

SHARING OUR JOURNEY

TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION IN OUR CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY



*WORKING DOCUMENT
2002 - 2006*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Strategic Design Process entitled “*Renewing Our Mission*” consulted our school community and the wider community during 105 community facilitation sessions held between November 2000 and March 2001. Over three thousand people provided input into the shaping of our strategic direction. Between April 2001 and February 2002 the writing team has consolidated the input and vetted their product through a reflection process and validation process with internal and external stakeholders. At this point, the Working Draft is ready for distribution to all.

Thank you to all schools, system sites and community groups that so generously provided input during the Strategic Design Process. Special thanks to all system facilitators, staff, and validators who contributed to the creation of *Sharing Our Journey*.

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God, Our Companion on the Journey

Wise and Faithful God, you lovingly abide in our depths.
Awaken us to the beauty within and guide our steps as we
journey together in faith.

Clothe us in strength and humility - strength to persevere when
faced with challenges, and humility to admit wrongdoing when
we have hurt others.

Risen Lord, may we be bearers of Your light, peace, and justice
as we strive to be servant leaders in Catholic education.

Help us be compassionate people of vision who care for and
inspire others.

Liberating Spirit, thank you for the many gifts freely given. For
the gift of our students, graced and precious creations entrusted
to us. May we honour and respect them, guide them and care for
them.

Source of Transformation, fill our being with Your love. Bless
our shared journey. May the conviction of our hearts and the
witness of our lives transform the world.

Amen

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Sharing Our Journey is the fruit of a year long, meaningful dialogue with all the partners in the community about our beliefs, values, and shared vision for the Waterloo Catholic District School Board. I thank all the community partners, parents, students and staff whose thoughts and ideas have been synthesized into this inspirational direction-setting document.

Sharing our Journey is the touchstone – the North Star – for everyone and for everything we do in this Catholic educational community.

Our beliefs provide the underlying values. They also serve as our decision screen for all decisions. **Our purpose** - why we exist as a Catholic School System - is expressed succinctly in our Mission statement. **Our guiding principles** describe how we interact with each other and as an organization in the public arena. **The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations** identify the image of our students and the skills they will have obtained that enable them to live and to contribute positively in an ever-changing world.

And finally, our document describes **our shared vision** – a compelling portrait of who and what we want to be when our schools and our system are operating at their very best in accordance with our deepest aspirations and faith-filled purpose.

I invite you now to personally and communally reflect upon and embrace this document. Examine your own beliefs, guiding principles, expectations for learners, and vision for the future in light of the words of our community. Determine how you can personally appropriate *Sharing Our Journey*. Examine your own sphere of influence to understand how you can personally convey even just one element of the vision to student's lives. It will be the combined synergy of all staff, students and community members that will bring life to the ideal. Together we will find the energy to create and sustain this shared vision that will inspire all of us to transform the world in love and justice as faithful disciples of the Risen Lord.

Judy Nairn
Chair of the Board
1999-2001

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Sharing Our Journey is the best portrait we have of our shared belief, mission and vision. The communal process of dialogue established in “*Renewing Our Mission*” provided clarity about the purpose and vision of our Catholic education system and validated our worldview that “Catholic education is nothing less than a truly holistic formation of persons who will be living witnesses of the faith.” Our mission is attained when we manifest our system as a Catholic community of learners. We demonstrate our mission when we engage in sustained, substantive school improvement and student growth that is reflective of a Catholic professional learning community.

So what is to be done with our newly expressed shared vision? The “heavy lifting” begins as we collectively align all facets of the organization toward achieving this vibrant shared vision – one that articulates student formation and personal transformation. To do this requires all of us to be committed to our shared vision and to identify goals with targets and timelines that establish priorities.

Sharing Our Journey resulted from a collective dialogue across the community and I suggest that its appropriation and attainment can only occur when the system is working collaboratively, in a spirit of collective inquiry towards continuous improvement and refinement. This is no easy task. It requires all of us to consider “re-culturing” our organization to really understand the moral purpose of education in making a difference in the lives of all students. Understanding change, building relationships, honouring the journey and pursuing coherence will become key determinants of our success.

