Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8

Religious Education

Part 1: Introduction

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, December 2012
Policy Document Structure

1. Introduction
   - New Evangelization: Context for Religious Education

2. Instructional Approach and Strategies
   Religious Education (RE) and Catechesis
   Methodology & Strategies for RE

3. The Program in Religious Education
   Hopes
   Curriculum Expectations
   Six Strands
4. Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement
   Expectations founded in OCSGEs
   Assessment *for* and *as* learning
   Evaluation
   Achievement (Levels 1 – 4)

5. Some Considerations for Program Planning in RE
1. Introduction
1.1 Transmission of the Gospel in the Third Millennium

Formerly Christian Groups/Societies need for a “new evangelization”

Gospel – Culture Split
- impacting Church’s ability to promote Christian values in society, culture
- weakening practice of the faith,
- challenging faith’s promotion in parish, school

Church asked to embrace new evangelization in new millennium:
“...to reach out to those Christians whose lives are becoming more removed from Christ and the Gospel.”
1.2 The New Evangelization

New Evangelization includes preaching, catechesis, liturgy, the sacramental life, popular piety and the witness of a Christian life. (p. 2)

- Promotion of enculturated faith (expressed in ways meaningful to each culture)
- Responsibility of all Baptised
- Promotes laws and institutions in harmony with Christ’s teachings
- Evangelizes individuals, cultures, societies
- Mission focused on dialogue with other religions; recognition of Spirit at work within them.
- Ardent, courageous proclamation of Christ’s Gospel
- Adaptation to needs of times
- Authentically teaching Church’s doctrine

(P. 2 Adapted from John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio)
Opening *court of Gentiles*

to allow all nations to know God

(Pope Benedict XVI)

**Bold, confident Dialogue**

with changing sectors of human life,
+ preceded by self-evaluation, purification
+ based on personal encounter with Christ and his Gospel.
+ requires **new approaches** to evangelization, maintaining Church’s missionary identity as “domestic Church” and “People of God.”
1. 2 The New Evangelization Cont’d

- No part of Church exempt
- Synonymous with mission
- Opposite of self-sufficiency, status-quo operations
- Particular Urgency for entire Church, primarily those from traditional Christian countries who have drifted from Church

This challenge of the new evangelization is applicable to the parish and the Catholic school in Ontario. (p. 3)
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School

**Courageous Renewal**
- in parish & Catholic school

**Called for to evangelize families, Children, youth in Christian faith**

**Stages/essential moments of evangelization**

- *missionary activity* toward non-believers and the indifferent
- *initial catechetical activity* for those choosing Gospel or needing to complete/modify initiation
- *pastoral activity toward persons of mature faith* in heart of Christian community.
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

Identify “SOIL OF THE BELIEVER” Essential

Nature of students

Student and family culture

Powerful influences on student experience, values, beliefs
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

**Soil of the Believer (cont’d)**

**Social, cultural, civil realities**
- **globalization** as ideology
- **technology** advances
- **social communications**

**Social, cultural, civil realities:**
positive aspects – democracy, publicly funded education, protection of family, multi-faith/cultural communities of welcome, promotion of common good…

**Immediacy of world events, cultural ideologies in our homes**
without legitimate critique, prudent explanation, potentially a negative influence on child/youth Christian moral development

Increasing over-activity, busy-ness of life
Exaggerated focus on acquiring/consuming can distort our understanding of dignity of human person. Impacts individual rest, cultural artistic expression, family spiritual needs, religious practices

**At times, these societal influences have overshadowed the importance of the religious formation of children and weaken the necessary relationship of baptised children and adults with the Church (i.e., parishes)** p. 5
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

New Challenges for Education
(from without: new socio-political context)

- **Crisis of values:** secularism, social media influence, subjectivism, moral relativism, nihilism

- **Globalization:** communications, developments in science/technology, economic, civic, political life.

- **Multiculturalism:** massive migration, multi-ethnic and religious societies.
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

New Challenges for Education
(from within: arising from new socio-political context)

- Broadened educational scope

- More complex, specialized curriculum

- New content, skills, models to embrace, to ensure student learning meets standardized models.
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

Catholic Schools and Church: History of collaboration, shared responsibility

Same Challenges to Religious Education in the New Millennium

Collaboration in family pastoral care, addressing needs of less fortunate

Shared responsibility for society’s social, cultural development

“The new millennium is challenging the Catholic school to a courageous renewal ‘not merely one of adaptation, but of missionary thrust and the duty to evangelize.’” (Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. No.3) (p. 5)
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

**Fundamental Characteristics of Catholic Schools Necessary for Effective Educational Activity in Church and Society**

- Ecclesial and cultural identity
- Service to society
- Mission of education as a work of love
- Place of integral human education in which Christ is the foundation

