

VALUING DIVERSITY



A Framework for Equity and Inclusive Education in
the Curriculum

2011

Catholic schools provide educational opportunity within the context of a faith community which must be seen to recognize that each individual is made in the image and likeness of God, to affirm the essential dignity, value and rights of the human person, and to model the gospel values of faith, hope and love to each and every student entrusted to their care. In part, the mission of the Catholic school is to create the lived experience of what it is like to be welcomed, cared for, loved without conditions, included, and taught values that students can commit to and find sustenance throughout their adult life.

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board Mission Statement:

Walking together in Christ's light with parish and family, we are called to build an inclusive Catholic learning community and to serve as partners in the formation of life-long learners by:

- Living our faith
- Promoting educational achievement and innovation
- Fostering stewardship, leadership and social justice

(Pastoral Guidelines to Assist Students of Same-Sex Orientation, Education Commission of the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 9, 2004)

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board thanks and acknowledges the work of the York Catholic District School Board for sharing and allowing us to use their original document, "Valuing Diversity".



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board provides in all its operations an educational environment which supports diversity within its Catholic community by adhering to the Guiding Principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and the recommendations from the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (see Appendix 4 on p. 51).

Equity and inclusive education:

- is a foundation of excellence;
In a diverse society, equity is a fundamental requirement for educational excellence and high standards of student achievement.
- meets individual needs;
Equity does not mean treating all students in the same way, but rather, responding to the individual needs of each student and providing the conditions and interventions needed to help him or her succeed.
- identifies and eliminates barriers;
All students are supported equitably through the identification and removal of discriminatory barriers that limit their ability to achieve to their full potential.
- promotes a sense of belonging;
Equity and inclusive education, based on Catholic values, contributes to every student's sense of well-being.
- involves the broad community;
In our Catholic schools, effective and meaningful home, school, parish, community partnerships are an essential component of an equitable and inclusive education system.
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives;
Sound research and analysis of successful policies and practices form the basis for the development and sharing of resources.
- is demonstrated throughout the system.
The ministry, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, and or schools will incorporate principals of equity and inclusive education throughout their policies, programs, and practices.

VALUING DIVERSITY: A FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITY IN THE CURRICULUM

The 2009 *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* document states that Equity and Inclusive Education:

- is a foundation of excellence
- meets individual needs
- identifies and eliminates barriers
- promotes a sense of belonging
- involves the broad community
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives
- is demonstrated throughout the system

In addition to these guiding principles, an equitable and inclusive curriculum also includes curriculum and assessment practices.

Curriculum Policy

The ministry's curriculum policy supports respect for and acceptance of diversity in Ontario's schools. The St. Clair Catholic District School Board endorses inclusive curriculum and assessment practices that consider both the content and context of curriculum in the classroom and in the lives of the pupils. Educators must consider both the content of the curriculum and how it is received as pupils learn both the explicit and implicit curricula. Inclusive curriculum in content, context and methodology of delivery seeks to recognize our commitment to Catholic values and our respect for all pupils, regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, place of origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability. Through the curriculum review process, curriculum is continually revised to maintain and increase its relevance to the changing needs and lives of students. Recent revisions include the addition of sections on anti-discrimination education and **First Nations, Métis and Inuit *(F.N.M.I.)** perspectives and how they relate to the particular subject or discipline.

* The terminology in this area is fluid but the general principal is that we use the names of the people by which they name themselves. In an attempt to include all indigenous peoples, the acronym, F.N.M.I., is currently used in the education community of Ontario to reflect this desire.

Learning Opportunities and Resource

Schools are expected to ensure that instructional resources and strategies are in accordance with Catholic teachings and the principles of equity and inclusivity. In addition, schools should provide students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Lessons, projects, and related resources should allow students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum (e.g., providing information about women's contributions to science and technology, about Black inventors, about F.N.M.I. peoples to the history and development of Canada, etc.). Schools should facilitate open

discussions about social justice within the school, the community and society. Students need to feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by the teachers and staff from whom they are learning, and welcomed in the environment in which they are learning.

Instructional Practices

Schools will ensure that instructional resources and strategies are in accordance with Catholic teachings and reflect the diverse needs and pathways of all students. Currently, there are excellent examples of practices that consider the diverse needs of individual learners in the Ontario Ministry of Education documents. Differentiated instruction takes into account the backgrounds and experiences of students in order to provide content that is relevant to them and approaches that are suited to their individual interests, aptitudes, and learning needs.

Closing the Achievement Gap

According to *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education*, “advanced literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills are the keys to successful lives for students” (*Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education*, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p.6). Ontario’s literacy and numeracy strategy supports *all* students, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, in attaining the highest possible achievement in both literacy and numeracy, through the implementation of *evidence-based instructional and assessment practices across all subjects*.

As well, the Ontario Human Rights Code provides for the right to equal treatment with respect to services, without discrimination on the basis of a number of grounds, including disability. Education is considered to be a service under the code, and service providers have an obligation to accommodate the strengths and needs of a person with a disability, unless doing so causes “undue hardship” for the provider, “considering cost, outside sources of funding, if any, and health and safety requirements, if any” (Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990). Persons with disabilities are to have their strengths and needs considered, assessed and accommodated on an individual basis. This includes students with special education needs, whether or not they have been formally identified as exceptional (*Shared Solutions*, 2007). Adopting such practices, teachers across Ontario help close the achievement gap by giving all students the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

The Student Success strategy promotes programs at the secondary level that are designed to engage student by meeting their diverse needs and interest. By helping more students succeed, these programs contribute to closing the achievement gap. For example, the Specialist High Skills Major enables students to gain sector-specific skills and knowledge in the context of engaging, career-related learning environments, and helps them focus on graduation and on pursuing their postsecondary goals. Students who are experiencing success in programs that recognize their strengths and interest remain active engaged learners.

