

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

Curriculum Series | Monograph #8 Fall 2022 | Published by Institute for Catholic Education

Transferable Skills and the OCSGEs

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Catholic Education in Ontario strives to provide a faith-filled, holistic, student and Christ-centred education from kindergarten through grade twelve. We accept the challenge to prepare our students to become citizens in a world that is increasingly complex, incredibly interconnected, wonderfully diverse, and technologically driven. We strive to help develop students who are responsive, adaptive, and inquisitive in order to respond to a world that is fast-paced, continuously evolving, and often unpredictable while also caring for their spiritual development, equipping them to be discerning believers open to God's will for their lives.

The Ontario Ministry of Education mandates that transferable skills must be evident in all its curricula in order to prepare students not only for their first employment opportunity post graduation, but to equip them with the skills and attributes for positions not yet imagined. It is the responsibility of all educators to provide students with learning opportunities to acquire these transferable skills.

While all educators in Ontario design and deliver curriculum that develops these transferable skills, educators in Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools are committed to providing learning opportunities that focus on the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs). The

OCSGEs provide the distinctive context within which the transferable skills may be realized. "The OCSGEs were designed to provide a common language to bring a heightened sense of the distinctiveness and purpose of Catholic education in Ontario."ⁱ Natural alignment exists between the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and the transferable skills. The Catholic educator may feel confident in knowing that attention to the OCSGEs more than fulfills the requirements of the transferable skills. Whereas the transferable skills often focus on the skills themselves, focus on the OCSGEs "provide educators and students, parents and/or guardians, pastors and parishioners, trustees and administrators a distinctive perspective from which they can critically and constructively engage contemporary culture, as well as a tool to gauge the efforts of our Catholic schools to meet these aspirational goals."ⁱⁱ While the transferable skills often focus on the what and the how, the OCSGEs go beyond to focus on why. "Because the relationship between learning and believing is fundamental in Catholic education...the Catholic Graduate Expectations must focus not only on knowledge and skills but also on values and action."ⁱⁱⁱ This is the essence of Catholic Education.

What are the Transferable Skills*?

The Transferable Skills from the Ministry of Education, Ontario, are defined as “the skills and attributes that students need in order to thrive in the modern world.” They are based in research that includes input from employers. They aim to help students achieve success in the future.

The Skills	What it looks like for students
critical thinking and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to interpret and critically analyze information • Looking at real-world situations and making connections to their own lives • Coming to understand how to make informed judgements and take positive action
innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating leadership, initiative and imagination • Contributing solutions to economic, social and environmental problems • Learning to formulate insightful questions
self-directed learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about one’s own thinking and learning • Setting goals and working independently • Becoming “managers of the various aspects of their lives – cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual”
collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in teams and groups - taking on a variety of roles • Learning from others • Managing conflict
communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating effectively in different contexts, including online • Learning to ask questions, listen to a variety of viewpoints, and advocate for ideas • Learning about various languages and the cultural importance of language
global citizenship and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the interconnectedness of the political, environmental, economic and social forces at play in the world • Engaging in local and global initiatives to make a positive difference • Promoting human rights and democratic participation
digital literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to use digital tools appropriately and effectively • Being open to learning new digital tools and emerging technologies • Learning to manage their digital footprint ethically and safely

* adapted from the Ministry of Education, Ontario – “Transferable Skills” <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/transferable-skills>



How are they related to the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations?

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations were first developed in 1998. Over 20 years later, publicly funded Catholic Education in Ontario continues to take inspiration and direction from these seven expectations. They serve as a lens for Catholic educators who continually seek to discern and interpret the signs of the times and show young people the way to what St. John Paul II referred to as “the high ground”, where they find the meaning and purpose of their lives in their encounter with Christ. These expectations articulate who the Catholic learner is becoming and help us uphold the promise of Catholic Education “that this true encounter with Jesus can and does take place, each and every day, within our Catholic schools.”^{iv}

There are many areas of resonance between the OCSGE and the Transferable Skills. Here are just a few:

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations	What this looks like for students*	Which transferable skill or skills does this help develop
A Discerning Believer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> celebrates communion with God, others and creation understands one’s purpose in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out that call actively reflects on God’s Word and integrates faith with life develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic Social Teaching and acts to promote the common good 	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
An Effective Communicator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listens actively and critically in light of Gospel values reads, understands, and presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity integrates the Catholic faith tradition in the critical analysis of the arts, media, and technology 	Communication Digital Literacy
A Reflective, Creative and Holistic Thinker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate and solve problems adopts a holistic approach by integrating learning from various experiences applies knowledge of physical, political, socio-economic, and ecological systems for the development of a just and compassionate society 	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship
A Self-Directed, Responsible Lifelong Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respects the dignity and welfare of others demonstrates flexibility, adaptability, and Christian leadership sets appropriate goals and priorities reflects on one’s personal values, abilities and aspirations 	Self-Directed Learning