Our collective role – as staff, trustees, parents, and community partners – is always to ensure that we ourselves continually engage in learning if our learners are to benefit. As the late Archbishop Oscar Romero reminds us, our role is to plant seeds. “We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold the future promise. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are prophets of a future not our own.” What an awesome analogy to assist us in our task – to be the light of hope for our future: our students.

Let us support and nurture each other as we renew our journey to be servant leaders in Catholic education. Let us not be afraid of new learning, new challenges and above all, God’s renewing love for us.

Roger D. Lawler
Director of Education

INTRODUCTION

What do we really want to create? What do we want to contribute? Who do we want to be? These are among the truly critical questions that stand before us in Catholic education. To be more specific, the question becomes what faith-based aspirations do we really hold for learners that connect us, focus our energies, and commit us to work as a Catholic educational faith community united in our common caring for learners? And how can we translate these creative energies, values, and aspirations into a shared vision that will guide us in the building of our dreams for Catholic education when it is operating at its very best? What would our Catholic educational mission actually look like if we set out to bring our dream to reality?

This is the essence of shared vision, a compelling portrait of whom we want to be when we are operating at our best and in accordance with our deepest sense of faith-filled purpose. Such a vision, aligned with our core beliefs and compelling mission, will set the goals of what it is that we really want to achieve.

Of course, no system or group can ever force a shared vision on anyone. Each learner, each parent, each staff member, each trustee, each stakeholder involved in our mission must discern what is his or her own personal vision and how that vision relates to a shared community vision and purpose. Ultimately, everyone must consult their own hopes and concerns to determine if and how they can make our stated system vision a truly shared communal vision. Only to the extent that each person establishes how her or his personal vision reflects a shared vision can we ever generate the commitment and energy necessary for a common pursuit.

This is not an easy process. Whenever values and vision mix with substantial change there will be tension. The privilege of all leaders in our system, formal or informal, is to help nurture a positive culture that invites each person to freely bring his or her personal vision into dialogue with our system vision. Only this dialogue, complete with questions, concerns, fears, hopes, and dreams will allow these system vision statements to be meaningfully appropriated so that personal vision and system vision can be transformed into “our community’s shared vision”.

BELIEFS

Beliefs form the underlying values we hold as a Catholic educational faith community. They inspire and inform the system mission and vision and serve as our decision screen.

We, as People of God journeying together in faith, believe that:

- We are a unique creation of God who unconditionally loves each of us;
- We are co-creators with God in the on-going transformation of the world;
- We recognize that the sacramental life of the Church is at the core of our being;
- We live and find hope as a Eucharistic community in the mystery of Jesus' life, death and resurrection;
- We are disciples of Christ called to serve one another in love;
- We, our world, and our universe are sustained by the Holy Spirit;
- We witness Gospel values by who we are and what we do.

We, as a Christ-centred learning community that participates in the mission of the Catholic Church, believe that:

- Our community recognizes and nurtures young people as gifts of God;
- Our community respects, affirms, and supports the dignity and well-being of all;
- Our community values diversity as essential to the enrichment of the individual and society;
- Our community is welcoming, inclusive, compassionate, and celebratory;
- Our community, together with the church and the home, proclaim, teach and witness the gospel through our Catholic educational ministry;
- Our community contributes to the transformation of our world in love, dignity, and justice.

We, as servant-leaders in Catholic education, believe that:

- Staff members are privileged to nurture and be responsible for educating all learners;
- Staff members affirm by their actions that all learners can learn;
- Staff members attend responsibly to each learner with appropriate care, support, and resources;
- Staff members recognize their ministry and follow the call to live their faith and model Gospel values;
- Staff members are nurtured and respected as lifelong learners by the Catholic educational community;
- Staff members significantly contribute to the realization of the unique potential of each learner as a gift of the Creator God.

