

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

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A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People: A Responsible Citizen

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*This eighth and final monograph in the series,
A Curriculum for the Heart of Young People, focuses on how the graduate expectation,
A Responsible Citizen is foundational for Catholic curriculum.*

A Responsible Citizen

“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.”¹ Now, more than ever, there is a need for responsible citizens who are committed to developing peace and justice for all. Making the world a better place begins with teaching students to relate to how Jesus lived in community and respected the dignity, equality and value of all people. Developing such a community in the classroom, where teachers are conscious of the “civic” aspect of their vocation and intentional about educating for the common good,² creates the foundation for students to understand, to take action and feel confident in their role as responsible citizens.

A Responsible Canadian Citizen

Today’s students are being educated for “jobs that have not yet been created, for technologies that have not yet been invented, to solve problems that have not yet been anticipated.”³ To successfully exercise their responsibilities as Canadian citizens in an uncertain future, like Jesus, they will need to respect and appreciate the ideas, perspectives and values of others and move forward grounded in their faith to face challenges. As Canada continues to be reshaped by increasing social and cultural diversity and reconciles with Indigenous peoples and people of colour, it is evident that social justice action,

adaptation and collaboration are essential in all environments. Canada’s future will also be reshaped as data is created, analyzed, and shared, holding out the promise of expansion and improved quality of life, while posing new challenges that require resilience, self-awareness, self-regulation and responsibility for one’s own actions.

Jesus as a Responsible Citizen

Jesus invited people into a community of believers. His life provides countless examples of respect for the dignity of others. Through all his personal interactions Jesus demonstrated what it means to

be ‘out there’ making things happen and welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with others. Jesus “truly listened to people - more than just hearing them but listening between the lines and with empathy — even when their perspectives were very different from his own”.⁴ His way of communicating provides a model for students to use as they grow in their understanding of what it means to be responsible citizens. In conversation, Jesus always invited others to express their point of view, appreciated their contributions, and affirmed the individual’s value as an equal member of the community be it the Samaritan woman at the well or Lazarus.

Contemporary society has exposed the need for an awareness that God’s commandment of love “is at once a personal and a social mandate. It cannot be limited to one-on-one relationships but demands that love does justice in the public realm as well.”⁵ 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.

Catholic Curriculum

A responsible citizen has a sense of agency, makes decisions and “takes action for oneself and others embracing the world both as gift and responsibility convinced that they can make a difference for life for all.”⁶ Catholic curriculum supports the learner in

understanding how to live life with a high standard of ethics, morality and accountability for their own actions. It plays a vital role in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive community that cares deeply for each other’s welfare. Students who are best prepared for the future are change-makers. They believe that they can have a positive impact on their future, understand others’ intentions, actions and feelings and anticipate the short and long-term consequences of what they do with an end goal of promoting the sacredness of life for all.



The Responsible Citizens We Need

In large parts of the world, “inequalities in living standards and life chances are widening, while conflict, instability and inertia, often intertwined with populist politics, are eroding trust and confidence in government itself.”⁷ In the face of this increasingly complex world, responsible citizens who are grounded in faith are called to embrace these challenges and take action for shaping communities that live the gospel message. The responsible citizens we need are committed to individual, communal and environmental well-being. The chart below invites reflection about what it means to be a responsible citizen.

A Responsible Citizen	Catholic Community	Educator Actions	Citizens We Need
a) Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions.	Connecting with one another is rooted in the relationship with God.	Engages students in the formation of a social life grounded in the faith tradition.	Engage with the world guided by an ethical compass that influences events and circumstances for the better.
b) Accepts accountability for one’s own actions.	Works to ensure peace and justice permeates every part of life.	Forms character by modeling honesty, loyalty, integrity and justice for all.	Anticipate the consequences of their actions and impact the community in a positive, responsible manner.