(Congregation for Catholic Education: *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. No. 4)
1.3 Evangelization, Culture and the Catholic School (cont’d)

**Church & Catholic Schools in Collaboration**

- **Discernment needed to identify educational and spiritual resources within Church’s commitment to addressing future challenges in education so that the “ecology of the human person” is constructed. (p. 6)**

- **Role of Catholic schools “can make a real contribution in promoting authentic education, instruction in the faith, and in witness to the common good”, in collaboration with its various communities (e.g., parents, Church, parishes, teachers and educators).**
1.4 Evangelization Within the Ecclesial Community of the Catholic School (cont’d)

The Catholic School

A challenged and compassionate meeting place, an educational ecclesial community” receiving young people experiencing “difficulties of the present time.”

coming from non-practicing families indifferent to Christian faith

lack religious or moral formation.

struggling to learn

incapable of self-sacrifice or perseverance

lacking human strength of diligent effort

lack authentic models to guide them (often in family)

Pedagogical Tiredness

Difficulty being teacher and educator

A unique potential role in New Evangelization.
1.4 Evangelization Within the Ecclesial Community of the Catholic School (cont’d)

Educational Activity

Heart of Christ’s teaching

Promotion of Human Person in their material & spiritual needs

Primary Goal of Catholic School

Pedagogical Instruction

Curriculum

Christian Concept of Human Person and their Integral Development
1.4 Evangelization Within the Ecclesial Community of the Catholic School (cont’d)

Complexity of Modern world

Growing Secularity of Values

Weakening Catholic school’s...
- Ecclesial identity
- Relation to parish

Nevertheless, Catholic schools are still:
• A genuine instrument of pastoral ministry
• Participants in Church’s evangelizing mission
• A privileged environment of Christian education
  • A genuine experience of Church
• Involved in care/attention for society’s weakest, marginalized; those suffering from material and spiritual poverty.
1.4 Evangelization Within the Ecclesial Community of the Catholic School (cont’d)

Catholic Schools by virtue of cultural identity & educational nature at public service of society

Synthesis between culture and faith
One of Catholic education’s most significant elements and potential contributions

Knowledge acquired in light of faith becomes a Christian vision of world, of life, culture, history

Public Character and denominational curriculum fulfills public role ensuring cultural and educational pluralism, parental wishes

Image: www.faithinourfuture.ca
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education

The Catholic school’s educating community requires...

Catholic school staff who strive for authenticity, exemplary character through dedication to truth of Christian faith we teach.

Modern [persons] listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. (Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41)

How:

+ Church must provide, ensure necessary support & formation
  - for all involved in work of Religious Education
    (teachers, parents, educators, catechists, priests, bishops)
+ Formation & Pastoral Care that is spiritual in nature: evangelized must receive and accept evangelization

This spiritual renewal is only possible through a personal encounter and lived communion with Jesus Christ.
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education

**Teachers**
- place of privilege, great responsibility to participate in NE

**Parents**
- primary, natural responsibility to support children through school & parish

Attention to *relationships* among Catholic school educating community
Needed to ensure achievement of goals: *education, transmission of the faith*

**Parents and Guardians**
*First educators* in children’s ...
*practice of faith*
*formation to receive Good News of Gospel*

**Transmission of the faith when children and parents together practice...**

Regular participation in sacraments, esp. Sunday Mass

Ritual of daily prayer: morning, mealtime, bedtime
Parents can encourage and help children to understand better their Catholic faith, and collaborate with teachers to help it deepen: esp. through familiarity with Religious Education program, commitment to children’s sacramental preparation, involvement in parish-school liturgies, attendance at parent meetings; participation in school council “invaluable.” (p. 8)
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education

The Parish – Christian Community

- Primary location where “Christian community is formed and expressed.” (GDC 257)
  - First catechetical task of parish priest and leaders:
    Fostering a “sense of common responsibility for Catechesis in the Christian community.” This includes “recognition and appreciation for Catechists and their mission.” (GDC 225)

**The Parish Priest**

- Tasked with...
  “integrat[ing] catechetical activity into his program of community evangelization and foster the link between catechesis, sacraments and liturgy.” (GDC No. 225)

Important part of this role fulfilled by working to “create a bond of cooperation and friendship with all members of the school community”

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![Diagram showing the roles and responsibilities in religious education, including a central node for "Working to create bond of cooperation, friendship with all members of school community," and branches to Students, Support Staff, Principal, Parents, and Teachers.](#)
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education

Support for Principal as spiritual leader of school

Support for teachers as educators in faith, by sharing resources, knowledge, expertise.

Spiritual, religious support, guidance to help students, staff grow in faith understanding, commitment.