We, as learner-focused educators in Catholic schools, believe that:

- Learners flourish when learning addresses their unique stories, gifts, needs, and differences;
- Learners learn best when they are respected, valued, and affirmed for who they are as unique expressions of the Creator;
- Learners who think and question with integrity grow in learning, personal development, and authentic spirituality;
- Learners are all capable of lifelong learning and are called to the joy and the responsibility of developing their capabilities;
- Learners learn best with high and clear expectations and relevant assessments which are authentic and aligned to these expectations;
- Learners are called to transform our world in love, dignity, and justice.

SYSTEM MISSION

Our mission statement briefly, clearly and with the gift of the Catholic faith states the purpose of our Catholic school system – the reason our school system exists.

OUR MISSION

With The Gift Of The Catholic Faith

**Learning, growing, and
transforming the world
together as faithful
disciples of the Risen Lord**



OUR SPIRITUALITY AND OUR SYSTEM'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Spirituality is the totality of all our lived relationships with self, others, the earth, the universe, and God. By living in right relationship with self, God, the earth and others, we reflect more clearly God our Loving Creator, God's Spirit that lives within us, and Christ who lives among us. Our spirituality as a Catholic educational community is our response to the Holy Spirit among us. Our spirituality calls us to a way of life in which God's grace gives focus to our faith, hope, love and mission.

Our Spirituality is the foundation for our seven guiding principles:

1. Holism
2. Lifelong Learning
3. Equity
4. Collaboration
5. Excellence and Accountability
6. Reflection
7. Reconciliation

These guiding principles are derived from the system's beliefs, are grounded in our spirituality, and synthesize the philosophy currently found in Church and Board documents. These principles are intended to assist us in our individual and communal struggle to live our beliefs and work towards the realization of our mission.

As we strive to apply these principles in our daily lives, we are reminded of our essential humanity, the limitations of human community, and our dependence upon God. At those times when we are hurtful or when we ourselves are hurt by persons or institutions, we recognize our need to receive God's forgiveness and to seek reconciliation with one another. In recognizing that we cannot apply these guiding principles perfectly, we presume the goodness of others. And we still persevere courageously on our journey!

HOLISM is awareness that all life is interrelated and interdependent. It emphasizes the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual dimensions of each individual. Holism also recognizes that the development of every gift and dimension of the person contributes to the overall well-being of the entire community. In a Catholic educational community, a commitment to holism emanates from our reverence for the Creator, the sacred source of all our being and our activity, and from knowing that Jesus Christ gives meaning and purpose to all aspects of life and learning.

LIFELONG LEARNING recognizes the natural capacity of all people to learn and grow throughout their lives. In a Catholic educational community, lifelong learning celebrates our capacities as gifts from God, which should be cultivated and nurtured. Lifelong learning involves the deepening of one's personal relationship with God, within a communal faith context. It also calls us to discovery, exploration, and the delight of learning and sharing as befits our calling to be co-creators with God in the on-going transformation of the world.

EQUITY is the fundamental truth that all people deserve respect, dignity, and fair treatment. In a Catholic educational community, equity derives from the respect, dignity and reverence due all persons as created in the image of God, redeemed by Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Equity demands a “faith that does justice” as it promotes learning environments in which all persons – irrespective of gender, race, colour, culture, religion, social class, sexual orientation or ability – can realize their full potential.

COLLABORATION is working together in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation for the common good. It empowers all members to contribute their unique gifts. In a Catholic educational community, collaboration involves both personal growth within a larger faith community and engagement in our communal journey towards a just and loving society.

EXCELLENCE is the promotion of high expectations and standards of performance. Accountability is the individual and collective responsibility to meet these high expectations and standards of performance. In a Catholic educational community, excellence and accountability derive from the call to nurture and use responsibly our God-given gifts and talents for the individual and common good.

REFLECTION is the process of thinking, examining and evaluating ideas, actions or situations. In a Catholic educational community, reflection allows us to make decisions in light of the common good and gospel values. Reflection is integral to Catholic education because we are called to use an informed moral conscience to evaluate our own and others’ thoughts and experiences and to discern the direction of the Spirit for the development of a just and compassionate society.