A Responsible Citizen	Catholic Community	Educator Actions	Citizens We Need
c) Seeks and grants forgiveness.	Teaches that each person is created to love, forgive and be forgiven as part of God's family.	Nurtures collaboration and partnership among learners to form them for 'right relationship' in every aspect of life.	"Dare to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it." ⁸
d) Promotes the sacredness of life.	Loving God, self and neighbour unconditionally is the essence of Jesus' community.	Encourages thoughtful reflection about Church teaching on sacredness of life.	Believe that "human beings are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness endowed with unique dignity." ⁹
e) Witnesses Catholic Social teaching by promoting equality, democracy and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.	Contributes to the community with the best possibility of oneself both humanly and spiritually.	Is intentional about educating for the common good.	Understand and support the needs and desires of others locally and globally.
f) Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures.	Believes that community is the primary context for becoming human.	Teaches the universality of God's love for all humankind.	Embrace different cultural perspectives and take action to support the respect for life, human dignity and the environment.
g) Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society.	Invites everyone into a community where all are equal, valued and respected.	Uses language that affirms the dignity, equality, and value of all people.	Navigate successfully across a wide variety of contexts reconciling tensions and dilemmas.
h) Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian Citizenship.	Upholds the dignity and rights of each person.	Encourages learners to understand what it means to live in a democracy and to use their voice to improve community.	Take action to create new ways of thinking and living while respecting each citizen's rights and responsibilities.

A Responsible Citizen	Catholic Community	Educator Actions	Citizens We Need
i) Respects the environment and uses resources wisely.	"...the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise." ¹⁰	Encourages an appreciation of the awe and wonder of nature and uses natural resources wisely.	Engage with the natural world, appreciating its fragility, complexity and value.
j) Contributes to the common good.	Works for a world of justice, love and compassion, peace and fullness of life for all.	Creates opportunities for students to commit, take action and support the common good.	Find balance between competing demands, and serve the needs of all.

The Thinking Framework and A Responsible Citizen

Teachers and school leaders model what it means to be responsible citizens grounded in the teachings of the Catholic tradition. Providing opportunities for students to contribute to the community by taking responsibility for participation and leadership in clubs and activities, teaches about the importance

of working together and valuing each other.

Learning about Jesus inspires students to be in right relationship with God and each other which is the cornerstone of authentic community. Clear expectations of what it means to be a community member helps everyone to understand how to contribute meaningfully to the common good.

Thinking Framework and A Responsible Citizen	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 as a citizen	ENGAGE Taking action to improve the common good for myself and the world
Student	Lives with authentic love of self and others.	Knows that there is one human family bonded together as children of God.	Is willing to learn from people whose perspectives on life and ways of thinking are different.	Is open to be changed by human knowledge and wisdom.	Functions in society as a source of unity and peace.
Educator	Never accepts any social situation as hopeless but ignites students to work for the common good.	Demonstrates how to work for human rights for all and never loses hope for the welfare of any individual.	Models that there is never "us and them" but only "we" bonded as one human family.	Teaches about all that is true, good and beautiful in the human community.	Takes the initiative to exercise hospitality and excludes no one.
The Catholic Leader	Promotes mutual support among all people and establishes norms of trust and risk-taking.	Models compassion and empathy with a global consciousness and concern for all.	Encourages and celebrates the diversity of the human family.	Welcomes growth and change and approaches complex problems with an open to learning stance.	Exercises a commitment to Catholic education and provides tools for all to be responsible Canadian citizens.

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 responsible citizens with both a global consciousness and a universal concern. Formed in a Catholic education, students learn that to be Catholic means to promote mutual support and celebrate diversity among all peoples and nations. Open to growth and life's possibilities, students understand that there are no limits to learning. Catholic teaching includes "appreciation for the discoveries of science, the creativity of the arts and the wisdom of humankind."¹¹ Welcoming discoveries and inventions, evaluating them by their potential to enhance human life, responsible Catholic citizens transform society and help shape the future.

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