

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

INSTITUTE FOR
CATHOLIC EDUCATION



2012

Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools (Initial Teacher Education Course)

1. Introduction¹

The Institute for Catholic Education periodically updates guidelines for Catholic teacher formation programs. This course is designed for prospective teachers in Catholic schools. Normally, this course would be taken by teacher candidates enrolled in Bachelor or Masters of Education programs at faculties of education. Many Catholic school boards mandate successful completion of this course as a condition of employment.

Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools is intended to introduce teacher candidates to professional practice, and extend knowledge and skills in the delivery of Ontario Catholic curriculum.

This course answers the question, “What do I need to know to begin teaching in Ontario Catholic Schools?” Consequently, this course:

- ❖ promotes an understanding of teaching as a vocation rooted in the call to Christian ministry,
- ❖ creates an awareness of the context of Ontario Catholic education,
- ❖ develops skills that enhance the integration of Catholic Graduate Expectations in the classroom and throughout the school,
- ❖ fosters professional knowledge of Religious and Family Life Education, and
- ❖ assists teachers in the acquisition of the theological background and skills necessary for the implementation of the Religious Education and Family Life curriculum.

Critical to the implementation of this course is the modeling of a positive learning environment that reflects care, professional knowledge, ethical practice, leadership and ongoing learning.

2. Regulatory Context

Ontario’s 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.² It coordinates the work of Catholic associations and organizations in writing Catholic curriculum within the parameters established by the Ministry of Education. ICE also develops Catholic resources under the guidance and in the name of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario.

While ICE prepared this guideline, it was approved by the Education Commission of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario. Bishops have teaching authority over matters of faith and morals for the Catholic faithful. This document provides guidance to those preparing *Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools* courses in Faculties of Education.

TERMINOLOGY

Teacher candidate: Those enrolled in faculties of education with the intent of becoming certified teachers in Ontario schools.

Students: Those enrolled in Ontario schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Teachers: Members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

3. Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession

The *Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools* course while exploring what it means to be a Catholic educator in Ontario schools also reflects the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* developed by the Ontario College of Teachers.³ A commitment to a clear vision of what it means to be a teacher is at the core of teacher professionalism. The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provide the focus for ongoing professional learning and are resonant with this course. In addition, the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*⁴ is underpinned by the standards, articulates the principles on which effective teacher learning is based and acknowledges a range of options that promote continuous professional learning.

Initial Teacher Education courses in Religious Education support the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* in the following ways:

1. Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Catholic schools provide educational programs and services based on distinctive expectations that the Catholic community has for graduates of Catholic schools (Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations). These expectations are based on research which identifies current and future educational goals and priorities across the province and enhance the expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education as outlined in provincial curriculum documents. To that end, Initial Teacher Education courses in Religious Education are designed to enable teacher candidates to support students who are becoming:

- Discerning Believers in the Catholic Faith Community
- Effective Communicators
- Reflective, Creative and Holistic Thinkers
- Self-Directed, Responsible, Lifelong Learners
- Collaborative Communicators
- Caring Family Members
- Responsible Citizens

Hence, teacher candidates enrolled in Initial Teacher Education courses in Religious Education learn to:

- Develop instructional practice which supports student learning, especially with reference to religious literacy and faith formation
- Build inclusive classrooms based on the inherent dignity of the learner and the principles of Catholic social teaching
- Develop skills conducive to teaching an integrated program where there are strong connections between religious learning and the life of the learner
- Demonstrate teaching strategies where students use technology in a moral and ethical way
- Use and integrate the Catholic faith tradition in the critical analysis of the arts, media, and information systems
- Value and nurture opportunities for prayer and community celebration
- Respect and affirm the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures

2. Professional Knowledge

Religious Education, as an evolving discipline, enables young people to learn the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of lifelong learners who value the religious dimension of human experience within a multi-religious society. Essential to this learning is the knowledge associated with Sacred Scripture, Church teachings, the sacramental and prayer life of the faith community, and its moral foundations for Christian living and family life.

