

# The Catholic Nature of our Schools

A Report from the Director of Education,  
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March 2010

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#### Commentary

From time-to-time, the Director is required to present to the board on various topics. While many topics come before the trustees for either deliberation or information, the topic of Catholicity in our schools is an essential part of the foundation of this school board and worthy of regular commentary. This report should be viewed as a “dashboard” observation, meaning it is a gauge to reflect what is taking place in Dufferin-Peel. It provides a view of the state and health of Catholicity in our board. The report also contains examples of concrete actions that our schools take to demonstrate our Catholic nature. Using this document as a foundation, staff will soon present a “best practices” report that will illustrate the many good things that occur in our schools, so that other schools can share and benefit as well.

The document is divided into the following sections: Curriculum, In-service/Professional Development and Organization.

#### Curriculum

“Genuine human and communitarian progress is at the centre of the Catholic school’s academic nature. Seeking to be the very best academically is not a distraction from the school’s purpose, rather not to be the very best in its academic program is to deny the Catholic school’s essential character and role in the progress of culture.”

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*

- ▶ Dufferin-Peel offers five secondary Religion credits, approved by the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), and the use of the ‘Born in the Spirit’ and the ‘Fully Alive’ programs in our elementary schools. All courses are supported to present a Catholic perspective.
- ▶ In conjunction with the local pastor, the board supports the continual development of pastoral plans in our elementary and secondary schools. These plans, which provide for liturgical activities and address the liturgical seasons in our church and schools, remain one of the most vibrant and important components of planning.
- ▶ The promotion of Catholic graduate expectations continues to be the focus of our program offering and delivery.
- ▶ The Virtues Program continues to be an ongoing focus in Dufferin-Peel schools. In many of our schools, monthly virtue assemblies are held where students are provided with examples of the virtue being celebrated. Our Virtues Program is well known across Canada and the United States, and has been a major success.
- ▶ Dufferin-Peel will take a lead role in the revision of specific units of the Grade one to eight, *Born in the Spirit Program*, which is used as a catechetical tool in our schools.

- ▶ A percentage of the budget has been allocated for Adult Faith and Student Faith development in all schools.
- ▶ The ICE (Institute for Catholic Education) civics unit for all Grade ten students will be implemented in September 2010.
- ▶ A Dufferin-Peel-developed Community Studies unit for Grades 5 and 10, which will reflect the contribution that Catholics have made in the development of the Region of Peel and Dufferin County, will be released this year.
- ▶ We continue to support Holocaust remembrance and ecumenical activities at our elementary and secondary schools.
- ▶ We encourage and promote partnerships with Catholic agencies including the Knights of Columbus (Keeping Christ in Christmas), the Catholic Women's League (Public Speaking Contest), Development and Peace (social justice awareness projects and conference).
- ▶ Mandatory retreat programs for secondary students are financially supported, in part, by the board.
- ▶ We support a variety of social justice experiences for our students, including conference speakers and awareness trips to the developing world.
- ▶ We continue to develop support material for Eastern Rite students at St. Sofia School.
- ▶ We introduced common content in all student agendas that reflect Dufferin-Peel virtues and Catholic teachings.
- ▶ A consistent ethic of life, from conception to natural death, is supported and promoted through funding for students to attend the March for Life in Ottawa, and the engagement of pro-life speakers in our schools.
- ▶ We are introducing a series of posters that celebrate historical and contemporary Catholic "nation-builders" who have helped shape our country.
- ▶ Consistent with Gospel teachings, we have revised our Safe Schools policies, are developing Hallway Response Protocols, are revising and updating TIC and TAR manuals, School Climate Surveys and related Safe School Procedures. We also provide inclusive education training relative to same-sex orientation and support systems for students.
- ▶ We are blessed by the overwhelming generosity of our students and staff in responding to the Haiti tragedy. It is worth noting that our school board has been involved with specific projects in Haiti well before the disaster as a means of encouraging cultural understanding and support for various projects. Our total raised, not including personal contributions by staff is \$293,115.61, an outstanding response to a tragic situation.
- ▶ Our schools are strongly encouraged and supported to become actively involved in Catholic Education Week and encourage our principals to speak in local parishes during the launch of this celebratory week.

## Inservice/Professional Development

“Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and a communion with people, events and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others.”