Assessment and Evaluation

Schools need to review their assessment and evaluation practices to identify and address any discriminatory biases that prevent students from fulfilling their learning potential. In order to

support valid and reliable assessment and evaluation, teachers must use assessment evaluation strategies that:

- address both what students learn and how well they learn;
- are based both on the categories of knowledge and skills and on the achievement level descriptions given in the achievement chart that appears in the curriculum policy document for each discipline;
- are varied in nature (e.g. an oral response for a reading comprehension task or a mind map in lieu of an essay or a dramatic performance that demonstrates the pupil's learning), administered over a period of time, and designed to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- are appropriate for the learning activities used, the purposes of instruction, and the needs and experiences of the students;
- are fair to all students;
- accommodate the needs of students with special education needs, consistent with the strategies outlined in their Individual Education Plan;
- accommodate the needs of students who are learning the language of instruction;
- ensure that each student is given clear directions for improvement;
- promote students' ability to assess their own learning and to set specific goals;
- include the use of samples of students' work that provide evidence of their achievement;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents or guardians at the beginning of the term / course / unit and at other appropriate points throughout the course.

(For further information see Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 1st ed., covering grades 1-12, 2010.)

Integrating Equity and Inclusivity across the Curriculum

The St. Clair Catholic District School Board envisions an inclusive education system in which all students value diversity and demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society. As Catholic educators, we are called to ensure that every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of excellence in order to achieve his or her fullest potential.

The life roles, knowledge, skills and attitudes outlined in this document describe the distinct expectations that the Catholic community has for graduates of Catholic secondary schools. Of particular relevance to this document is the seventh expectation which states that a graduate is expected to be “a responsible citizen who gives witness to Catholic Social Teaching by promoting peace, justice and the sacredness of human life”. (Institute for Catholic Education)

Specifically a graduate:

- acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions.
- accepts accountability for one’s own actions.
- seeks and grants forgiveness.
- promotes the sacredness of life.
- witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.
- respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world’s peoples and cultures.
- respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today’s contemporary society.
- exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.
- respects the environment and uses resources wisely.
- contributes to the common good.

These expectations have been written in student appropriate language and can be found in Appendix 1(b).

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION WITHIN ONTARIO'S EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY

The religious education program used in Ontario schools is developed by the National Office of Religious Education under the direction of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a comprehensive program and provides all the material students will need to achieve the expected outcomes.

Elementary Religious Education Program

The general aim of the Elementary Religious Education program is to help the children to grow as believers in God and in Jesus, and as faithful members of the Roman Catholic Church.

There are cognitive, moral, and spiritual components interwoven throughout our programs that assist in this aim. These not only serve to bring students deeper into relationship with Jesus Christ but also help them to see the world through lenses of justice and love.

Faith is most effectively shared in a personal manner. The teacher's greatest contribution will be to make a sincere expression of his or her own faith and love. The witness of the teacher to matters of equity and inclusion both in the curriculum and in the conduct of their classes is of paramount importance. These contributions lead to enshrining a Catholic school climate.

That is why we say that religion is taught throughout the day, by the atmosphere and attitudes that pervade the classroom, as well as by the structured religion program. The sincerity of the teacher is a most important quality for the success of the faith formation of students and the creation of a just and equitable school environment.

The program seeks to build upon the teacher's personal faith sharing as a foundation, to meet the students at their own level of experience, and to acquaint them with the person and teaching of Jesus, and with the traditions and values of the Catholic Church.

Elementary Family Life Education

The Family Life Program is intended to augment the students' awareness of themselves as individuals and as members of communities. Approximately 80% of the program deals with self-understanding and human relationships; some 20% of the teaching time in the junior/intermediate divisions will be concerned with the reproductive system and issues related to human sexuality. There are several points within the curriculum that lend themselves to discussions regarding the creation of more equitable and just communities, particularly in Theme 2, Living in Relationship and Theme 5, Living in the World. In Elementary schools, Family Life is normally taught as a distinct program separate from Religious Education.

Secondary Religious Education Program

Specific learning outcomes in the Secondary Religious Education program are organized under the following five broad topics:

- Scripture
- Profession of Faith
- Christian Moral Development
- Prayer and Sacramental Life
- Family Life

Religious education programs enable learners to develop their understanding of religious language, concepts and ideas. In doing so, they develop a knowledge base that leads to religious literacy in the Catholic faith, as well as religious attitudes and responses. These activities occur within a learning environment where subject matter and teaching strategies are planned according to the cognitive development of learners, and with sensitivity to the affective and personal dimensions of the learner's faith life. Together these activities assist Catholic students in developing a basic knowledge and understanding of their faith tradition. As well, these programs promote the development of attitudes and skills that encourage a deeper, personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a commitment to living the Gospel's call to transform persons, relationships, and structures through our service to the poor, compassion for the needy and a willingness to bring wholeness to the broken.

Scripture

Scripture has a privileged place in religious education. In reading, listening, and praying using the Bible, students learn of the loving presence of God. The Scriptures are the living word of God and a living witness to the faith experience of humanity. Jesus reveals His mission as he reads from the Book of Isaiah while speaking to his people in the synagogue in Nazareth:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save His people.