Initial Teacher Education courses support the growth of professional knowledge in the following areas:

- The core teachings of the Catholic Church
 - Biblical, doctrinal, moral, and sacramental
- Religious Education and Family Life curricula
 - Curricular strands, methodology, resources
- Cross-curricular connections
 - Using Curriculum Supports for Catholic Schools and Catholic Curriculum maps
- The Practicum Experience
 - Application of professional knowledge and school-based professional development

3. Teaching Practice

The Catholic School System in the Province of Ontario supports best teaching practice in the area of curriculum delivery and creation of a positive learning environment.

The Initial Teacher Education Religious Education course assists teachers to:

- apply age-appropriate teaching and learning strategies to the delivery of Religious Education and Family Life curricula;
- implement a developmental approach to faith formation;
- develop appropriate assessment strategies for Religious Education;
- modify learning to meet the needs of all learners; and
- demonstrate the skills necessary for effective teaching.

4. Leadership and Community

Initial Teacher Education courses in Religious Education promote teachers as leaders in several ways. For example, teachers work together with colleagues in the presentation of seminars that address current issues and concerns within education. They assist in the organization and facilitation of course-related community events and worship. They discuss strategies to enhance school programs and student learning and ways to build bridges between home, school, and parish.

5. Ongoing Professional Development

Initial Teacher Education courses in Religious Education encourage teacher candidates to acknowledge their need for ongoing faith formation and professional development. Teacher candidates are presented with essential information concerning:

- Religious Education AQ courses
- Board sponsored New Teacher Induction opportunities
- OECTA's Beginning Teachers program

- Professional journals and publications related to Catholic education and religious learning

4. Course Components

The design, course content and implementation of *Teaching in Ontario Catholic Schools* support effective teacher education practices. The following course components of this guideline support and inform effective professional knowledge and practice within this course. Participants will be:

- exploring the dimensions of the vocation to teach in a Catholic school
- situating themselves within the context of Ontario Catholic education
- understanding the Catholic worldview
- exploring religious education and family life programs
- deepening their understanding of Catholic teaching

More specifically, teacher candidates will explore and deepen their understanding of the following:

A. The Vocation of the Catholic Educator

- articulating what it means to have a vocation to be a Catholic educator
- understanding the responsibilities and conditions of employment in Catholic schools
- identifying strategies for sustaining ministry as an educator
- exploring the spirituality of the teacher in Catholic schools
- understanding the role of the Catholic educator in relationship to Jesus Christ, the Church and the family

B. The Context of Teaching in Ontario Catholic Schools

- situating oneself in the story of Canadian Catholic Education
- situating oneself in the story of Ontario Catholic Education
- exploring ways of communicating this story with students
- identifying ways of promoting Catholic identity within our classrooms and schools
- identifying organizational structures and resources that support Ontario Catholic education

C. Foundations of the Religious Education and Family Life programs

- understanding the role of the six tasks of catechesis in shaping elementary and secondary religious education guidelines
- describing similarities between the catechetical method found in the Canadian Catechism and the three-part lesson
- understanding features of the Religious Education curriculum
- understanding features of the Family Life and AIDS curriculum in elementary and secondary programs
- exploring textual, organizational, and online resources that support Catholic teaching throughout the curriculum
- exploring the nature and uses of the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations

D. Catholic Teachings

The categories for exploring these Catholic teachings reflect the six tasks of catechesis, which are being developed as the strands of elementary and secondary curriculum for Ontario schools.