RECONCILIATION is the healing act of restoring harmony after divisiveness in one’s life and in one’s personal and communal relationships. In a Catholic educational community, reconciliation is a sign of our healing the wounds of alienation that separate us from God, the Spirit within, and the Christ among us. It is God’s invitation of pardon and peace in the midst of our brokenness and sin. And it is our response of conversion in co-operating with God’s saving love, a sign of our change of heart and our renewed unity with God’s sacred intention.

THE ONTARIO CATHOLIC SCHOOL GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

Our Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGE) were also developed with an eye to the future, designed to respond to the Catholic community's best estimate of the trends and future conditions that would affect our graduates. They were written so that educators in our Catholic schools could help learners develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that might best serve them and our society. These Expectations have a "now" and a "future" focus, both a current and a future accountability. They are designed, therefore, to direct learners as they engage with their present education, as they continue their education toward exit or graduation, and as they then move forward through the rest of their lives.

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGE) deliberately aim to form all learners in Catholic schools to be well-developed persons, good citizens, and faithful disciples of Christ. The Institute for Catholic Education developed these Graduate Expectations in consultation with representatives of the Catholic community across Ontario. They are based on research that examined future conditions from which current and future goals and priorities across the province were identified. These Graduate Expectations certainly enhance the expectations of the Ontario Ministry of Education as outlined in provincial curriculum documents.

Our Catholic schools stand by these Graduate Expectations because we believe that they will enrich our learners beyond measure as we try to engage "tomorrow's citizens today". As essential and significant cross-curricular Expectations, these Graduate Expectations are intended to serve our learners in all arenas of life at each stage of development from childhood to adulthood.

These lifelong Expectations, therefore, directly support our mission for learners: "Learning, growing, and transforming the world together as faithful disciples of the Risen Lord". To accomplish this compelling mission, the OCSGE identify the following Expectations of the Catholic graduate:

- **A DISCERNING BELIEVER** formed in the Catholic Faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection, and moral living.
- **AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR** who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in the light of gospel values.
- **A REFLECTIVE, CREATIVE AND HOLISTIC THINKER** who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.
- **A SELF-DIRECTED, RESPONSIBLE, LIFELONG LEARNER** who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.
- **A COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTOR** who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.
- **A CARING FAMILY MEMBER** who attends to family, school, parish, and the wider community.

- **A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN** who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life.

Taken together, these form the image of the learner in our Catholic schools. Catholic curriculum is designed with these expectations in mind. And all our resource materials, at all grade levels, contribute to our learners achieving these Expectations.

Some Expectations, of course, are beyond quantitative measure, especially those dealing with faith development. Nevertheless, our beliefs, our mission, our guiding principles, and our vision are all designed to support learners to realize these Expectations. The image of the learner, then, is that of a human person formed in Catholic community, who would seek both personal transformation in Christ's spirit and the transformation of our world in fulfillment of God's loving intention. And this image is what generates the excitement and the challenge of Catholic education!

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The future is both not yet and right now! Change is so much a part of everyday experience that many people find themselves scanning the horizon for a glimpse of what might lie ahead. Trend-watchers and social analysts make professional careers from their attempts to read the trends and major forces that are impacting our society and influencing the future. The hope is that better planning for a preferred future - “think tomorrow, act today” - might be established from an insightful reading of current trends and future conditions.

Although we are cautioned that any estimates of the future are only limited at best, our Catholic Tradition encourages “reading the signs of the times”. Since Vatican II, our Catholic tradition has assigned this term to this faith process of assessing shifts and trends in the light of our Gospel values. Our faith calls us to read, interpret, and respond to these social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual signs with a critical perspective using our God-given faith and reason. The incarnated Christ and His Spirit are encountered in each age and culture; and each generation must once again discover God in the setting of everyday life. Of course, any reading of the signs of the times may sometimes uncover troubling or even frightening trends with undesirable social or moral implications. In such cases we may be compelled to respond in prophetic or counter-cultural ways just as Jesus did. But we are always reminded to respond through the eyes of the Spirit, in faith and in hope, as befitting our Christian conviction.