(Luke 4:18-19)

Other scriptural suggestion reflective of the social justice theme might include:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. – Matthew 11:28

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
– Galatians 3:28*

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your
neighbour as you love yourself. – Matthew 22: 37-39*

*God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as God chose . . . that there may be no
dissension within the body but the members may have the same care for one another. – 1
Corinthians: 12: 18-20*

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the
same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them
in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. -1
Corinthians 12: 4-11*

The Gospels reveals Jesus' mission on earth, both in His divinity and humanity. It is in the Gospels that the story of Jesus Christ is told. Since the Scriptures are literary works, the learning objectives of the Religious Education program involved the skills of literacy. These include critical literacy skills such as, activating prior knowledge, generating questions, making predictions, visualizing, monitoring comprehension, summarizing, making connections, and inferencing. In addition, critical literacy involves the use of critical thinking skills. These skills include the ability to identify perspectives, values, and issues; detect bias; and read for implicit as well as explicit meaning. In the context of promoting equity and inclusion, critical literacy involves asking questions and challenging the status quo, and leads students to look at issues of power and justice in society. Many of these strategies are embedded within the Canadian Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Profession of Faith

Students should be able to express what they believe in language that is common to believers around the world and across the centuries. Essential to the Catholic tradition are the Church's creeds; doctrinal statements and authoritative teachings. Students should achieve a genuine understanding of these teachings so that their learning is an intelligent articulation of their faith in a language that is appropriate to both the Catholic tradition and to their age and ability. (e.g. recitation of the Apostle's Creed, learning the basic doctrines like the Resurrection, the Incarnation and the Trinity.)

Christian Moral Development

It is important that students be given the means with which to make sound moral choices and judgments in both personal and social spheres of life. Critical thinking and analytical skills assist in the efforts to integrate a Catholic worldview into decisions concerning such moral issues as respect for life, poverty, violence, racism, stewardship, and care for nature/environment.

Prayer and Sacramental Life

This strand includes all of the various ways that the Church expresses its faith in worship, whether it is in personal prayer, liturgy or celebration. It refers primarily to the actions that demonstrate thankful awareness of God's presence in the world. As well as including the use of the student's own words in prayerful response to God's presence, prayer will include music, drama, meditation and various art forms through which reverence can be expressed.

The liturgical year affords the opportunity for participation and study of the Church's sacramental life. The seven sacraments signify and accomplish God's loving initiative to lead people to wholeness by interceding at significant moments of their lives from birth through maturity to death.

Family Life

In Catholic Secondary schools, Family Life education is woven into the Religious Education program. Students are expected to address issues such as same-sex orientation, barriers to healthy communities, and forms of unjust discrimination.

Religious Accommodation

Catholic school boards recognize that all people are created equal, in the image of God, each with inimitable characteristics deserving of dignity (Genesis: 1:27). In accordance with the teachings of the Church, it is the policy of Catholic school boards to provide in all its operations an educational environment, which supports and enables diversity within its Catholic community.

Catholic school boards across Ontario are committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion. They will take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodation with the legal rights afforded to the Catholic school system.

It is recognized that the Catholic school system gives pre-eminence to the tenets of the Catholic faith, consistent with the protection afforded in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Constitution Act, 1982 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

On June 24, 2009, the Ministry of Education released Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 entitled *Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools*. Among other things, as part of the new equity and inclusive education policy and implementation plans, all school boards are required to include a religious accommodation guideline, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed and imposes a duty to accommodate. In this regard, all Catholic school boards are expected to take appropriate steps to provide religious accommodation for students and staff, within the legal rights afforded to the Catholic school system.

CREATING A SCHOOL CULTURE OF EQUITY & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Critical Literacy

Why teach critical literacy?

As Catholic educators, our role includes nurturing in our students an awareness of our diverse society and the social inequities embedded in it. We strive to engage students in discussions about injustices and encourage them to respect other perspectives thereby motivating them to address the issue.

Critical literacy has gathered momentum in recent years to help prepare children for life in a knowledge-based society and media-saturated world. There is an increasing need for students to acquire both basic literacy and critical literacy to come to terms with the many forms and types of text that surround them, to ask questions, to examine viewpoints (their own and others), to take a stand and to clarify the issues and relationships that are important to them and their future. Critical literacy is an approach to teaching literacy which provides students with a set of skills, dispositions and strategies that enables them to become critical consumers and users of information.

Key Concepts

The impact of new and evolving communication technologies on students' thinking and development served as the wake-up call about the need for media literacy. Five key concepts, developed for the media literacy strand in the Ontario curriculum, also help us to position critical literacy conversations within a broad curriculum context (adapted from *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education*. Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, pp.34-36).

1. **All texts are constructions.** What is written is the product of many decisions and determining factors. Much of our view of reality is based on messages that have been constructed in this way, with the author's attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built into the text.
2. **All texts contain belief and value messages.** Whether oral, print or visual media, texts contain messages which reflect the biases and opinions of their authors/creators; whether intentionally manipulative or not, this means that no text can be neutral or value free.
3. **Each person interprets messages differently.** Demographic factors such as age, culture, gender and socio-economic status as well as prior experience and knowledge play a role in how we interpret a message.
4. **Texts serve different interests.** Most media messages are created for profit or to persuade, but all texts are produced intentionally for a purpose. These interests can be commercial, ideological or political.
5. **Each medium develops its own "language" in order to position readers/viewers in certain ways.** Whether TV program, website or novel, each medium creates meaning differently and each has distinctive techniques, conventions and aesthetics.

Creating a Classroom Culture of Critical Literacy

“Critical literacy does not necessarily involve taking a negative stance; rather, it means looking at an issue or topic in different ways, analyzing it, and hopefully being able to suggest possibilities for change and improvement.”

(Vasquez, 2004, p. 30)

Critical literacy is not something to be added to the literacy program, but a lens for learning that is an integral part of classroom practice. Below are some suggestions for creating a classroom culture which supports a critical literacy approach.

