



ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS



Learning in Catholic Classrooms

For the Love of Learning, the 1995 report of the Ontario Royal Commission on Education, recommended the development of a set of “graduate outcomes” that should be “subject and skill orientated.” The Institute for Catholic Education worked collaboratively with the Ontario Catholic education community to craft a distinctive set of graduate guidelines, and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs) were first released in the 1998–99 school year. Because the relationship between learning and believing is fundamental in Catholic schools, the decision was made that the Catholic Graduate Expectations must focus not only on knowledge and skills but also on values and actions.

The OCSGEs were designed to provide a common language to bring a heightened sense of the distinctiveness and purpose of Catholic education in Ontario. Publicly funded Catholic schools have a dual mandate. From the Ministry of Education, all schools share the mandate to address specific curriculum expectations and to meet the educational needs of learners. Additionally, Catholic schools share the mission and mandate of the Roman Catholic Church to address the development of the whole person, incorporating elements of faith in the holistic education of students. The OCSGEs serve as a clear and concrete example of the way Catholic school communities give expression to this dual mandate.



Members of the Catholic Education community in Ontario recognized themselves in the language and imagery and began to use them in a variety of ways. The OCSGEs provide a framework for designing distinctively Ontario Catholic curriculum and resource materials at all grade levels in Ontario. Educators in Catholic schools use the OCSGEs to guide their work and make curriculum decisions related to instructional planning, strategies, assessment and evaluation.

The OCSGEs are used creatively not only as a framework for curriculum development, but also in the development of youth leadership, teacher education and administrative programs, and to support the work of local board initiatives. They provide educators and students, parents and/or guardians, pastors and parishioners, trustees and administrators a distinctive perspective from which they can critically and constructively engage contemporary culture, as well as a tool to gauge the efforts of our Catholic schools to meet these aspirational goals.



In 2011, the second edition of the OCSGEs was released after extensive consultation within the Catholic community. In 2019, the third reprint of the OCSGE updates the preface and afterword, provides current context, and is accompanied by new tools and resources to help introduce the expectations in meaningful ways to students, parents, and educators. **Importantly, the seven overall and 52 specific expectations have been validated and remain unchanged.**

CATHOLIC EDUCATION – YESTERDAY AND TODAY

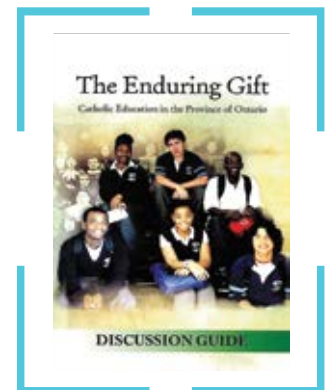
Catholic schools have been an integral part of the Ontario landscape for nearly two hundred years, articulating a vision of a Catholic education that is holistic in its approach, and seeks to educate the student mind, body, heart and soul.

In the early years, almost all Catholic schools were associated with religious communities. While lay women and men were always actively engaged in the work of Catholic schools, the presence of religious brothers, sisters, and priests as teachers and principals naturally ensured the Catholic character and ethos of the schools and contributed significantly to the financial viability of schools. Very limited public funding for Catholic elementary schools began in 1841, and increased levels of government funding was made available in incremental steps, over time, sometimes as the result of successful court challenges, and sometimes as a result of political advocacy.

As Catholic schools advocated for and gradually accessed increased levels of public funding, the level of direct participation, involvement and support by religious brothers, sisters and priests gradually diminished. While a strong and visible Religious presence remained in Catholic schools,

by the 1960s this pattern began to shift. Within two generations, the landscape of Catholic education in the province of Ontario changed dramatically and by the 1980's religious communities were no longer the defining face of Catholic schools and professionally trained lay people were assuming the roles of leadership.

In 1984, Catholic school boards experienced new prospects and possibilities provided by the decision to extend full financial funding to Catholic schools from JK through to secondary graduation. This prompted the need for the Catholic community to reflect more deeply upon our shared Catholic identity and to address the increasing public accountability demanded of the curriculum offered by Catholic schools. The changes affecting society such as globalization and the impact of technology were beginning to redefine students' learning experiences and the vision of Vatican II continued to challenge the Church to explore new ways of witnessing to the Good News of our faith in an increasingly fragmented and secularized world.



