

Making Connections: Renewing the Promise and Achieving Excellence in Ontario's Catholic Schools

Amidst the social turmoil, young people are eager to find solid and enduring values which give meaning and purpose in their lives... Catholic school are places where children and young people may find solid and enduring values to give hope, meaning and 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. (*Renewing the Promise*)

Promoting Student Well-Being	A Community That Accompanies	A Community That Builds Relationships	A Community That Encourages Engagement and Instills Hope	A Community That Forms Joyful Disciples
<p>Equity and Inclusive Education To achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate, schools will strive to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted. We want all staff and students to value diversity and to demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society.</p>	<p>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. In addition to being places of teaching and learning, Catholic schools live the Emmaus experience as they witness to the Risen Lord. It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on the journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.</p> <p>Pope Francis speaks about the art of accompaniment as that of taking the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in so doing, to transform. Our Catholic schools do this on a daily basis as they model the Emmaus experience. 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.</p> <p>Our Christian faith is about an encounter with God; it is an incredible love story that inspires hope and joy. In the sacrament of baptism, we are given the great commission to go forth, infused with the divine virtues of faith, hope and love, and make disciples by witnessing to Christ and his Gospel.</p> <p>It is important to recognize that people are at different stages on the journey. Jesus provides the model for how our schools need to accompany students and families with great respect, patience and love, inviting all to deepen their understanding of Christ and his Church.</p>	<p>"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. The analogy of St. Paul is helpful; there is one body, but many parts. They need one another and must work together in harmony, 'that there be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.'" (1Cor. 12:25)</p> <p>Catholic school communities provide many opportunities for students and staff to know, love and serve the Lord. 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 – 'see how they love one another'. Catholic schools witness to Christ and in doing so help to reveal Him to others.</p> <p>Just as all the parts must work together to ensure a healthy body, so too must all the educational partners collaborate and rely upon one another to ensure that Catholic education remains healthy and strong.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Catholic education forms communities of faith that help students experience the love of God. The more our students see and understand themselves as the beloved children of God, the more they will want to love God with all their hearts, minds and souls. This in turn moves them to love neighbour which bears witness to justice and charity. Jesus says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:40). The more we love God, the more we love our neighbour and the more we engage in community.</p>	<p>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. Pope Francis states, "Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valid resource for the evangelization of culture."</p>
<p>Safe and Accepting Schools A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are imbedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is an essential component of prevention of inappropriate behaviour.</p>			<p>The disciples on the road to Emmaus are overcome by grief...Jesus gives his disciples understanding where there only seemed to be meaningless suffering. Ultimately, through this loving encounter, Jesus evokes in them a strength and courage not to run away, but to go back into difficult circumstances with a passion to share with others the Good News they have received. The result is a deep re-engagement with their community and with the world, with all of its challenges and opportunities. 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.</p>	<p>As faithful disciples of Jesus, we celebrate God's joy which longs to break into the world. The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow and inner emptiness and loneliness. "With Christ, joy is constantly born anew." (Evangelii Gaudium)</p>
<p>Mental Health One of the guiding principles in 'Supporting Minds' is healthy development, hope and recovery. Individuals are resilient and have an inherent sense of hope for the future. Service providers will reinforce the personal strengths of children and youth to help them develop a sense of safety, self-worth, and mastery over their future and to help adults achieve personal fulfillment, meaningful social roles and positive relationships within the community.</p>			<p>Catholic schools 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.</p>	<p>Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are the most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture. (Evangelii Gaudium)</p>
<p>Healthy Schools Healthy schools need to focus not just on academic success, but also on the whole child and student — their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. The research is clear: healthy students are better prepared to learn, and education is a key determinant of health.</p>			<p>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.</p>	<p>Our Catholic schools help to form joyful disciples as hearts and minds are opened to the transforming love of God and the flame of faith in action.</p>

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Together, we renew that promise by continuing to strengthen our Catholic school communities that exemplify the Good News of Jesus in word and in deed...May we work together to form joyful disciples ready and eager to renew the promise as we respond to the challenges and opportunities of this present moment. (*Renewing the Promise*)

