

# A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

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SERIES

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## A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People: A Collaborative Contributor

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*This sixth monograph in the series, A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People, focuses on how the graduate expectation, A Collaborative Contributor is foundational for Catholic curriculum.*

### A Collaborative Contributor

“As people, we are relational by nature. Catholic schools nurture the individual and shape the development of the individual within the meaningful context of community. Both educators and students bond together through a shared commitment to live and work in ‘right relationship.’ Educators support students in reaching their full potential and provide opportunities for collaborative joint work as a way of learning and growing, and a cooperative partnership is the ‘how’ of ‘right relationship’ for every context. A collaborative contributor “finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.”<sup>1</sup>

### Jesus as a Collaborative Contributor

Jesus invited people into a community of believers. His life provides countless examples of true collaboration. His way of interacting with people, his ability to listen, synthesize and ask meaningful questions and his unconditional acceptance of all reflects the hallmark of his community — love of God, self and neighbour. Jesus seeks to understand other people’s perspectives. He listens and responds with justice, love and compassion and builds an inclusive, hopeful community. He embraces everyone as members of God’s family and invites all to contribute their gifts, recognizing their skills and circumstance. His open-minded stance exemplifies genuine interest in others, honesty, personal authenticity and collaboration as a way of being and

serves as a model from which we can learn and to which we can aspire.

The work Jesus does in the first century to build community sets the stage for the work that needs to be done in our world today. The lesson to be learned is found not only in what Jesus says and does; it is the affirming way he makes people feel. His words, his deeds and his manner build trust with each person he encounters and when his spirit prevails in the lived experience of those who encounter him, our experience of community becomes complete.

### Meaning, Dignity and Vocation in Work

How does this first century lesson speak to our twenty-first century lives? The collaborative contributor is the worker of the future. Facing

issues and trends that will shape the world of work and profoundly impact the quality of their lives, workers must be flexible and adaptable as they address new and unexpected challenges posed by globalization; environmental security; digitalization; individual and societal well-being; global health challenges; excessive consumption and stark poverty. An integration of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, combined with collaboration and cooperation will inspire worthy work opportunities. The workers we need are lifelong learners who are provided with the tools and guidance to continue to learn and collaborate, throughout their lives. Through our shared efforts, we enrich our own lives and the lives of those around us and deepen our experience of authentic community.

### Catholic Curriculum

Catholic curriculum provides a meaningful system for students to discover how they see the world and make sense of it. As well, the curriculum extends opportunities to explore dimensions of Canadian culture and cultural narratives that include understanding the world of work. Educators are stewards who help students learn about the value and importance of work as a Christian vocation.



By constructing learning experiences that provide students with opportunities to think critically and dialogue meaningfully about the world of work, educators help students discover their responsibility to personally contribute to work that supports the common good. “Learning is the work of collaboration.”<sup>2</sup> Catholic curriculum provides opportunities to knowledge build and collaborate using head, heart and hands to deepen understanding about what it means to work effectively in a community. The integration of values, knowledge and experience is key.

### The Workers We Need

“It has never been more important than it is in the present, for students to learn to think for themselves — but not by themselves. This means being open, to deeply engaging with and building on the ideas of others but also being able to filter and assess these ideas in light of one’s own values and beliefs.”<sup>3</sup> The workers we need for the future need to be self-motivated and self-directed, and have the ability to collaborate, think, and work well with others. They need to be able to participate in “joint work which includes analysis, debate and challenge — what lies at the heart of impactful collaboration.”<sup>4</sup>

A Collaborative Contributor	Scripture	Educator Actions	Workers We Need
a) Works effectively as an interdependent team member.	If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)	Focus on student evidence as the center of collaborative work. Engage all voices in discussions. Build student commitment to take action.	Have social, emotional and intercultural skills. Value each person’s ideas and expertise. Take responsibility for personal and team success and productivity.