1. Honour the cultural capital and multiliteracies of all students:

- acquire an understanding of students’ interests, backgrounds and values
- begin with and build on the unique identities and diverse community perspectives represented within the classroom and the school
- consider students’ ideas, questions, interests and experiences in shaping learning opportunities
- ensure entry points for all students when designing tasks and learning experiences, which provide them with opportunities to think critically

2. Build a safe, inclusive classroom environment that promotes risk taking and inquiry:

- model and explicitly teach norms for respectful classroom interactions
- use learning strategies that encourage active, meaningful participation of all students
- provide time and opportunity for students to refine and clarify their thinking about critical issues by encouraging accountable talk through the use of graphic organizers, jot notes, illustrations and dramatizations
- acknowledge that some issues can be sensitive for some students

3. Incorporate thought-provoking multimedia and multimodal texts that:

- engage students in considering alternative and diverse perspectives—perspectives they may be unaware of, those they might not agree with, those that differ between texts, or points of view that vary from the one presented by a particular author
- are drawn from popular culture (commercials, TV shows, songs, music videos etc.)
- serve as a springboard for students to reflect on those texts that support and/or challenge their own opinions and solutions and address real-world current issues
- connect with topics and issues that may stem from other areas of the curriculum

Teaching Students to Challenge the Text

“Readers who are critically aware see beyond the literal interpretation of the text. They question in order to understand the author’s intent, the way ideas are arranged or emphasized, and the purposes of production. They challenge the text.”

(McLaughlin, M., p.61)

Once the reader has a literal understanding of the text, he/she then poses questions that lead to critical understanding. Critical literacy involves the reader’s understanding of the author’s intent, point of view and purpose for writing. This inquiry process leads to examining issues such as what the author wants readers to believe, and which gender, ethnic group, or philosophy is focused on in the text and which is missing, discounted, or marginalized. The following questions could be used to guide teachers and students in challenging the text.

Questions to Challenge the Text:

1. Who or what is in the text?
 - What gender is the focus or is viewed as more important in the story? Are the boys or the girls the most important characters in the story? Who does most of the talking? Whose picture is seen?
 - What point of view is presented by the characters in the text? Is the winner or the loser telling the story?
 - What ethnic group or race is most common?
 - What type of family seems normal in the text?
 - What setting, country, area or neighbourhood appears to be most common in the text?
 - What emotional or physical state seems the best in the text? Does being calm or being active appear to be treated as better in this text?

2. Who or what is missing from the text?
 - What gender is missing? Are boys or girls missing in the story?
 - What point of view is lacking? Is the antagonistic person’s point of view explored?
 - What ethnic group or race is uncommon?
 - What type of family seems unusual in the text?
 - What race is not present?
 - What setting, country, area, or neighbourhood is left out of the text?

3. What is marginalized?
 - What gender is marginalized? Does the author favour boys or girls?
 - What ethnic group or race is marginalized?
 - What viewpoint is ridiculed? Who are perceived to be odd because of their beliefs?
 - What setting, country, area, or neighbourhood do characters scorn? What place do the characters dislike?
 - What emotional or physical state seems the best in the text? Does it seem better to be spontaneous or well-organized, giving or withholding, happy or serious? Are people with different, creative ideas thought of as weird, or are they admired in this text?
 - Are people with particular body types, hairstyles, cars, clothes, or attitudes admired in this text? What body type, hairstyle, car, clothes, or attitudes might not be admired?

4. What does the author want you to think?
 - What message does the text seem to convey?
 - What do the “good” characters do that makes them so “good” or the “bad” characters do that makes them so bad?
 - What are the values we might learn to use in our lives after reading this book?

5. What story might an alternative text tell?
 - **GENDER SWITCH:** If there are mostly boys in the text, create a story in which the characters are mostly girls. How would that change the story?
 - **THEME SWITCH:** Make up a story with the opposite theme or different but closely related theme as a way of looking at the original theme in a different way. How would this change the story’s message?
 - **BODY-STYLE SWITCH:** If the main characters are tall, how would the story be different if they were short? If the main characters are big, how would the story change if they were small? If the main characters are athletic, how would the story change if they were not?
 - **CLOTHES SWITCH:** How would the story change if the characters were dressed differently – preppy, gansta rapper-style?
 - **ETHNIC/RACE SWITCH:** What if they characters were given different ethnicities or races? How would that change the story?
 - **EMOTIONAL SWITCH:** Make up a story in which the characters exhibit a different feeling or mood. If activity and action are honoured in the text, make up a story in which the characters are calm and thoughtful. If cracking jokes seems the best way to be in the text, try reimagining the text with the best characters being serious instead.
 - **RELATIONSHIP/ORGANIZATION SWITCH:** If the main characters are friends, try portraying them as family members. If the main characters are part of a large family and grandmother is living with them, think about a single person living alone or a single father with his child. How do these switches change the story?

- **SETTING SWITCH:** Tell the story in a different setting, time period, country, neighbourhood, or social class. Explain how it would be different.
 - **LANGUAGE SWITCH:** Tell the story using accents, vocabulary, and expressions from a different country or neighbourhood – England, the South, the “hood”.
 - **FAITH PERSPECTIVE SWITCH:** Tell the story using various faith beliefs (i.e. believer or non-believer).
6. How can information from the text be used to promote justice? (Action steps)
- How will my attitude or actions change about this topic?
 - How will I treat others differently as a result of having critically analyzed this topic?
 - What could I do to change a rule, a procedure, or an attitude that is unjust? To learn more about it? For example, could I write a letter or have a conversation?
 - How can I support those who are treated unfairly?

(Adapted from McLaughlin, Maureen and Glenn L. DeVoogd. *Critical Literacy: Enhancing Student's Comprehension of the Text*. Scholastic Inc., Toronto, 2004.)

Critical Literacy Prompts

Use these prompts to help students identify and analyze aspects of critical literacy such as perspective, bias, and author's intent.

- From whose perspective is this story being told?
- How would the story be different if it were told from another perspective?
- Whose bias is represented in this text?
- How does the author communicate this bias?
- Whose bias is not represented in this text? How would including this bias affect the text? How would it affect the reader?
- If this were the only text you read on this subject, what beliefs would you have about _____?
- How does the author support his/her perspective? Is he/she successful in doing so?
- What does the author want you to do/think/feel after reading this text?