*The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education  
The Catholic School*

- ▶ Inservices have taken place with our principals, local pastors and local bishops regarding the new sacramental preparation guidelines. Those guidelines shape and give direction to the catechesis that we provide in our schools.
- ▶ All Grade 4 teachers and all second year elementary teachers in our system have been inserviced relative to the Religious Education and Family Life Curriculum.
- ▶ We support the inservicing of Faith Ambassadors whereby at least one teacher from the elementary and secondary school meet at the board level to be inserviced on a monthly basis. Following the inservice, the Faith Ambassador returns to his/her school and supports the faith life of that school.
- ▶ We offer a graduate course of Theology in partnership with St. Michael's College.
- ▶ We support the annual *When Faith Meets Pedagogy* educational conference, which hosts over 150 teachers annually. Over 200 students attend the Youth Forum component of the conference.
- ▶ We supported the annual Theology Forum, attended by 50 secondary religion teachers and chaplaincy team leaders.
- ▶ Dufferin-Peel offers the OCSTA/OECTA additional qualification courses in Religious Education for teachers as well as Part I & II in the specialist program.
- ▶ We support inservice and training for extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers to assist in school Masses.
- ▶ Dufferin-Peel has partnered with St. Augustine Seminary in the establishment of a Catholic Update Program, consisting of five nights of training for teachers, with specific themes related to Catholic education and Catholic faith.
- ▶ We provide inservice for administrators on Catholic education history.
- ▶ Through St. Augustine Seminary, we will be providing a series of professional development workshops to take place next year. We established the first administrators retreat in Lent of this year.
- ▶ A certification program was offered this year through the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.
- ▶ The board supported the inservicing of administrators and the distribution of materials that support cultural diversity in our community.
- ▶ Catholic Education Week support material from OCSTA was distributed to all schools.
- ▶ NTIP mentor training was presented from a Catholic faith perspective, using biblical mentors.

## Organization

“Humankind judges rightly that by intellect one surpasses the material universe, for one shares in the light of the divine mind. By relentlessly employing ones talents through the ages, one has indeed made progress in the practical sciences, technology and liberal arts.”

*The Church in the Modern World*

- ▶ The board supported the allocation of a percentage of the library budget for the purchase of resources to reflect the Catholic nature of our schools, e.g., literature resource material on saints, sacramental liturgical celebration and church history.
- ▶ We ensure that schools dedicate a portion of their funds for faith initiatives i.e., visible creation, visible art creation of sacred spaces, liturgical celebrations, and social justice initiatives.
- ▶ A comprehensive Strategic Review that surveyed priests and our parent community on a variety of issues, many dealing with Catholic Education, was completed. Results indicated overwhelming support from the parent community on the direction that this board is moving and there was particularly strong support for those questions related to Catholic Education and the action that the board has taken.
- ▶ We have supported and attended annual meetings with both Archbishop Collins and Bishop Boissonneau to discuss issues related to Catholic Education at parish and community events.
- ▶ Dufferin-Peel has supported the creation of ShareLife Representatives in schools who would act as agents to communicate staff activities regarding ShareLife and the inservicing of administrators on Family Life, Religious Education Program.
- ▶ We have secured the full-time release from teaching for Chaplaincy Leaders in each secondary school, consistent with ACBO recommendations.
- ▶ Chaplaincy Leader Guidelines, as established by the ACBO have been implemented.
- ▶ We created the position of Priest-in-Residence at the Catholic Education Centre. Responsibilities include the weekly celebration of Mass, assisting in liturgical events, liaising with parishes and assisting with staff and students’ bereavement needs.
- ▶ Dufferin-Peel is an active participant in the Workers Consortium that vets school uniforms being manufactured in a non-exploitive environment. We have also created a committee with students, and teachers. Board representation is provided to govern the committee.
- ▶ The participation of Priest-in-Residence, Father Jim Roth, in regular Zone Meetings, is provided on behalf of the board.
- ▶ Support is provided to our Chaplaincy Leaders for monthly inservices related to their ongoing formation.

- ▶ Approval was given for the provision of full-time Chaplaincy leaders at our two new secondary schools beginning with Grades nine and ten at St. Roch and Cardinal Ambrozic in 2009 and St. Michael's in 2010.
- ▶ We have implemented all legislation with the integration of Catholic values and perceptions related to Safe Schools, Equity/Diversity Initiatives, and Human Rights.
- ▶ We have provided ongoing support for ShareLife and United Way as two outreach groups for our community. In addition, schools are encouraged to actively participate in local charities, such as food banks, that serve our community.
- ▶ Regular newsletter inserts are provided to our community and workforce relative to Catholic Education.
- ▶ A trustee retreat has been established, allowing trustees to reflect on the spiritual nature of their vocation.

*JBK/2010*