A Collaborative Contributor	Scripture	Educator Actions	Workers We Need
<b>b) Thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work.</b>	“...in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light.” (1Peter 2:9)	<p>Pose thoughtful questions to begin learning dialogues.</p> <p>Focus on understanding point of view and multiple perspectives.</p> <p>Encourage a growth mindset in work by valuing the importance and practice of using feedback.</p>	<p>Embrace complexity and solve problems creatively.</p> <p>Work effectively with different beliefs and values.</p> <p>Exhibit effectiveness in a variety of roles.</p>
<b>c) Develops one’s God-given potential and makes meaningful contribution to society.</b>	“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...” (Ephesians 2:10)	<p>Use a problem-solving process to work through challenging questions.</p> <p>Reframe complex problems to seek creative solutions.</p> <p>Scaffold learning to meet and support students where they are.</p>	<p>Are proactive and take risks.</p> <p>Have a heightened sense of purpose and agency.</p> <p>Are motivated to impact the world locally and globally.</p>
<b>d) Finds meaning, dignity, fulfilment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good.</b>	“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” (Colossians 3:23-24)	<p>Recognize the importance of personal effort and shared effort.</p> <p>Appreciate that humanity is relational by nature.</p> <p>Respect and care for each individual.</p>	<p>Bring their whole selves to the task.</p> <p>Are sensitive to the level of knowledge and feeling of others within the group</p> <p>Work interdependently to leverage team strengths.</p>
<b>e) Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others.</b>	“Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:16-17)	<p>Recognize individual capabilities, gifts and talents.</p> <p>Encourage willingness to take responsibility for personal action.</p> <p>Adapt strategies to meet a variety of learners’ needs.</p>	<p>Have a strong work ethic and are able to persevere.</p> <p>Seek understanding before moving to action.</p> <p>Filter and assess each other’s ideas respectfully and responsibly.</p>
<b>f) Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals.</b>	“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7)	<p>Distribute the work and the responsibility for leading.</p> <p>Share leadership to engage all in decision making.</p> <p>Use logic, analysis, sound evidence and Christian values to solve problems.</p>	<p>Are emotionally intelligent change-makers.</p> <p>Work toward the achievement of group goals and contribute to group well-being.</p> <p>Have the ability to turn ideas into action.</p>

A Collaborative Contributor	Scripture	Educator Actions	Workers We Need
<b>g) Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others.</b>	"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)	Nurture learners' self-awareness and honesty. Demonstrate ability to connect the dots and see the big picture. Be open to ideas, integrate diverse views, and invite engagement.	Consider and pursue novel ideas and solutions. Tackle real world issues that help develop humanity. Value equity and excellence.
<b>h) Applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.</b>	"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Colossians 3:17)	Build peace and justice in a service-oriented community. Care for student well-being. Nurture curiosity, reflection and action on ideas.	Understand how to improve contributions to the workplace. Have an entrepreneurial eye for economic and social opportunities. Advocate for support of the poor and disadvantaged.

## Effective Communication

Effective communication in schools requires active listening skills and dialogue. Dialogue promotes learning, deepens understanding about and between people, encourages divergent thinking and is a critical component of building trusting relationships. Authentic dialogue cannot take place without love, humility and faith. Love is a commitment to wanting the best for people, faith marks our belief in each other, and humility keeps us open to each other. The workers we need engage in dialogue founded on recognizing each other's goodness. When people are open to each other and believe in each other, trust is the natural outcome and relationships and communities grow. Listening is a key component of dialogue. Active

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## The Thinking Framework and A Collaborative Contributor

Following the example provided by Jesus, the collaborative contributor brings their 'whole self' to the community. The collaborative contributor is shaped to have confidence in their own voice as well as listening to and supporting everyone else's voice. The essence of collaborative thinking is the fruitful exchange of ideas and Jesus demonstrates this in his interactions. In Catholic schools the image of the collaborative contributor offers a model for a way of thinking and a way of being. The thinking framework below offers ways to consider and deepen understanding of how the life and actions of Jesus integrate into each person's role and provides opportunities for reflection on how Jesus inspires all to be collaborative contributors.

Thinking Framework and A Collaborative Contributor	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
<b>Student</b>	Lives with love of self and others in solidarity with all people.	Engages with culture to make sense of different points of view to deepen understanding.	Demonstrates interpersonal and team related skills in the classroom and beyond.	Interacts peacefully and cooperatively in a variety of community roles.	Works for human rights and justice for all and effectively communicates with diverse audiences.
<b>Educator</b>	Models cooperation and partnership and resolves conflict in positive ways.	Focuses on human values as reflected in the gospels.	Teaches a sense of agency and change-making.	Creates structures to build trust and joint work.	Designs opportunities for students to take on new and unexpected challenges.
<b>Catholic School Leaders</b>	Model love of God, self and neighbour and takes action on community problems.	Welcome others' perspectives and nurtures people's identity.	Demonstrate a humanizing worldview and value system grounded in faith and equity.	Practice inclusion, welcome and a non-judgemental approach.	Exemplify work as sharing in God's creative act.

## 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. Living in the 21st century requires students to be collaborative contributors. Foundational to living in the world today is the ability to work effectively and productively with others. Realizing that when God became man, he became a working man who valued the dignity and worth of work, students use Jesus' example to build their own work ethic and "develop their full moral, social and spiritual resources with the experience of steady, worthy work."<sup>6</sup> Learning to work together is imperative in a society where work is specialized, diverse, and extends past the local community. In a world filled with inequities, God's divine work comes to life through the collaboration, innovation and creativity of the worker who respects the rights of all, contributes to the common good, and lives as an agent of peace and justice in this world.

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