(From CASI Reading Assessment. Nelson, 2003.)

Checklist for Creating Equity & Inclusion in Schools

Increasing equity and inclusion in classrooms, schools, and society starts with individual reflection leading to action. Ultimately, real change can only occur when changes take place in the whole school, involving all members of the school community (students, parents, teachers, support staff, administrators).

“All students feel welcome and accepted in our school when they see themselves reflected in their learning and in the environment. Students feel and are respected and fairly treated, according to their different needs and experiences. They are actively engaged in ongoing efforts to create the conditions necessary to make this vision a reality.”

(From Promoting Equity and Inclusive Education in Schools: A Teacher’s Guide, 2010)

Checklist for Creating an Equitable and Inclusive Learning Environment

1. Do the students and staff know and appreciate the diversity within their school community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do the learning materials explore and connect with the diverse histories of people in Canada and the global community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do the learning materials reflect and include diverse communities of people as a resource?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do the learning materials in the environment, acknowledge and celebrate the similarities and differences of the human experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do the images that are displayed in the learning environment reflect the diverse communities of people in Canada and the global community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is the entrance of the school welcoming and inviting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contain Welcome sign (s) in many languages ▪ directional signs (translated if possible) ▪ board’s mission statement ▪ school’s mission statement 	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does the school environment provide a safe and supportive climate free from harassment, bias, stereotyping and discrimination of diverse communities of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are the students’ first language and culture acknowledged, valued and respected?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are school community resources used to facilitate understanding and communication in different languages?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Is heritage awareness and contributions of F.N.M.I.* and diverse racial and ethno-cultural groups promoted and highlighted through students’ works on the walls, bulletin boards or over the public announcement system in the school?	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Do the images in the learning environment represent the diversity of socioeconomic groups, professions and lifestyle in Canada and different parts of the global community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do the students and parents of diverse communities of people feel accepted, affirmed and show a sense of belonging within the school community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do the images in the classroom/school reflect and represent a variety of families and homes of diverse groups in the global community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do the displays in our school reflect an equitable balance of F.N.M.I.* and racial minority women's issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do we avoid making assumptions about students from diverse communities in our daily practice?	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do our staff and students interact cooperatively and harmoniously with each other and are they aware of the Safe Schools Policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do our staff and students interact cooperatively and harmoniously with each other and are they aware of the Work Environment – Respectful Workplace/Safe Schools Policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>

*F.N.M.I. and racial minority women's issues can be issues of combined biases of racist and sexist prejudice. For example, aboriginal and racial minority women do not experience sexism and racism separately; rather they suffer the effects of these prejudices simultaneously, as each has an impact on the other and compounds its effect.

Checklist for Designing or Redesigning a Unit or Course of Study

Curriculum by its very nature is rooted in the culture of the dominant group of society. The inclusion of the perspectives of a variety of groups is essential to providing a balanced opportunity for students to learn about themselves and others.

It is the Church’s teaching that social justice issues are taught, nurtured and clearly articulated in the classroom setting.

1. Is the material factually and historically accurate reflecting the norms, values and practices of a FNMI or members of a diverse society?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are FNMI or diverse groups of people portrayed in a positive way – avoiding stereotypes or myths?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. When biased materials are presented, are students provided with opportunities of critical thinking and are students provided with opportunities to enable them to develop the skills to distinguish fact from fiction in print and audiovisual media?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are all students affirmed through the acknowledgement of various cultural lifestyles? (e.g., extended family, traditions/practices, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do guest speakers include representatives from FNMI or diverse groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are the resources current and updated to represent life as it is in countries today for FNMI or diverse communities of people and accurately portray different cultures and diverse family structures?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are positive and relevant role-models among FNMI or diverse groups identified in ordinary day-to-day lives within the community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. When planning field trips, have efforts been made to ensure that students who are differently-abled can gain access to the site?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Does the curriculum integrate information about FNMI or diverse groups, in all program/subject areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Am I aware of and use appropriate terminology when describing FNMI or diverse groups? Does the material reflect the evolving terminology to eliminate offensive or dated terms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuit instead of Eskimo • First Nations, Métis, Inuit instead of Indian <p>(Use names people use to refer to themselves such as East Asian, Chinese instead of Oriental; Newfoundlander instead of “newfie”. The term Chinaman, unlike Englishman has a derogatory connotation.)</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Does the material attempt to provide realistic role models for students of FNMI or diverse groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Are the accomplishments and contributions of people of oppressed groups celebrated?	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Is membership in FNMI or diverse groups portrayed through descriptions focusing on external characteristics such as facial features, dress, skin colour, rather than country of origin?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist for Analyzing Resources for Bias