Catholic education is dedicated to reading the signs of the times. It aims not only to influence what our learners learn and can do but also to shape the kind of persons they will become. In response to the signs of the times, and in light of our core beliefs, these Expectations will not only serve our learners well but also contribute to the transformation of our society in love, justice, and peace. The essential purpose of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board is the realization of these powerful Expectations for all of our learners, in all of our operations.

“*Renewing Our Mission*” was the Board process in 2000-2001 school year for establishing staff and community input to guide the writing of our beliefs, mission, and vision found in this document. Those who participated in these input sessions, just as those who wrote the Graduate Expectations, were asked to respond to the question “What are the significant problems, challenges, and opportunities that students are likely to face in various arenas of life when they graduate?” Among the signs of the times noted by our Waterloo Catholic District stakeholders in their responses were the following:

- Renewed interest in spirituality and the decline of organized religion
- Increasing secularization of culture
- Institutions, including Churches, experiencing significant change
- Expansion of ministry
- Decreasing religious literacy
- The rise of individualism
- Excessive materialism
- Pervasive influence and concentration of ownership of the worldwide communications media

- Constantly advancing technologies
- Complex, constantly changing world
- Lifelong learning
- Job obsolescence and multiple career changes
- Difficulty balancing living and working
- Dominance of a seamless global marketplace
- Decline of nation-states
- Decreased local control
- Fear for safety
- Multi-cultural society
- Promotion of and respect for equity
- High pressure, high stress society
- Increasing pressures on families
- The groaning of the earth with pollution and exploitation
- Inequitable distribution of wealth
- Growing resistance to progress at any price

Individualism, materialism and the insistence on productivity, competition and efficiency in the name of progress have certainly been a dominant part of our society in the modern era of the 20th century. But a closer reading of the signs of the times may also be telling us that many people in Canada and elsewhere are increasingly critical of individualism and the myth of progress, particularly as it is so often measured in material terms. Many respondents involved in *“Renewing Our Mission”* expressed concern about the loss of meaning, the decline of community, and the growing sense of isolation. Certainly, our Scriptures continually call us back to another story, what we might call the “Big Story” of God’s plan for the universe as told in Scripture and in most great religious traditions. That Big Story comes with a call given to each of us to be co-creators with God in the unfolding of that Story and our destiny. That Big Story reminds us always of meaning, purpose, and the need for relationship, community and ongoing personal conversion.

SHARED VISION

Shared Vision represents a compelling portrait of who and what we want to be when our schools and our Catholic school system are operating at their very best. This vision is seen through the lens of our Catholic beliefs and guiding principles and lived in the complexity of our current reality. It is at the junction of these two parameters – our Catholic beliefs and guiding principles and our emerging trends and signs of the times – that our shared vision is created.

The following vision statements have been formulated, revised and edited from broad input across the system. They create a powerful picture of what, where, and how we are called to be in the light of who we are as followers of Christ. Although they name our preferred future as a Catholic educational system, the vision statements are written in the present tense to forcefully express the power they hold to affect our current practice. It is our right and our responsibility, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, individually, in small groups, and within our communities to determine how we will answer the call, make the commitments and take the actions that will “bring to life” this preferred vision.

OUR CURRICULUM: “What all learners experience in our Catholic schools”