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations	What this looks like for students*	Which transferable skill or skills does this help develop
A Collaborative Contributor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finds meaning and dignity in the vocation of work which contributes to the common good exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals achieves excellence and integrity in one's own work and supports these in the work of others respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others 	Collaboration
A Caring Family Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> values and honours the role of the family in society ministers to family and the wider community through service relates in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner 	Global Citizenship and Sustainability
A Responsible Citizen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions seeks and grants forgiveness witnesses Catholic Social Teaching by promoting equality, democracy and solidarity for a just society respects the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society. respects the environment and contributes to the common good 	Global Citizenship and Sustainability Digital Literacy (see specifically the Digital Citizenship resources that relate all seven OCSGE to our Online Witness: https://iceont.ca/digital-citizenship/)

*This chart is a brief summary of the rich descriptions of the seven overall and 52 specific expectations that make up the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations. Further professional reading, classroom posters, online images, PowerPoints and student voice video resources can all be found at www.iceont.ca.

What does this mean for us in our roles in Catholic Education?

Each of us in Catholic Education has a crucial role to play in the student's journey from kindergarten through grade twelve. St. Paul reminds us, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ."^v It is the same with Catholic education. Our deepest hope is that our students become not only our alumni, but witnesses to their encounter with Christ in our midst.

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations are realized both within and outside of the classroom. They are evident in the resources chosen, in the speakers engaged, in the assemblies conducted, in the extra and co-curricular programs, in student and staff leadership opportunities, and in our celebrations. Let us take time to reflect:

My role	Suggestions of what it looks like:	Reflection to improve practise:
Teacher	<p>Teachers are charged with direct responsibility for the students in their care. Teachers fulfil the requirements of transferable skills and the OCSGE in various ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long and short range plans, and daily lessons provide opportunities to make the OCSGE explicit • naming expectations explicitly in my interactions with students • celebrating moments when students demonstrate these expectations • providing real-life examples of those who embody the expectations • using the expectations to highlight how faith is alive in our society, especially in changing and challenging times 	<p>In my practice as an educator, how can I assist my students appreciate that over the course of their Catholic educational journey, they are the embodiment, the expression and the celebration of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations?</p>
The Instructional Leader	<p>The principal is charged with responsibility for the overall program and its effective delivery in our Catholic schools. The principal assists teachers with providing a continuum of opportunities for students to grow in their awareness of and their ability to demonstrate the expectations. A few examples of the instructional leader fulfilling this responsibility include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nurturing a school environment that identifies, supports, and celebrates the expectations • selecting classroom and library resources that embody and exemplify the expectations • engaging with speakers and outside agencies that provide concrete examples for students • creating with school staff a continuum of experiences for students that allow them to realize the expectations as they mature and develop • supporting co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences that demonstrate the power and potential of the expectations 	<p>In my practice as an instructional leader, how can I support the importance of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations across all grades, all curricula, and all experiences both inside and outside of the classroom?</p>
The System Leader	<p>In this context, the system leader will refer to Supervisory Officers and Directors of Education, who have a crucial role in supporting the continuum of learning. A few examples of the system leader fulfilling this responsibility include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing professional development opportunities for staff that demonstrate the OCSGEs • offering mentorship opportunities across the organization that emphasize the expectations • ensuring that the recruitment programs, selection processes, and orientation programs focus on the importance of the expectations, and the dual nature of a Catholic education • implementing ongoing review of the expectations in action across the system, along the continuum from kindergarten through to graduation 	<p>In my practice as a system leader, how can I assist my students, families, and staff appreciate the essential dual nature of a Catholic Education, in the acquisition of skills and knowledge, and in the fulfillment of the mission of the Roman Catholic Church to nurture the faith development of the whole person for all students from enrolment through to graduation?</p> <p>In my practice as a system leader, how can I support all staff, families, and community partners charged with this collective responsibility?</p>

- i Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, Introduction, Third Reprint, 2019
- ii Ibid.
- iii Ibid.

- iv. Renewing the Promise – Page 15, Institute for Catholic Education 2018
- v. The Bible (NRSV) – Catholic Edition, 1 Cor 12:12

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