Promoting Student Well-Being	Students	Parents	Teachers and Education Workers	Support Staff	Principals and Vice-Principals	Trustees	Directors and Supervisory Officers	Clergy and Pastoral Teams
<p>Equity and Inclusive Education Commitment to our students' well-being is the driving force behind everything we do in education. Parents want our schools to bring out the very best in their children and help them reach full potential. Everyone who works in education...shares that same commitment.</p>	Know that you are never alone. You are the beloved child of God, and he is with you always.	In a world that is sometimes beset with negativity and acrimony, remember your example of life, grounded in faith, is a powerful witness for your children...	Create inclusive places of learning that invite and enable each child and young person in your care to grow fully to be all that God knows and hopes them to be.	You are the stewards of our physical space and facilities; without your diligence, hard work and attention to detail, our offices and classrooms would be less welcoming.	Together with staff, ensure that it is an environment of welcome and hospitality. Model for your staff how best to minister to children and young people.	...all voices need to be heard, and all persons need to be recognized and respected for their inherent dignity and goodness.	As leaders of school systems...Let your voice speak with love and respect, and reflect compassion and understanding.	Your words of encouragement and support, your ministry of presence whenever possible, your invitation for all to engage in the life of the parish community...
<p>Safe and Accepting Schools Ontario schools should be a place where everyone — children, students, staff, parents and the community — feels welcome, safe and respected. A safe, inclusive and accepting school environment is essential for student well-being and achievement.</p>	Jesus is a kind and wise teacher and a healer of all your hurts, who will bring you peace and joy.	Work with the school community to help your child realize the gifts they have been given by our Creator God.	Each day provide a welcoming environment as students arrive to school. Listen to their stories, and help them discover the connection between the larger biblical story and their own lived experience.	Your model of service, and generosity of spirit offers important witness to the values of the Gospel.	In addition to your role managing a safe and efficient learning environment and leading the instructional efforts of your staff, your attention to the spiritual and cultural dimension of a Catholic school is an essential part of your mission.	In your decision making, in the setting of policy, in the nurturing of leaders, seek goodness that models compassion, wisdom and care.	As you build relationships among parents, students, clergy, pastoral teams, teachers, staff, and community members, the atmosphere of trust, respect, and honesty you establish is critical in creating a community able to engage and accompany.	Your partnership with our schools and your ministry to them has long been a foundation for the success of Catholic Education in the province of Ontario, and continues to be critical to the success of our shared mission.
<p>Mental Health People with lived experience of mental illness and/or addiction are valued members of their communities. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. It is important for communities and providers of services to work together to eliminate stigma and discrimination.</p>	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.	Just as Jesus heard the words of his Heavenly Father, share these words with your sons or daughters: "You are my beloved child in whom I delight!"	Model for them the gratitude we have for all that has been gifted to us through God's bountiful goodness: the meals we share, the friendships we value, the quality of education we experience in the province of Ontario.	Each day you offer loving service to those who depend on you. Yours is the voice of welcome to our parent community.	Gather your school community, tell the story, break the bread, and help to bring hope to the world.	Let your public actions be a visible sign of what we profess as a Catholic community and an expression of God's love and mercy in this world.	Let your actions match your words, guiding and animating communities, rooted in our Catholic faith, that invite students, staff, and families to encounter Jesus each day, as we accompany one another.	The goal of Catholic Education is to prepare hearts using the language of love, dialogue and service. The Holy Father reminds us that the essence of our vocation is love.
<p>Healthy Schools All educators are expected to create a learning environment that will support not only students' cognitive, emotional, social and physical development but also their mental health, their resilience, and their overall state of well-being.</p>	Jesus 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 and justice.	While children are definitely a particular gift for parents, they are also God's gift for our world. They form the next generation of God's people, tasked to respond to the enormous challenges and opportunities they are inheriting.	At the close of the day send them home to their families with enthusiasm for the opportunities that are present in their lives and with confidence in their own abilities to make this world more loving, and more just though their good works and witness.	From the scriptures we know that Jesus welcomed children, and your work alongside educators, to care for children, helps our Catholic schools to fulfill their mission.	Serve with joy in such a way that those you encounter are empowered and encouraged in the work.	Allow the Holy Spirit to emerge from the creative tension that exists in balancing budgets and providing rich educational programs for children.	Your words and your actions inspire and influence the efforts of all those who work in our Catholic schools. Your words describe the vision, set the tone, and inspire the actions of all those who share the work.	Our Catholic schools present a tremendous opportunity for the new evangelization and can be a powerful tool in helping you connect with students and families...it is not about the great things we do; it is about doing little things with great love.