Check the illustrations	
1. Are there stereotypes? e.g. Indian savage, Arab terrorist, poor and lazy student	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are members of FNMI or diverse groups depicted realistically? e.g. White features with darker skin, appropriation of image(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are characters members of FNMI or diverse groups in active or passive roles?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the text	
1. Are male or white standards required to be successful? e.g. Competitive nature valued	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are members of FNMI or diverse groups perceived to be the problem? e.g. Unemployed loafers, evil medicine women, racial generalizations	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are all problems resolved by males and/or white heroes? e.g. benevolent master, passive acceptance of ills with no resistance	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is the story historically correct? e.g. fair to all characters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the lifestyle	
1. Are members of FNMI or diverse groups represented in an accurate manner? e.g. disabled and useless, naked African, body images	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are persons and settings implied to be inferior? e.g. inaccurate or over-simplified, assumptions about members of diverse group	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are negative views stated or implied about depicted differences? e.g. only minorities in ghettos, countries as one dimensional appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check relationships among people	
1. Are males and whites in superior roles? e.g. controlling power, women and minorities supporting and subservient	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. How many family relationships are shown? e.g. many members in Latino families, mother always dominant in Black families, nuclear families shown as the ideal, omission of other family structures	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. If families are separated, are societal reasons given too? e.g. unemployment, poverty, war, abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the heroes	
1. Is the hero serving sexist, racist or classist interests? e.g. subtle or overt, patronizing, offensive jokes	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check the effects on students' self-image	
1. Does the story build and reinforce positive self-image of a student? e.g. inclusive, empowering	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do subtle stereotypes risk strengthening stereotypes and impact negatively on self-image of a student? e.g. only boys do brave things; fair, slim females equal beauty, errors and lack of representation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check background of author and illustrator	
1. Does their background add to the authentic depiction of characters and issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are they members of FNMI or diverse groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check author's perspective	
1. Is the view Eurocentric? e.g. are people of FNMI or diverse groups invisible, vast, previously uninhabited wilderness for the taking?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are global communities respected and included? e.g. Patronizing vs. true respect, patriarchal or balanced?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the language	
1. Are the words loaded?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do they have offensive overtones? e.g. primitive, lazy, backward, simple, stupid, inscrutable, wily	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the language sexist? e.g. excludes or demeans females, male pronouns for groups of both genders, forefathers, man-made	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do the words assume a cultural superiority? e.g. demeans individuals or groups of peoples, excludes other world views.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check copyright date	
1. When was it published? e.g. How is the information presented, from whose perspective? Acknowledge the changes in the publishing industry and society but be vigilant, include multiple perspectives in resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Recent copyright dates do not ensure inclusive perspectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist for Parent Interviews

1. Does the meeting time allow working parents and guardians to attend?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do I provide flexibility in my schedule to ensure that all parents and guardians are accommodated?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the meeting in conflict with religious or cultural events in the community?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Have I asked if parents would like the assistance of school board interpreters?	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have I placed signs in appropriate languages, or appointed guides to escort parents or guardians to my room?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Have I learned the correct last names and pronunciation of the parents' or guardians' name?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do I have several examples of every student's work on hand?	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Am I listening? Am I paraphrasing and giving back to the parents my understanding of what is being said?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Am I allowing time for the parent(s) or guardian(s) whose first language is not English or who speak a variety of English, to convey her/his meaning?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Am I open to the fact that the parents' or guardians' cultural/economic/social reality may make it impossible for the student to participate in school life in traditional ways?	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Am I noting the parent's or guardian's non-verbal cues?	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Am I using the opportunity to learn from the parent or guardian about strategies that will work well with the student in the area of work habits and conduct?	<input type="checkbox"/>

A Classroom Self-Reflection Checklist for Teachers

Effective leadership by classroom teachers in achieving equity and inclusive education is a prerequisite for securing the best possible outcome for every student in Ontario.

In my classroom, I . . .

1. Foster a commitment to equity of outcomes and to closing achievement gaps between students.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Use inclusive and respectful language and approaches in all interactions with students and parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Demonstrate a belief that all students can learn and a commitment to meeting the needs of all students in diverse ways	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Work to provide classroom materials and activities that represent the diversity, values, backgrounds, and experiences of students	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Communicate and work effectively with a diverse range of parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Model the equity and inclusive education values and vision of the school	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have worked with students to develop a process through which concerns and issues about discrimination can be identified and resolved	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Have worked with students to develop a survey to measure progress towards creating an equitable and inclusive classroom environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Ensure that my students are aware of our Board's Safe Schools policy and the consequences of harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Ensure that my students realize and remember that everyone is created and loved by God	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Provide my students with the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss controversial issues as they arise	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Use "teachable moments" to address non-inclusive, disrespectful, or discriminatory classroom behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Encourage student leadership by involving students in establishing and monitoring guidelines for achieving inclusive classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Understand that equity and inclusive education principles apply to every student and not just to certain groups of students	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Curriculum and Assessment & Evaluation Review
Through the Equity and Inclusive Lens**

Criteria	Where are we now?	What do we need to do?
<p>A. Curriculum Document Usage Review Current curriculum documents are used by teachers to plan for relevant learning opportunities.</p>		
<p>B. (1) Students as Active Participants Students are engaged as active participants in their learning (e.g. students see and hear themselves in the curriculum; gender specific, culturally relevant teaching practices and resources are used; research based practices in assessment and evaluation are demonstrated).</p>		
<p>B. (2) Students engage in self-assessment to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.</p>		
<p>C. (1) Assessment and Evaluation Teachers carefully plan assessments in collaborative learning communities that relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals, learning styles and interests of all students.</p>		
<p>C. (2) Teachers ensure that student learning is assessed and evaluated in a balanced manner with respect to the four categories, and that achievement of particular expectations is considered within the appropriate categories.</p>		

Criteria	Where are we now?	What do we need to do?
<p>C. (3) Assessments are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning.</p>		
<p>C. (4) Ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely is provided to support improved learning and achievement.</p>		
<p>C. (5) Teachers are using assessment for, and as learning as opportunities for short and long term instructional planning.</p>		
<p>D. (1) Learning Opportunities Students are provided with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives.</p>		
<p>D. (2) Counseling about available program options is provided for all students with consideration of all destinations.</p>		
<p>E. Instructional Practice Student backgrounds and experiences are taken into account and differentiated instruction is used to match the individual interests, aptitudes and learning needs of students.</p>		

Criteria	Where are we now?	What do we need to do?
<p>F. Closing the Achievement Gap Teachers believe that all children can learn. As a result they use evidence-based instructional and assessment practices across all subjects to give all students the opportunity to fulfill their potential.</p>		
<p>G. (1) Growth of Students on Individual Education Plans Accommodations and modifications described in the Individual Education Plans are in place to ensure the specific needs of students are addressed through focused programming in instruction and assessment.</p>		
<p>G. (2) Parents/Guardians are actively involved in the identification and placement decisions.</p>		
<p>G. (3) Students who require accommodation to support achievement and success access and use assistive technology on a consistent basis.</p>		
<p>H. Resources Resources are in accordance with Catholic teachings and values, and allow students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum (e.g. socio-economics, Aboriginal, etc.) Teachers are looking for bias when selecting resources.</p>		