Pastoral Letters – Encouragement, Guidance and Support from the Bishops of Ontario

While the mission and vision for Catholic schools had not changed, the context, challenges and opportunities were shifting rapidly. Amidst this changing reality, the Catholic bishops of Ontario encouraged all the partners in the Catholic educational community to consider the great opportunities present, and released ***This Moment of Promise***, their first pastoral letter on Catholic education, in 1989. This letter, and subsequent pastoral letters, established a clear and compelling mission

and vision for Catholic education following the historical legislative decision that resulted in the extension of funding for Ontario's Catholic schools.

In 1993, the bishops released ***Fulfilling the Promise***, a pastoral letter that supported school and board leaders to articulate a Catholic philosophy of education for the times, practice leadership rooted in spirituality and call forth spiritual growth in others. This vision invited each individual in Catholic education to put the values of faith into practice in the daily life of the school, home, and all of society.

In 2018, Ontario's bishops released ***Renewing the Promise***, continuing the tradition of offering guidance, encouragement and support to those who share responsibility for Catholic education today. This most recent pastoral letter uses the scriptural account of "The Road to Emmaus" as the basis for further reflection on the mission and vision of Catholic education, and celebrates that a true encounter with Jesus, can and does take place, each and every day within our Catholic schools.



Renewing The Promise
**A Pastoral Letter
for Catholic Education**

A VISION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Searching for High Ground

When the OCSGEs were released in 1998, few would have predicted how they would grow in significance over twenty years of almost constant change in our world, and in our schools. In hindsight, the OCSGEs have served as a critical navigational instrument, if not the rudder, for Catholic education.

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“Young people today are buffeted in every direction by loud and competing claims upon their attention and allegiance. From around the world, they hear daily messages of conflict and hostility, of greed and injustice, of poverty and despair. Amidst this social turmoil, young people are eager to find solid and enduring values which can give meaning and purpose to their lives. They are searching for a firm place — a high ground — on which to stand. They seek a sense of direction, a goal which will give meaning and purpose to their lives.” (Pope St. John Paul II)

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The OCSGEs have contributed in various ways to being that ‘high ground’ for Catholic schools since 1998. They have served as a lens for Catholic educators who continually seek to discern and interpret the signs of the times and show young people the way to that high ground. They have informed our collective efforts to respond to the challenges of our world in a distinctively Christian manner in order to serve our students and their families. They hold out the potential of grounding us in the broader mission of our Church and, most importantly, in the message and person of Jesus Christ.

“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.” (*RTP*, pg. 24)

Renewing the Promise

The Ontario Bishops Pastoral Letter 2018, **Renewing the Promise**, affirms that

“Catholic schools have a unique opportunity to show young people the way to that high ground; to accompany students in the search for truth; to foster in them a thirst for justice and an appreciation of the goodness of God, leading them patiently and lovingly in their journey of faith. Young people are hungry today for truth and justice because they are hungry for God. To respond to that hunger is the highest calling of the Catholic educator.

Educators must seek to listen with faith and humility and ask the questions: How is the spirit calling us to respond individually and communally to our present context? Drawing from our Catholic faith and

tradition, how can we respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities we face today?” (RTP, pg. 4)

It seems natural to ask the question, what is the promise that we are called to renew? “...Within the context of Catholic education, the promise is that the true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together we commit to renew that promise as we work together to strengthen our Catholic schools as communities that exemplify, in word and in deed, the Good News of Jesus Christ.” (RTP, pg. 4) The OCSGEs embody this renewal for all in our Catholic school communities.

A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instils Hope

“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.” (RTP, pg. 10) Jesus’ experience that the human journey is best understood within the context of relationship, shows us what it means to be human in today’s world. The OCSGEs are grounded in this message.

“The Christ-centered 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. Students and staff help to promote engagement with the local and global community through their many acts of charity and by their witness to social justice and environmental stewardship.” (RTP, pg. 10) OCSGEs include a vision of learners expected to be collaborative contributors who contribute to the common good and responsible citizens, expected to promote peace, justice and the sacredness of life.