1. Proclaims that Jesus is THE RISEN LORD;
2. Creates a learning culture that embodies Gospel values across the curriculum;
3. Includes opportunities for students to learn about the graced history of the Catholic Church;
4. Provides opportunities for faith exercises, liturgical celebrations, prayers, meditation and sacramental preparation;
5. Respects learner interests, abilities, and learning styles;
6. Enables personal growth and improves individual achievement;
7. Addresses well-being, self-worth, dignity, and the gifts and needs of the whole learner: heart, mind, and embodied spirit;
8. Promotes relationships, fosters the development of social-emotional intelligence, and ensures that self-esteem, personal dignity and individual rights are nurtured and protected;
9. Prompts learners to ponder life’s mysteries, to question and discern with wisdom and integrity, and to act justly and truthfully;
10. Ensures that programming is designed from the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and *The Ontario Curriculum* and is clearly communicated to learners, parents/guardians and stakeholders;
11. Ensures that programming is reflective of quality research and focused on essential, significant, and continuous learning;
12. Focuses on lifelong learning strategies as well as knowledge, skills, and values across the curriculum;
13. Emphasizes ministry to the community, contribution to the common good, and the call to transform society in justice and love and enables the demonstration of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations;
14. Emphasizes relevant, energizing, future-focused life roles;
15. Enables learners to demonstrate the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

OUR ASSESSMENT: “How learning will be measured, observed, or inferred based on clear criteria”

1. Aligns with Gospel values in honouring the gifts and needs of each learner;
2. Supports diversity in learning styles and in rates of learning;
3. Focuses on the lifelong learning process and related learning skills;
4. Guides educators in determining instruction and programming;
16. Provides evidence of progress towards the achievement of the learner expectations as outlined in the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and *The Ontario Curriculum*;
5. Demonstrates growth of the individual and the community of learners according to a continuum of learning in various program and personal development areas;
6. Provides expanded opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, understand, and are able to do;
7. Determines growth and achievement which can be measured, observed, and inferred while honouring that which is immeasurable in the sacred mystery of each person;
8. Includes a variety of appropriate and on-going assessment methods and strategies;
9. Is learner-driven, fosters learner responsibility for growth and progress and provides opportunities for self-assessment, peer consultation, and program assessment;
10. Includes communication with learners, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders regarding learner effort, growth, and achievement, including how such assessments are determined and valued;
11. Indicates the next steps to be followed by learners to improve learning and effectiveness;
12. Includes assessment of the effectiveness of strategies, programs, policies, and practices.

OUR INSTRUCTION: “How all learners will experience learning”

1. Respects the efforts of learners, values their prior learning, and honours multiple intelligences, learning styles, and rates of learning;
2. Focuses on learning that is contextualized, meaningful, and life-role oriented;
3. Nurtures and enables learners in loving, compassionate, joyful, and fun-filled communal learning environments;
4. Celebrates inclusivity and diversity in our learning community, and respects, values, and protects fundamental rights pertaining to differences among learners and staff;
5. Promotes civility in the learning environment and ensures that the safety of all is protected;
6. Engages learners in a variety of settings with the assistance of many types of personnel and partnerships;
7. Ensures a variety of learning strategies, i.e., discovery, project/problem-based learning, cooperative learning, e-based learning, media-based learning, etc.;
8. Aligns with high learning expectations and authentic assessment which requires learners to apply, integrate, and transfer their knowledge, skills, and values in the completion of meaningful activities;
9. Leads to learner demonstrations of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and the expectations of *The Ontario Curriculum*;
10. Enables and inspires learners to be self-directed, responsible, lifelong learners;
11. Empowers learners to realize our Catholic mission to transform the world into a just and loving society.

OUR RESOURCES, INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY: *“Learning materials and tools that assist learning”*

1. Provide learning materials and tools that support the system mission, the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and *The Ontario Curriculum*;
2. Encourage reflective, creative, and critical thinking skills;
3. Integrate current technologies and resources in an effective manner to assist holistic learning;
4. Employ inclusive language and reflect cultural diversity;
5. Provide for personalized learning programs that are geared to meet the needs and styles of all learners;
6. Enable staff to be skilled facilitators of learning using appropriate learning resources and expanded applications of technologies;
7. Enable learners and staff in a wise and discriminating manner to access, use, and evaluate information from a variety of resources and technologies, including print materials, web sites, videos, primary sources, interviews etc.;
8. Facilitate interactive communication networks.

