

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

ONTARIO
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GRADUATE
EXPECTATIONS
SERIES

A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People | Monograph #1 Spring 2020 | Published by Institute for Catholic Education

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations: A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People

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This monograph is the first in a series, “A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People.” It presents a framework for thinking about Catholic curriculum and illustrates how the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations can both inspire and support curriculum development.

“A Catholic curriculum assists young people to engage constructively with the wisdom of the faith and the community in a way that is meaningful to them, living as they do, in a particular cultural and historical setting with the life changes this setting has to offer”¹

A Vision of the Learner

The journey towards Christian maturity begins at birth and continues long after formal education has been completed and the Catholic school plays an important part in this life-long journey of becoming. “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 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.”²

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 mandate, the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGE) were designed to describe Catholic Education not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but also in terms of values, attitudes and actions formed by reason and faith.³ “Catholic schools are places where children and young people may find purpose in life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ. This provides a firm place to stand in shifting times.”⁴

Catholic Curriculum

The ultimate purpose of Catholic curriculum is to move the hearts of young people and nurture a meaningful relationship with Jesus. Developing this relationship creates the potential for students to acquire the wisdom and competencies needed to bring Jesus’ life and teachings alive in their complex world. Catholic curriculum inspires student agency and helps students to find their own voice and identity. Foundational to Catholic curriculum are the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs). The OCSGEs identify and describe

what our students need to know and be able to do in order to be well prepared for their future and these expectations serve as a framework for developing Catholic curriculum.

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations have been the vision of Catholic Schools over the past twenty years. Though our context in Catholic schools in Ontario has evolved, the OCSGEs continue to inspire our teaching, our curriculum and our pedagogy. Affirming our belief that every student can succeed and have a meaningful relationship with Jesus that significantly shapes their worldview and actions, the OCSGEs are at the core of learning in Catholic schools.

“Rooted in a distinctive Christian anthropology that is grounded in the Catholic tradition, the OCSGEs succeed in providing a language that brings clarity and a renewed sense of distinctiveness and purpose to teaching and learning in publicly funded Catholic schools. The seven overall, and fifty-two specific, expectations continue to provide a lens for Catholic educators to discern and interpret the signs of the times, supporting young people to make sense of their lives.”⁵ They influence all efforts to respond in a distinctly Christian manner to the challenges of the world. Most importantly, the expectations place both church teaching and the person of Jesus Christ into the entire curriculum and life of the school.



1. A Discerning Believer formed in the Catholic faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God’s presence through work, sacraments, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living.



2. An Effective Communicator who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively responding critically in light of gospel values.



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



3. Reflective, Creative and Holistic Thinker who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.



6. A Caring Family Member who attends to family, school, parish, and wider community.



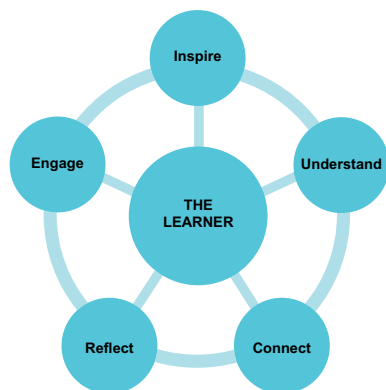
4. A Self-directed Responsible, Lifelong learner who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.



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

Thinking Framework

The OCSGEs can be used as a framework for curriculum development and as a source of inspiration, understanding, connection, reflection and engagement for the learner. The OCSGEs Thinking Framework below offers precise ways to consider and deepen students' understanding of how the life and actions of Jesus integrate into their own lives.



Inspire

In teaching about Jesus' life and message, we create learning opportunities that **inspire** students.

Understand

In coming to **understand** what was in Jesus' heart, why he was doing what he did and how his actions affected others, we help students to know and understand His unconditional love.

Connect

By encouraging students to make **connections** between their own life and Jesus, we support students in deepening their relationship with Him.

Reflect

By **reflecting** on their relationship with Jesus, students' personal experiences of relationship within the family and the community are enriched.

Engage

By **engaging** in a meaningful relationship with Jesus, students will be encouraged to take actions to improve the common good for themselves, as well as the world.

OCSGEs as a Framework for Curriculum Development




When used as a framework for designing curriculum, the Catholic Graduate Expectations support educators




in fulfilling two objectives: to nurture students as active contributors to the common good and to support ongoing pursuit of improved achievement and well-being. Today's learners need to exercise agency in their own learning and in their lives. "This agency or implied sense of responsibility to participate in the world and influence people events and circumstances for the better,"⁶ requires a guiding purpose. For Catholic students this guiding purpose is grounded in the belief that God loves them and that they are made in God's image and likeness.