“Pope Francis challenges us to live the Gospel by caring for the poor, working to end injustice and by promoting peace and stewarding the environment. In a world mesmerized by materialism, with a declining respect for life, Pope Francis calls us to the transcendence of divine love.” (RTP, pg. 11)



“Catholic schools also help to engage the world by promoting a dialogue between faith and reason. They promote what is good, true and beautiful while at the same time demonstrating that it is rational to believe. This too is part of Catholic identity. The more we foster and nurture Catholic identity, the more we promote the expression of that identity in service and witness to the world. Our faith calls us to be engaged with the world around us, to have hope, and to inspire it in others.” (RTP, pg. 11)

— ” The Journey of Learning

“The more our students see and understand themselves as beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds and souls.” (RTP, pg. 10)

and his promise to be with them always. Only in this way can they be nurtured and encouraged to become who they are meant to be: persons of dignity and freedom, created in the image and likeness of God as modelled in Jesus Christ.”
(*Curriculum Matters: A Resource for Catholic Educators*)

The OCSGEs guide the journey of learning for all students in Catholic schools by articulating a vision of who the Catholic learner is becoming. While the achievement of these expectations may seem very far off in the early years, the journey towards Christian maturity begins at birth and continues long after formal education has been completed. The Catholic school plays an important part in this life long journey of becoming.

The critical relationship between learning and believing, between knowledge and faith, is fundamental to understanding the mandate of our Catholic schools. In keeping with this broad mandate, OCSGEs are described not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but necessarily in terms of values, attitudes and action formed by reason and faith.

“Consequently, Catholic schools must be places where students can hear Jesus’ invitation to follow him, where they can receive his command to love all people, and where they can realize his presence

“Three decades after full funding for Catholic schools, our context may have changed profoundly, but our mission has not; Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find purpose

to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship, and the certain knowledge of God's unwavering love for us, provides a firm place to stand in shifting times. The promise is that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools. Together we renew that promise by continuing to strengthen our Catholic schools as

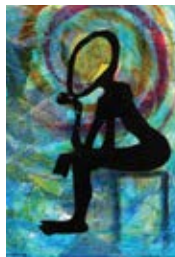
communities that exemplify the Good News of Jesus in word and in deed." (RTP, pg. 15)

Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find purpose to life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This provides a firm place to stand in shifting times.

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations – A Vision of the Learner



2. AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively responding critically in light of gospel values.



3. A REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE AND HOLISTIC THINKER who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.



4. A SELF-DIRECTED, RESPONSIBLE, LIFELONG LEARNER who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.



5. A COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTOR who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.



6. A CARING FAMILY MEMBER who attends to family, school, parish and wider community.



7. A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice and the sacredness of human life.

**A DISCERNING
BELIEVER**



I. A DISCERNING BELIEVER Formed in the Catholic Faith Community who

- a. Illustrates a basic understanding of the saving story of our Christian faith.
- b. Participates in the sacramental life of the church and demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of the Eucharist to our Catholic story.
- c. Actively reflects on God's Word as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.
- d. Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good.
- e. Speaks the language of life..."recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it." (Witnesses to Faith)
- f. Seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship.
- g. Understands that one's purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life's journey.
- h. Respects the faith traditions, world religions and the life-journeys of all people of good will.
- i. Integrates faith with life.
- j. Recognizes that "sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey" and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of redemption. (Witnesses to Faith)

“Our Catholic schools offer an extraordinary contribution to the social and environmental fabric of our society and world. In partnership with parents, who bear the primary responsibility for the education of their children, all those who work in Catholic education are called to reflect, in a faithful and discerning fashion, God's presence in this world.” (RTP pg. 3)



**AN EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATOR**

- a. Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values.
- b. Reads, understands and uses written materials effectively.
- c. Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others.
- d. Writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada's official languages.
- e. Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.

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“As young people growing to maturity in a complex world, you are faced with many difficult and confusing choices on a daily basis. The demands of our consumer driven society and the noise of social media may sometimes lead you to think you are alone. Know that you are never alone. You are the beloved child of God, and he is with you always.” (RTP, page 16)

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An abstract painting featuring a vibrant, textured background of blue, green, yellow, and red. Overlaid on this is a solid black silhouette of a person in a dynamic, almost dancing pose, with one leg raised and arms extended. The silhouette is positioned on the right side of the frame, with its head tilted back and arms reaching upwards. The overall composition suggests a sense of movement and creativity.