OUR EDUCATIONAL FAITH COMMUNITY: *“Partnership of home, school, parish, and church that directly supports and nurtures Catholic faith-based education”*

1. Lives out of our baptismal commitment of discipleship and mission;
2. Strives for truth and lives out of Tradition while always remaining open to the newness of the Holy Spirit;
3. Prays and worships together and is open to the gift of joy given by the Holy Spirit;
4. Helps all learners honour their grace-filled questioning as they seek deeper meaning in faith;
5. Is accepting, non-judgmental, welcoming, inclusive, invitational;
6. Walks with one another in our life, suffering, death, and resurrection and helps learners relate their experiences to the “Big Story” – Scripture;
7. Is Christ-centred, proud and excited by our Catholic identity, and supports, promotes, and celebrates our Catholic educational mission;
8. Engages in various forms of ministry and leadership and supports the participation of students in youth service in our call to transform the world in love, justice and peace;
9. Works toward an integrated parish, home, Catholic school model in support of faith formation and expression.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS: *“Partnership of all in community whose efforts involve them with Catholic education”*

1. Exercise their rightful roles as supportive partners committed to Catholic education;
2. Articulate our educational mission, beliefs, learner outcomes, and vision as well as significantly influence the realization of that mission and vision;
3. Engage in systematically designed opportunities to influence system and school decisions that affect them;
4. Assist learners to realize the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and *The Ontario Curriculum* in all learning environments and at all stages of learner development;
5. Engage in partnerships to offer a comprehensive and seamless approach to services, support, and opportunities for all learners;
6. Support, in a proactive manner, programs that contribute to the common good as well as to the good of each learner;
7. Receive accurate and timely information and feedback regarding the implementation of the system’s vision.

OUR STAFF: *“All employees of the Board who are formally charged with operating the school system”*

1. Commit themselves to the realization of our Catholic educational mission in all activities and relationships;
2. Root themselves in Christ’s teachings and remain committed to their faith and their own authentic spiritual development;
3. Model the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations;
4. Affirm that all students can learn and are committed to their education, development, and welfare;
5. Are knowledgeable, skilled, discerning, and committed to excellence, equity, and the well-being of students and staff;
6. Work as a collaborative, supportive, prayerful, celebratory, joy-filled and service-oriented community;
7. Value lifelong learning and regularly engage in professional development;
8. Engage in a program of staff growth, appraisal, and review that is oriented to personal and professional growth and that demonstrates accountability in performance according to criteria and procedures, which are clear, fair, and positive.

OUR LEADERS: *“Those in a position of vested authority and those in positions of added responsibility”*

1. Honour the shared vision and pursue a clear strategic direction for action that defines how our system and schools will operate;
2. Invite, encourage, and engage all learners and staff in building educational faith communities based on Gospel values;
3. Motivate and energize all with whom they work and serve to find personal meaning, value, and purpose in our system beliefs, mission, and vision;
4. Model the system beliefs, principles, mission, and Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, and support these by working to bring to reality the preferred vision for learners;
5. Demonstrate visionary service, responsibility, respect, compassion, openness, courage and other qualities appropriate to the servant-leader;
6. Create effective policies and procedures, make good decisions, empower learners and staff, maximize talents and teamwork, and support all best efforts to accomplish the system mission;
7. Foster an organizational climate that is marked by healthy relationships, reconciliation, and a positive, inclusive, and participatory culture;
8. Encourage, support, and create a proactive orientation toward continuous improvement, professional development, and lifelong learning;
9. Set high standards for quality results and involve and empower all learners, staff and stakeholders in positive collaboration and productive change;
10. Invite open communication and listen attentively to all constructive suggestions to improve our educational service;
11. Align people, policies, practices, resources, and recognition with the vision.

