an extension of the family and the Church, and as such, embodies the values and teachings of Jesus Christ. This is highly visible through its symbols, liturgies, and relationships in a setting which upholds the dignity of each student.



Catholic Community

We are a community committed to acting morally and legally as a people formed in Catholic traditions. We witness Catholic social teachings by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.



Catholic Curriculum

A Catholic school teaches the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum with a difference – grounded in the Religious and Family Life Education. Catholic attitudes and values permeate each individual area of experience and learning in our schools.



Catholic Staff

Halton Catholic District School Board staff share a common focus on faith and take pride in openly demonstrating and celebrating that faith through their teaching and service to all students and each other and to the greater community.

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