**A REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE
AND HOLISTIC THINKER**

- a. Recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges.
- b. Creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good.
- c. Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems.
- d. Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience.
- e. Adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience.
- e. Examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society.

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“Find strength in knowing that Jesus is always at your side, accompanying you... In a world that is sometimes beset with negativity and acrimony, remember your example of life, grounded in faith, is a powerful witness..., and an antidote to the hopelessness that often permeates our times.”

(RTP, page 17)

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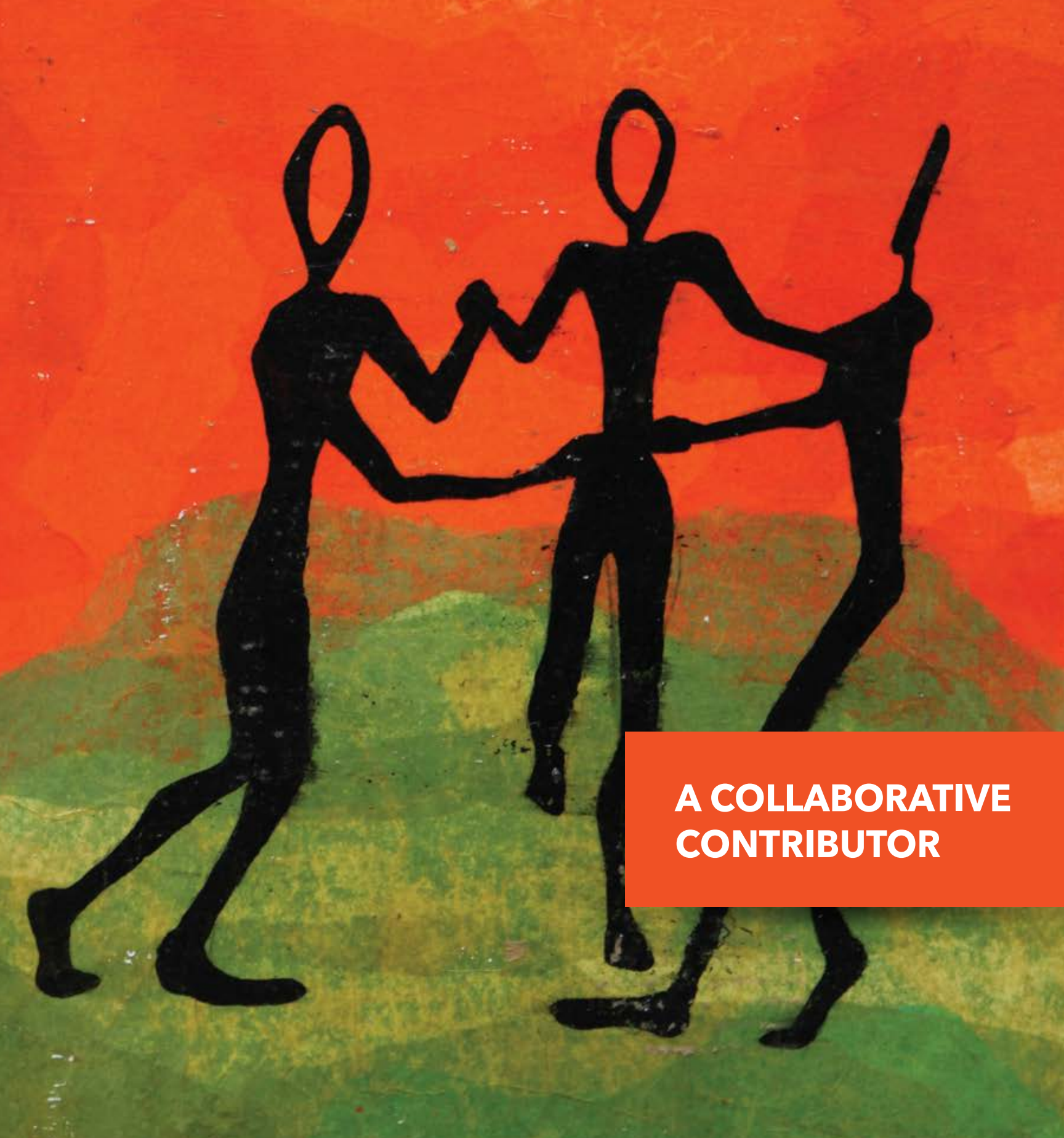
**A SELF-DIRECTED,
RESPONSIBLE,
LIFELONG LEARNER**