Pastor: Working to create bond of cooperation, friendship with all members of school community

Create opportunities for continued evangelization of parents, teachers to support them as religious educators, witnesses to the faith.

Encouraging collegial effort of parish catechists, school teachers in student sacramental preparation.

Providing opportunities for staff, student participation in liturgical celebrations, incl. Mass, other prayers and devotion.

Participation in Religious Education class to draw links between program and Gospel (e.g., Sunday rdgs); thus contributing to student faith development.

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1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

**Lay Pastoral Ministers (Catechists)**

- **Catechesis to children**
- **Trained lay pastoral ministers:** Assisting priest as link between school and parish
- **Assisting schools with sacramental preparation**
- **Youth and adult catechesis**
- **Where no chaplain present, possibility to:**
  - Lead retreats, participate in Religion class discussion, help create, celebrate liturgies, represent parish at school council meetings

**Limitations of time, available staff challenge priests in meeting needs of community (sacramental, liturgical, catechetical)**

**Great need for parish-based catechesis for children, youth ministry for pre-teens to bring religious education to life.**
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

*Parish Leaders and Laity*

Men, women whose talents can contribute to child, youth faith development through...

Many learning experiences to help enrich Religious Education programs in Catholic schools.

**Good communication between school and parish pastoral council** important to foster this partnership.
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

**SCHOOL – PRINCIPAL AND TEACHERS**

- **Catholic School Participant in Church’s pastoral, evangelizing mission.** Important place of human, Christian formation.
- **Catholic School Leadership**
  - Tasked with establishing conditions for student success.
- **Church’s Pastoral, Evangelizing Mission**
  - Partnership offers “living & genuine witness of the faith.”
- **Catholic School Leadership**
  - Ensuring Rel Ed Progs
    - promote religious knowledge, skills
    - help deepen student relationship with God, life of faith.
- **Catholic School Participant in Church’s pastoral, evangelizing mission.**
  - Close association of parish and Catholic school at service of parents.
- **Partnership provides for student educational & spiritual needs.**
  - Cooperatively work to prepare students to participate in sacramental life of Church.
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

The Principal

Catholic School Principal
Ensures
- Rel Ed Prog. Taught each year
- Consistency between program and school life
  - distinctly Christian ethos in school and Rel Ed prog.

- Allocates time required to teach Rel Ed Program
- Supports teachers in delicate or difficult situations
- Provides chaplaincy leadership
- Provides ongoing teacher training, resources for planning Rel Ed programs
- Ensures integration of Catholic teaching across curriculum
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

The Principal (Cont’d)

Catholic School Principal
Ensures
- Rel Ed Program Taught each year
- Consistency between program and school life
- Distinctly Christian ethos in school and Rel Ed program

Promotes, maintains good communication with stakeholders (esp. parents, pastors, catechists)

Provides opportunity for parish-school relationships by sharing effective practices, new Rel Ed resources

Invites parents to deepen involvement in parish community and its social, ecclesial activities

Helps coordinate student sacramental preparation
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

**Teachers**

**Primary Role in Religious Education**
- Transmission of knowledge about the faith.

**Secondary Role in Religious Education**
- Support catechetical efforts of parish and home.

**Participating in work of Church as Ministers of the Word**
- Teaching on behalf of Christian community

**Transmitters of the faith**
- Helping prepare young people to be “Clothed in Christ”, “Salt for the earth” “Light for the world.”

**Engaging in Respectful Dialogue with students on meaning of life, on the way to happiness revealed by Jesus Christ**

**Teaching**
- Content of the faith
- With witness of life to help students discover what it means to live their faith.

**Witnesses of Gospel Values**

**Helping students relate knowledge and skills to everyday life.**

**Encouraging critical look at the world, commitment to lived witness to God’s Kingdom of justice, peace, joy.**

**Accompanying students as brothers and sisters in faith, with prayer and support in their faith journey.**
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

**Teachers (cont’d)**

- **Assisting in Christian moral formation (of conscience)**
- **Supporting, mentoring young people in their faith as they strive to understand the value of Christianity and seek to integrate it into their daily lives.**
- **Teaching content of the faith, relating it to students’ lives.**
- **Witnessing to Gospel –**
  - in relationships with students,
  - in participation in Church’s sacramental life of (esp Sun. Eucharist)
  - in ministries of Church (e.g., Lector, choir, St. Vincent de Paul Society)
- **Speaking with integrity on behalf of faith community, while being faithful to Church teaching, Gospel**
- **Teaching content of the faith, relating it to students’ lives.**

**Teachers transmitting the faith to students**
Teachers (cont’d)

Religious Education is therefore more than teaching life skills or sharing information. It is participation in the essential mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News and to empower young people to live out their baptismal commitment in a mature way. (p. 11)
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

**The Student**

The heart resounds with the Word and welcomes, makes a home for Jesus.