The OCSGEs act as a framework to assist educators in making authentic curriculum connections to this guiding purpose. The expectations are student-centered rather than subject-centered and this approach has been the driving force behind school-based curriculum development in Ontario where educators readily respond to the emphasis on contextualizing learning. "We must grasp firmly the challenge of providing a kind of education whose curriculum will be inspired more by reflection than by technique, more by a search for wisdom than by the accumulation of information."⁷

The OCSGEs and Pedagogy

The Catholic Graduate Expectations support teaching pedagogy. The teaching learning dynamic engages learners and when successful, creates interest and curiosity. These expectations lay the foundation for the teacher to build Catholic curriculum that touches students' lives in relevant ways. When teachers connect curriculum to students' heads, hearts and hands, they are challenging learners to excel according to their own capabilities. These learning experiences help shape and deepen faith. "Helping students to create meaning in their lives is the backdrop of all teaching. It is important for students to find purpose and connect the curriculum content to themselves and their world."⁸ The chart on the following pages offers insights into the person of Jesus as brought to life through connecting the Thinking Framework to the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

Thinking Framework and OCSGE's	INSPIRE Jesus as role model	UNDERSTAND Understanding Jesus through the lens of heart, head and hands	CONNECT Connecting Jesus' life and teaching to my life experience	REFLECT Reflecting on my role in my family and community	ENGAGE Taking action to improve the common good for myself and the world
A Discerning Believer 	<p>Celebrates the signs and sacred mysteries of God's presence through word, sacrament, forgiveness, practice and moral living.</p> <p>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." (Witness of Faith)</p>	<p>Illustrates a basic understanding of the saving story of our Christian faith.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Seeks intimacy with God and communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship.</p> <p>Participates in the sacramental life of the Church and demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of the Eucharist in our Catholic story.</p> <p>Integrates faith with life.</p>	<p>Actively reflects on God's word as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.</p> <p>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. (Witness of faith)</p>	<p>Develops attitudes and values developed on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good.</p> <p>Respects the faith traditions, world religions, and the life-journey of all people of good will.</p>
An Effective Communicator 	<p>Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values.</p>	<p>Reads, understands and uses written material effectively.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values.</p>	<p>Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others.</p> <p>Writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada's official languages.</p>
A Reflective, Creative and Holistic Thinker 	<p>Recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges.</p>	<p>Adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience.</p>	<p>Creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good.</p>	<p>Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems.</p> <p>Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience.</p>	<p>Examines, evaluates, and applies knowledge of independent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just society and compassionate society.</p>

Thinking Framework and OCSGE's	INSPIRE Jesus as role model	UNDERSTAND Understanding Jesus through the lens of heart, head and hands	CONNECT Connecting Jesus' life and teaching to my life experience	REFLECT Reflecting on my role in my family and community	ENGAGE Taking action to improve the common good for myself and the world
A Self-directed Responsible Lifelong Learner 	Demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others.	Takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership.	Responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner. Sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life.	Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability.	Applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills. Participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle.
A Collaborative Contributor 	Develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society. Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals.	Thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work.	Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others. Applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.	Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others.	Works effectively as an interdependent team member. Finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good.
A Caring Family Member 	Relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner.	Recognizes human intimacy and sexuality as God-given gifts, to be used as the creator intended.	Values and nurtures opportunity for family prayer.	Values and honors the important role of family in society.	Witnesses to the family, school, parish and wider community through service.

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A Responsible Citizen 	Promotes the sacredness of life. Seeks and grants forgiveness.	Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions.	Accepts accountability for one's own actions. Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.	Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the worlds' people and cultures. Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society.	Contributes to the common good. Respects the environment and uses resources wisely. Witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.

Catholic Education in Today's World

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations manifest themselves as 21st century competencies and prepare students in Catholic schools to thrive in today's world. Teaching curriculum through the lens of the OCGSEs encourages our students to let Jesus into their lives in a very meaningful way. A curriculum built around Catholic values, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge, that requires students to interact with their learning through their heads, hearts and hands helps learners navigate the world they live in and find solid ground in an ever-changing context.

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and *The Thinking Framework* provide tools that help us bring church teachings and the life of Jesus together to nurture the development of a Catholic worldview in our students. This monograph sets the foundation for a series of monographs that is intended to provide an introduction to *A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People*. The monographs that follow will delve deeply into thinking about and understanding each specific OCSGE expectation

and how to bring it to life in classrooms and schools across Ontario.

References

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Monograph Series — A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People

Issue	Series	Monograph Title
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2	Spring 2020	<i>A Discerning Believer</i>
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