- a. Demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others.
- b. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability.
- c. Takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership.
- d. Responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner.
- e. Sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life.
- f. Applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills.
- g. Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.
- h. Participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

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**A COLLABORATIVE
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(Pope Saint John Paul II)

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- a. Works effectively as an interdependent team member.
- b. Thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work.
- c. Develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society.
- d. Finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good.
- e. Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others.
- f. Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals.
- g. Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others.
- h. Applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of overlapping, hand-drawn swirls and loops in various colors including purple, blue, pink, orange, and green. A large, solid black silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is superimposed over the center of the image, facing right. The silhouette is simple and bold, contrasting sharply with the colorful, textured background.

**A CARING
FAMILY MEMBER**

- a. Relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner.
- b. Recognizes human intimacy and sexuality as God given gifts, to be used as the creator intended.
- c. Values and honours the important role of the family in society.
- d. Values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer.
- e. Ministers to the family, school, parish and wider community through service.

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“Ask Jesus to help you become a good student, a true friend, and a loving son or daughter. Both your local parish and your Catholic school community are places to encounter Jesus, and to know him more deeply. He is a kind and wise teacher and a wonderful healer of your hurts, who will bring you peace and joy.” (*RTP*, page 16)

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A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN

- a. Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions.
- b. Accepts accountability for one's own actions.
- c. Seeks and grants forgiveness.
- d. Promotes the sacredness of life.
- e. Witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.
- f. Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures.

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“While the world may sometimes make you feel like you are not good enough, not wealthy enough, not attractive enough, or not special enough, Jesus knows you perfectly and loves you without limits. He is always at your side, encouraging you and helping you to be the best that you can be as you offer your service to the world as an instrument of peace.” (*RTP*, page 6)

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- g. Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society.
- h. Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.
- i. Respects the environment and uses resources wisely.
- j. Contributes to the common good.

CATHOLIC CURRICULUM

Catholic curriculum and resource materials, at all grade levels, contribute to achieving OCSGEs for all students in our Catholic schools and the OCSGEs inform curriculum development by providing the framework. Teachers in Catholic schools use these expectations to make curriculum decisions concerning program planning, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation and “to invite each child or young person in their care to grow fully to be all that God knows them to be.” (*RTP*, pg. 17)

Administrators and trustees use the OCSGEs to develop policies and practices that support not only the essential work of the classroom but also “to ensure that schools are an environment of welcome and hospitality...where all voices are heard, and all persons are respected for their inherent dignity and goodness.” (*RTP*, pgs. 19, 20)

Parents, recognizing in the outcomes of the OCSGEs distinctive elements of a Catholic education, celebrate the successes of Catholic schools for their children and recognize that their children “form the next generation of God’s people, tasked to respond to the enormous challenges and opportunities they are inheriting.” (*RTP*, pg. 17)

As growth to full Christian maturity is a lifelong journey, the attainment of these expectations continues beyond graduation from secondary school or any adult faith development opportunity. Because faith development is also an internal process, a number of OCSGEs are beyond quantitative measurement or professional judgments. In their essence, then, these 52 statements have both inspired and served as a foundation upon which a wide variety of initiatives and resources have been developed including: school board improvement planning; safe school policies; character development; leadership formation and on-going enrichment; innovative programs for exceptional students and students at risk.

Above all, the OCSGEs provide to all those involved in Catholic education both a vision and a practical tool to ensure that the treasures of our Catholic faith and tradition properly inspire all that we do in our schools.