- Deepening knowledge of the faith
 - identifying key events and themes in our scriptural story
 - exploring ways of engaging students in our scriptural story
 - applying elements of the scriptural story to our vocation as educators
 - explaining the importance of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the learner and teacher
 - understanding elements of a Catholic worldview and how this can be imbued within a Catholic school
 - surveying sources for deepening knowledge of Catholic doctrine
- Promoting knowledge of the meaning of the liturgy and the sacraments
 - explaining the key role of sacraments and sacramentality in relationship to the teacher and Catholic schools
 - exploring with teacher candidates for elementary schools how schools support parish sacramental preparation programs
 - identifying how the Eucharist is “the source and summit of Christian life”
- Promoting moral formation in Jesus Christ
 - understanding key principles that underlie Catholic moral teaching
 - identifying Catholic teachings on moral issues
 - exploring strategies for responding to challenging moral questions
- Teaching the Christian how to pray with Christ
 - understanding the role of prayer in Christian life
 - establishing good practice for leading prayer within the classroom
- Preparing the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church
 - exploring ways of teaching that enhances participation in the life and mission of the Church
 - identifying key Catholic social teachings
 - exploring strategies for bringing Catholic social teachings into the classroom and school
- Promoting a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society
 - understanding and situating oneself within the “New Evangelization”
 - identifying ways in which Catholics can respond to challenges to faith that arise from science, media and other sources

5. Instructional Practices in *Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools*

In the implementation of *Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools*, instructors use strategies that are relevant, meaningful and practical in providing candidates with learning experiences about program instruction, pedagogy and assessment and evaluation. These include but are not limited to: small group interaction, action research, presentations, independent inquiry, problem solving, collaborative learning, retreats and direct instruction.

Instructors model the standards, honour the principles of adult learning (see below), recognize candidates' experience and prior learning and respond to individual needs. Important to the course are opportunities for candidates to create support networks and receive feedback from colleagues and instructors and share the products of their learning with others. Opportunities for professional reading, reflection, dialogue and expression are also integral parts of the course. Teacher candidates should also be introduced to powerful witnesses to faith either as guest speakers or as part of the curriculum.

Where possible, the course includes experiential learning and authentic school-based experiences such as: service projects, classroom observations, practicum experiences and action research projects. Instructors model effective instructional strategies and formative and summative assessment that can be replicated or adapted in the candidate's classroom.

Instructors need to be sensitive to the tentative nature of the faith development of many teacher candidates. They play a vital role in helping teacher candidates discern, interpret and articulate their faith in a contemporary Catholic context.

ADULTS LEARN BEST WHEN:

1. They are treated with respect, as self-directing persons.
2. The learning situation is related to their past experiences.
3. They have participated in the planning of the learning activity.
4. They are physically comfortable and can socialize with others as they learn.
5. They are with their peers, freely learning in groups.
6. There are opportunities for a variety of learning activities.
7. In a problem-centered situation, when a question needs resolving or a task needs completion.
8. They can see progress, immediate results, and some rewards for the time they put into learning.

(Adapted from University of Ottawa Course Outline)

The CCCB's *On Good Soil* contains valuable suggestions for adult faith learning.⁵ It begins with a reflection on our present experience of culture and faith, drawing upon the work of many researchers and authors and employing the experienced eyes of faith to offer a helpful, practical picture of our Canadian reality. This document is then divided into five parts. Each section provides practical examples and suggestions for application. Part One outlines the nature of evangelization and catechesis with adults in various stages. Part Two explores how the five criteria for proclaiming the Gospel message within the Catholic community are reflected in good catechetical practice to our people. Part Three offers practical help with methodology, including examples of application. Part Four examines the practicalities of adapting evangelization and catechesis to various ages and circumstances in adulthood, and to different environments, cultures and challenges. Part Five focuses on the various roles

needed for effective leadership, and offers some practical help for assessing needs and engaging in effective pastoral planning for evangelization and catechesis with adults.⁶

6. Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates

At the beginning of the course, candidates are provided with the specific learning expectations and forms of assessment and evaluation that will be used throughout the course. Instructors will provide opportunities for regular feedback regarding candidates' progress throughout the course.

A balanced approach to teacher candidate assessment and evaluation is used. It includes the combination of self and peer assessment and instructor evaluation, and models effective practices. A variety of assessment approaches will be used that enable candidates to convey their learning related to course expectations. The course provides opportunities for assessment for, as and of learning.