DEALING WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The inherent right of all individuals to be treated with dignity and respect is central to Catholic values and Catholic Social Teaching (refer to Appendix 2). The St. Clair Catholic District School Board is a Catholic educational community committed to hosting a working and learning environment in which every person is treated with respect, and is free from discrimination. This commitment stems from the St. Clair Catholic District School Board's values and its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Every classroom is populated by students representing some degree of diversity. Teachers will inevitably encounter situations that represent different values or new ways of thinking and behaving in relation to our own. We may experience an emotional reaction that requires further exploration, self-examination and reflection to understand.

In daily life at school, teachers and school staff witness many interactions between various members of the school community. Some are characterized by unkindness, abuse, an intention to hurt or harm someone, or by a power imbalance, where one individual is afraid of or dominated by another. Sometimes, social problems such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of injustice may take such direct and explicit forms. At other times, they are manifested in much more subtle and indirect ways.

When incidents behaviours or practices involving issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia occur, there are often other influences, visible or not, in addition to the individuals who are directly involved. Some examples of these influencing factors are:

- Television shows and movies
- Song lyrics
- Family culture
- Political decisions influencing school or family life
- School books, newspapers, magazines and other literature
- Learned internal messages in someone's mind
- Billboards, posters and other forms of advertising

This is because racism, sexism, classism and homophobia are among a number of social problems that are embedded in our systems and institutions, and in the way that our society is organized. These forms of injustice are rooted in an historical legacy of social exclusion that continues to influence our society in ways that marginalize certain social groups.

Sexual Orientation

God has created each of us to be fully alive and to reach our full potential as human persons just as all of Creation is intended to reach its full potential. Some people are created with the desire to be attracted, generally, to persons of the same sex and they are called to reach their full potential in who they are.

Some people, no matter what their sexual orientation, feel called to live a single life. Whether we are single or married we are called to live a chaste life. This same moral obligation exists for all of us regardless of our life-calling.

Attitude to persons with same sex attractions within the school and within the local community remain sensitive.

Physiologically, the adolescent brain undergoes a massive remodeling of its basic structure, in areas that affect everything from logic and language to impulses and intuition” (*Start Where They Are*. Hume, p.39). With this in mind, as Catholic educators, we may observe many challenges and insecurities among our students in the intermediate and high school divisions. Emotional responses tend to be inconsistent, unpredictable, and impossible for the young adolescent to explain (Hume, p.48). Sometimes “homophobic” language can be little more than thoughtlessness and insecurity, often motivated by the need to fit in. It must be pointed out to students, however, that such language is inappropriate. If they use a term like “retard” or “autistic kid”, it would be quite offensive, particularly if someone had a brother, sister or friend that had a mental exceptionality. At other times, some students engage in quite deliberate harassment of students which becomes bullying or worse. This would necessitate the implementation of related Safe and Caring schools and Bullying Prevention board protocols.

Boundaries

As with all topics related to sex and sexuality, the teacher must outline very clear expectations as to what is acceptable and not acceptable in the classroom setting.

Family Life education is concerned with the human, moral, social, religious and justice aspects of all issues related to sexuality. **Questions or comments deemed inappropriate and related to sexual acts, whether heterosexual or homosexual, are strictly off limits in the classroom.** This point should be made clearly, in a calm but firm manner, **before** the unit begins.

Establishing boundaries early in the unit will help to avoid inappropriate remarks and questions by setting specific limits to the topic.

Answering Questions

It is always a good pedagogical approach to receive student questions respectfully, acknowledging the value of the question. This demonstrates respect for all students in the classroom and keeps the door open to further questions on any number of other issues.

Not all questions, however, need to be answered in the classroom context. If one feels that the question goes beyond the maturity of the class, simply say that the question is sensitive and is best answered by their parents. (From Supplemental Resources to Support Grade 7 and 8 Family Life Education, v.1. 2007)

Guidelines for Staff from Pastoral Guidelines for Students with Same Sex Attractions

- Make it clear that harassment of and discrimination against students with same sex orientation will not be tolerated in staff rooms, classrooms, in hallways, or anywhere on school property. Respect the confidentiality of students.
- Ensure that the required lessons on homosexuality, chastity, and sexual morality outlined in the educational curriculum documents for your grade are taught well. If you are uncomfortable with, or not knowledgeable about the topic, seek help from department heads, board consultants and/or administration. Attend in-services/workshops that will help you to become more comfortable and knowledgeable.
- Inform yourself about the needs of and resources for the student.
- Do not assume that all students or their parents are heterosexual. Use inclusive language when referring to this relationship.
- Do not apply labels to students such as “homosexual”, “gay”, “lesbian”. Rather say, “A person who is ...”
- During classroom discussions do not suggest that a youth should disclose their same sex orientation to parents, family and friends. They need to do that at their own safe pace. Many students who reveal their same sex orientation to their parents are forced to leave home. The decision to tell their parents must be their choice and they must be ready to live with the consequences.

(From Pastoral Guidelines for Students with Same Sex Attractions, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007)

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH CONTROVERSAIAL ISSUES

How prepared am I to deal with controversial issues?