OUR ORGANIZATION: *“Structures, roles, responsibilities, policies, practices, and procedures which taken together constitute the system”*

1. Manifests our distinctiveness as a Catholic educational community and promotes our significant contribution to our society as a faith-based educational system;
2. Ensures that Gospel values are embodied in our practices and that integrity, trust, honesty, dignity, and love are reflected at all levels of the system;
3. Advocates for Catholic education and the best interests of learners, staff and community in all provincial, regional, and local areas of governance;
4. Advocates equity, social justice, respect for our environment, and the welfare of the community in all our practices;
5. Fosters an environment and provides structures that facilitate continuous learning, growth in discipleship, collaborative decision-making, responsible partnerships, community development, and school/system renewal;
6. Ensures site-based strategic planning and encourages empowerment, teamwork, and communication at each site and throughout the system;
7. Collaborates with various community partners through our beliefs/values and guiding principles;
8. Ensures open disclosure at all levels of the system as well as invites constructive criticism and suggestions to bring about positive change;
9. Accepts responsibility for and responds to educational issues which affect the best interests of learners, parents/guardians, and all stakeholders;
10. Provides strategic direction and system planning, including the assignment of resources, in alignment with our beliefs, mission, Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, and vision;
11. Provides, within the limits of the available budget, appropriate human and financial support to enable the system to meet its strategic goals and vision;
12. Assesses the effectiveness of personnel deployment, policies, and procedures, including demonstrations of how these contribute to the realization of our system mission and vision.

AFTERWORD CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

“Come, my love; my darling, come with me... Do not let your hands hang limp ... Let me hear your voice from the garden, my love ... Do not be afraid - I am with you ... I will never forget you... I have called you by name - you are mine ... I will strengthen you and tell you ‘do not be afraid; I will help you’... I love you and give you honour.”¹

Which of us would not desire to hear such words from our beloved, from one who is significant for us? These intimate words, drawn from our Scriptures, resonate with our deepest longing. The beautiful mystery of life is that our God continually says these words of love to us individually and communally throughout history and in all of creation! In our joys and successes! In our sorrows and failures! In prayer and in relationship! In worship and in play! In our work and in our ministry!

Such is the way of our God, perhaps best described by Scripture: “God is love.” Such divine love overflows and hungers to be shared with others; such love seeks, by its very being, to be communicated and be creative of new life. In love God created us. Out of this love God chose Israel to bring God’s love back to a world that had been unfaithful. In loving intimacy, God married Israel at Sinai so that the Israelites would be God’s people and God would be their God. When the ardour of Israel’s responding love cooled, God reached out through Israel’s prophets, men and women of conscience who had not forgotten the sacred mission to bring all humankind to this loving God.

At an even deeper level of intimacy, God chose to send Jesus Christ to bring us to the full abundance of life. Christ so embodied the Father/Mother’s love that he gave us everything, including his own life. And God’s response to Christ’s complete trust and unconditional love was to raise His son from the dead to be Risen Lord forever incarnate to us in all cultures and throughout all the ages. This is the loving Christ who kisses us into the fullness of new existence through baptism! This is the loving Christ whose intimacy fills us with His Holy Spirit making our bodies His body and through that Body of Christ His continued presence to and in and for the world! This is the loving Christ inviting us to be co-creators of the world that is being fashioned anew! And this is the same loving Christ who calls all of us in the Waterloo Catholic District School Board - trustees, staff, students, parents, stakeholders - to our beliefs, our guiding principles, our mission, our learner expectations, our vision and our journey together!

This powerful Scripture story, our “Big Story”, continues to animate us shaping how we live, grow, and have our being. Can we truly grasp it and make it our own? In a skeptical age, can we truly believe this Story and live out the consequences of that faith and hope? Can we, as today’s Church, be as audacious as the early Church that literally transformed the world in loving response to this Story?

Sharing Our Journey is a product of this same audacious faith as it represents our response in faith and hope to bring to the world this transforming love. Our beliefs, our mission, our guiding principles, our expectations for learners, and our vision connect our educational vocation and ministry to God’s overwhelming gift of love. Let us not be afraid of God’s renewing, intimate, intoxicating love...let us raise our hands in joy...let us sing from the garden! And let us dance, the sacred dance of love, encountering in all of our experiences the constantly renewing love of Christ, the Spirit, and the Creator!

¹ Note: Scripture quotations in the opening paragraph are from *Song of Songs 2:13, Zephaniah 3:16, Song of Songs 8:13, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 43:1, Isaiah 41:14, Isaiah 43:4*