Student is *Main Protagonist* (not passive agent) in catechetical process

Our intelligence is enlightened by the Holy Spirit so that the Word can speak to the heart.

Clothed with Christ at Baptism and opened by grace to receive gift of Spirit.

Gifts of Spirit received in each one’s thirst for happiness, questions, life experience.

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Gifts of Spirit received in each one’s thirst for happiness, questions, life experience.
1.5 Roles and Responsibilities in Religious Education (cont’d)

The Student (cont’d)

Important to Teach Students:
- responsibility for learning
- *self* as architect of success
  * with parental/teacher patience, attention, encouragement

Religious Education Helps students develop attitudes toward freedom, responsibility, desire for truth and goodness, openness to dialogue involving faith and reason in the search for meaning, purpose, understanding in life.
Successful mastery of a discipline “requires a sincere commitment to work and the development of skills of cooperation. ...students should actively pursue opportunities outside the classroom to extend and enrich their understanding of [any discipline].”

“Teachers rely heavily on the efforts of parents to form positive character in their children and to provide opportunities for enrichment of the religious experiences provided in the school. Here too the parish can play a significant role by encouraging active participation of children and youth in the life of the parish.” (p. 12)
Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document
Grades 1-8 Religious Education

Section 1 Summary

- **Context**: Culture split from Gospel
  - needing New Evangelization (NE)
- **New Evangelization** needed for Parish and Catholic school
- **Evangelization** includes preaching, catechesis, liturgy, the sacramental life, popular piety and the witness of a Christian life. (p. 2)
- **NE is**
  - missionary (toward non-believers and indifferent)
  - catechetical (toward believers)
  - pastoral (toward mature in faith)
- **Identifying Soil of the Believer** is Essential to Evangelization
  - i.e., pos and neg forces influencing Church members’ life of faith:
    - Globalization; advances in technology, social comm.
Section 1 Summary (Cont’d)

• **Identifying *Soil of the Believer* (cont’d)**
  - social influences at times overshadowing importance of children’s religious formation, relationships of baptized with the parish/Church.

• **New Challenges to Education**
  - from without: crisis of values, globaliz’n, multiculturalism
  - from within: broadened ed. scope; more complex, specialized curriculum; new content, skills models to embrace

• **New Millennium challenges Catholic school to a “*courageous renewal*” via missionary thrust and duty to evangelize.**

• **Church and Catholic school are collaborators.**
  – Catholic school *an educational ecclesial community*;
  – educating human, spiritual needs (integral development);
  – instrument of Church’s pastoral ministry;
  – participant in Church’s evangelizing mission;
  – *genuine experience of Church*;
  – involved in care for society’s weakest, marginalized.
  – foster *synthesis* of culture and faith, Christian vision of life and world
Section 1 Summary (Cont’d)

• Roles/Responsibilities in Religious Education:
  – Church: must provide **support, formation** (evangelization for evangelizers)
    Note: renewal only possible through encounter, communion with Jesus Christ.
  – Parents: **first educators in faith** through life of faith, witness of love, prayer, sacramental life, involvement in parish life.
  – Priests: linking catechesis, sacraments, liturgy; **fostering cooperation, friendship, support, evangelization** among all members of Catholic school community.
  – Catechists: **link between school and parish**, greatly needed for parish catechesis, youth ministry; can provide chaplaincy-related help.
  – Laity: parish leaders and laity can **contribute time, talents, expertise to life of school** – relationship requires good communication between school and parish pastoral council.
  – Principal: ensures Rel Ed programming delivery, consistency with school life; fosters relationship, collaboration with parents, parish.
  – Teachers: + Primary role in RE: transmission of knowledge of the faith;
    + Secondary role in RE: support catechetical efforts of parish, home;
    teach on behalf of Christian community as **Ministers of the Word**.
    + Teachers witness, support faith, sacramental life in relationship with students, helping them relate the faith to life experience.
    * RE is participation in Church’s mission to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel and to empower young people to live out their baptismal commitment in a mature way.
Section 1 Summary (Cont’d)

– Students:  
  + Main protagonists in catechetical process, not passive agents, by welcoming Word of God into heart, being clothed with Christ at Baptism, enlightened by gifts of Holy Spirit at Confirmation.  
  + Students must be taught responsibility for learning and success with proper attitude toward freedom, responsibility, dialogue in their search for meaning, purpose, understanding in life.  
  + Commitment to work, cooperation skills development, pursuit of extension and enrichment opportunities outside classroom are encouraged.  
  + Parents, parish play significant role in...  
    - enriching religious experiences provided at school,  
    - encouraging active participation in life of parish.