Central to teachers enrolled in this course is the opportunity to be engaged in relevant and meaningful work. Assignments, artefacts and projects enable teacher candidates to make connections between theory and practice. At the same time, assignments must allow candidates flexibility, choice, and individual inquiry opportunities.

The following list of assessment strategies is not exhaustive; it is intended to serve as a guide only.

- a) Performance assessment: designing a sample lesson which includes appropriate assessment and evaluation tools, incorporates a variety of technologies and resources relevant to the study of Religious Education or Family Life Education and is based on Catholic curriculum expectations.
- b) Written assignment: reflecting critically on issues arising from articles, publications, research and/or other resources related to the teaching or practice of Religious Education, Family Life Education, or Catholic Education in general.
- c) Presentation: developing a digital story, presenting an issue related to the teaching and learning of Religious Education, Family Life Education, or Catholic Education in general.
- d) Portfolio: creating a portfolio of practical resources, artefacts, photographs and recording critical reflections for each component related to Religious Education, Family Life Education, or Catholic Education in general.
- e) Action research: engaging in action research by reflecting and acting upon a specific inquiry into teaching practice related to Family Life Education, or Catholic Education in general.
- f) Independent project: addressing any aspect of the course that is approved by the instructor.
- g) Instructional resource: developing a meaningful resource that will support instruction and pedagogy related to the teaching and learning of Religious Education.
- h) Theological reflection: teachers integrate life experiences, course work, theological insights and/or educational practice into a paper or presentation.

- i) Service learning: practicing the Corporal Works of Mercy and reflecting upon the experience.

7. Preparation for Teaching in Catholic Schools: Additional Considerations

a) Timetable

The course is taught within the context of faculty of education programs. This may take the form of regularly scheduled class time, retreats, and online activities. Usually, teacher candidates would be given academic credit for taking this course. This course is normally taught with 36 hours of face-to-face teaching. Because of the communal nature of Catholic faith formation, no more than 25% of the course should be conducted online.

b) Elementary and Secondary Cohorts

Teacher candidates who are seeking qualification to teach in Elementary schools have certain differences in their formation requirements. In this course there is room for the course director to exercise discretion in identifying content and assessment/evaluation strategies and tools to meet the needs of cohort. Classes with Elementary school destined teacher candidates would focus on the Religious Education and Family Life Curriculum whereas those with Secondary school destined teacher candidates would focus on cross-curricula approaches.

c) Relationship to the Additional Qualifications Courses in Religious Education

Most Catholic School Boards mandate teachers to take the Additional Qualifications Course in Religious Education as a condition of employment. The *Foundations in Catholic Education* course is not a substitute for the Religious Education AQ course. The *Foundations in Catholic Education* course is normally taken while teacher candidates are in their regular teacher formation programs at Faculties of Education. Furthermore, topics may be introduced in Foundations in Catholic Education that are more deeply explored in the Religious Education Additional Qualifications Courses. This guideline is designed to resemble the Ontario College of Teachers in order to emphasize the continuity between this program and Additional Qualifications Courses.

Additional Qualifications Courses designed particularly for the Catholic School system by the Ontario College of Teachers:

- Schedule C: Teaching in the Catholic School System
- Schedule C: Adapting Curriculum for the Catholic School System
- Schedule D: Religious Education: Parts I, II and Specialist

¹ The general structure and some wording are taken from the Additional Qualifications Courses in Education documents written by the Ontario College of Teachers. This is done to show continuity between this course and Additional Qualifications Courses in Religious Education.

² Mission of the Institute for Catholic Education

³ See <http://www.oct.ca/standards/standards.aspx?lang=en-CA>

⁴ See <http://www.oct.ca/standards/framework.aspx>

⁵ CCCB, *On Good Soil*. Ottawa, CCCB Publications, 2011.

⁶ Taken from

http://www.cccbpublications.ca/site/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&category_id=87&product_id=1738&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=76&lang=eng