When Catholic schools focus on infusing faith into every aspect of curriculum and community, the contextual challenges of the time become opportunities to transform culture. Catholic educators, guided by the vision of the learner as articulated by the OCSGEs, embrace their role in developing the ‘full flowering’ of each student — body, mind and spirit. Curriculum integration that seeks to consistently present a Catholic worldview across all subject areas enables students to become discerning believers, effective communicators, critical thinkers, lifelong learners, collaborative contributors, caring family members and responsible citizens.

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Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing that Jesus walks with us.
(RTP, pg. 7)

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Communities of Accompaniment

The Christian vision regarding the dignity of the person and their life journeys as having value and meaning is promoted only through community. “Catholic schools are communities of accompaniment where the story of our salvation is known and shared, offering the encouragement that comes from knowing that Jesus walks with us.” (RTP, pg. 7)

In sharing the evangelizing mission of the Church, “Catholic schools always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel and are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 134)

The Institute for Catholic Education encourages students, teachers, parents, guardians, school councils, trustees, administrators, school board employees, local business and labor community groups, and all interested Ontarians to continue to explore the relevance of the OCSGEs. It is hoped that conversations about the expectations among the partners in Catholic education will lead to deeper understanding of the goals of Catholic education and will strengthen them in their commitments to the education and faith formation of students in Ontario Catholic schools.

The OCSGEs serve as a foundation upon which a wide variety of initiatives and resources are developed. A collection of these resources, including samples of work, can be found at www.iceont.ca.

“Catholic schools are places where children and young people encounter Jesus, and where they are encouraged to enter more deeply into a personal relationship with Him. They are privileged places, together with the family and the parish community, where our faith is handed on, and this can only succeed with the cooperation of all concerned. In a rapidly changing world our Catholic schools provide students with firm ground upon which to stand because they are founded on Christ who is the sure foundation. It is in Christ that we find the wisdom, the courage, the creativity and the integrity to work together in realizing the great promise of Catholic education. May everything we do be for the greater glory of God!” (RTP, pg. 25)

A Future of Hope

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“From St. Augustine we know that the human heart is restless until it finds God. It is our faith in Jesus Christ and our Catholic culture that will help us to creatively respond to this longing and to the challenges and opportunities that we face today. All who serve in Catholic schools are called to ongoing discernment – how is God calling us to respond within the context of these times.” (*RTP*, pg. 24)

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“As we seek to renew the great promise of Catholic education, we are reminded that we bring particular gifts and charisms that are responsive to the signs of our times. Those who worked tirelessly to establish Catholic education in Ontario nearly 200 hundred years ago could not have imagined our current context, with both its challenges and opportunities: accessibility to a fully funded Catholic system; the presence of well-educated Catholic laity in Catholic schools; the complexity of strengths and needs presented by a rich diversity of students; the presence of well-developed Catholic

curriculum; the passionate commitment to social justice and stewardship of the environment of so many students and educators; the pressures of a culture that does not celebrate life the way we do; the omnipresence of social media; a culture that distrusts religion and religious insight; the serious ethical challenges of our time; and the social and economic pressures on families, parishes and school communities.” (*RTP*, pg. 3)



The OCSGEs will continue to guide Catholic educators as they adapt to new realities. What will remain constant is the distinctive vision that continues to compel and challenge us to proclaim Christ in and out of season, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

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“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.” (*RTP*, pg. 24)

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The Ontario Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) brings together, works with, and assists organizations that share responsibility for English Catholic education in their efforts to promote and maintain publicly-funded Catholic schools animated by the Gospel and reflecting the tenets of the Catholic faith.

The Institute was established by the Bishops of Ontario in 1986. ICE falls under the authority of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO) but, recognizing the collaborative nature of Catholic education, broad oversight and governance is provided by a board of directors representing seven partner organizations or associations that work cooperatively in the interest of publicly funded Catholic schools. The partners include the Ontario Bishops, school trustees, directors and supervisory officers, business officials, principals and vice principals, teachers and parents.

The broad mandate for ICE includes:

- Coordination of organizations in writing Catholic curriculum.
- Developing foundational documents in Catholic educational practice.
- Outlining programmes for pre-service and in-service professional development for Catholic educators and leaders.
- Commissioning research related to Catholic education.
- Fostering positive relationships and common vision on issues and policies that promote and protect Catholic education.



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