1. I am aware that the Board’s Policies (Policy 2.5 – Board Code of Conduct, Policy 2.6 – Equity and Inclusive Education, Policy 3.17 – Student Discipline) assist us with controversial issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am aware of the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops’ 2004 document: Pastoral Guidelines to assist students of Same-Sex orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I teach my students that values of equity and inclusivity are inherent in the Gospel.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I provide non-threatening opportunities for my students to explore controversial issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration • Racism/Prejudice • Gender Issues • Accessibility • Peace and Conflict • Child Labour • Poverty • Globalization, trade agreements and education • Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (L.G.B.T.Q.) • Police and minority communities • Employment equity 	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My students are aware that all people are created in the image and likeness of God.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My curriculum offers a balance view of diverse groups and communities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I encourage critical discussion of justice and fairness in government practices and policies and their impact on F.N.M.I. and diverse groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I provide opportunities for my students to examine and critique the influence of media and its impact on issues and perspectives of equity and diversity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I provide strategies for my students to take responsible action on controversial issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I know how to access resources, such as the S.C.C.D.S.B. Religious Education/Family Life Consultants to address controversial issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I take the initiative to discuss controversial issues and share ideas and resources at Divisional meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>

DISCUSSION GROUND RULES FOR CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS IN THE CLASSROOM

Dialogue and discussions around controversial topics can be important opportunities to explore an issue, examine different viewpoints and unpack assumptions and blind spots. They are valuable learning experiences that can help foster thinking and deeper analysis. As the level of civil discourse erodes in the wider culture and society, too often students will mirror the behaviour of talk show celebrities, pundits and shock jocks unless challenged to do otherwise. Good modeling is often needed along with clear expectations of respect for all participants.

Before launching into a conversation or discussion, be sure to have the ground rules firmly established. One of the best ways to ensure a civil, courteous and respectful discussion is to invite the participants to set the rules themselves and agree to abide by them. Invite students to create a list of ground rules and write them on the board. Refine or expand the list as needed. The tone setting of the session is an important way to communicate respect for all and ensure a rich and vibrant discussion. In the event that the tone or tenor of the discussion veers off course, returning to the ground rules can prevent anyone from being hurt, excluded or shut down. It is also important to note that the Church's social teaching is neither "liberal" nor "conservative". It seeks to be faithful to God's call. As specific issues are explored, people of goodwill might see complex social issues differently than others. If you are teaching Catholic social teaching (CST), encourage all involved to understand the basic values of CST. The goal should not be to have an immediate expression of "personal opinion" on an issue, which can lead to a polarized debate.

First ensure that the group understands the basics of CST and understands how the Pope and the Bishops have reached the positions articulated in their teachings, using the values of dignity of the human person, solidarity, option for the poor, rights and responsibilities, common good and care for creation. Have students analyze how these values are, or are not, reflected in a particular policy or position on an issue. Having participants in classes and groups role play first to understand how CST as opposed to secular values can shape responses to situations and issues is one way to prepare them for more informed and sensitive discussions. Even with acknowledge and a focus on the values of CST, there will be disagreement. The Second Vatican Council taught,

"Very often [the] Christian vision will suggest a certain solution in some given situation. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that some of the faithful, with no less sincerity, will see the problem quite differently . . . let them, then, try to guide each other by sincere dialogue in a spirit of mutual charity and with anxious interest above all in the common good"
(*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43)



GUIDELINES AND GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSIONS

Discussion groups function better when they follow basic ground rules. Review these ground rules with the class and get students to agree to the rules before starting a discussion.

1. Remember to treat others with the same respect and courtesy that you wish to be treated with.
2. Respect the human dignity of each person and be respectful at all times by giving your undivided attention.
3. Listen actively and carefully. Wait a moment after each person speaks to acknowledge and absorb what they have said before moving on.
4. Be open to really consider another's point of view; do not dismiss it quickly, but try to understand how it was formulated and why it is compelling to the speaker.
5. Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements.
6. Engage everyone in the group and ensure that all participate.
7. Remain curious rather than judgmental. Ask for clarification to learn more.
8. Make sure no one person dominates the discussion.
9. Challenge ideas, not persons. (Avoid questioning the integrity or motives of others.)
10. Stay on topic.
11. Be respectful at all times, in your tone of voice and your body language as well as your verbal language.

The following guidelines will help teachers to avoid unproductive debates as students encounter and act on Catholic Social Teaching:

1. Stay focused on the Church's social teaching, especially its basic themes and principles, regarding dignity of the human person, solidarity, human rights, the common good, structural justice, and peace.
2. Be familiar with Church pronouncements on specific issues (welfare reform, death penalty, the debt of poor countries, etc.) where the Pope and/or Bishops have articulated and explained their positions.
3. Use the Church's social teaching as a lens to look at the moral and human dimensions of public issues, and the values of CST to examine and analyze public policies, so students learn the skill of consciously applying values to a deliberation process.
4. Acknowledge that persons of goodwill might legitimately disagree over how to apply the values and teachers of CST in particular circumstances, especially complex social situations.
5. Encourage dialogue and respect for the dignity of each participant as they learn to analyze issues and articulate thoughts in discussions.
6. Over the course of time, address a wide range of issues and concerns of the Church to avoid the appearance of being ideological. Always back up your presentations with clear statements from the Pope, the Vatican.

(From Education for Social Justice. Discussion Ground Rules for Education for Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching.)

Restorative Practices

The restorative conference or circle offers a pathway to restoring damaged relationships. Victims can benefit from the opportunity to confront the perpetrators and in doing so both restore themselves to greater strength and offer the offender an opportunity to provide healing (Drewery, 2004).

THE USE OF THE RESTORATIVE CIRCLE	
Objectives of a restorative circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an insight for the offending student into the impact of his/her behaviour on others. • To allow those affected to confront the offending student • To provide a safe, supportive environment in which those affected can state their views about how the harm should be repaired, as well as an opportunity for the offender to repair the harm that has resulted. • To involve family and significant others and increase accountability and responsibility • To provide the school community with an appropriate response to disruptive and serious incidents
Factors that contribute to successful restorative practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school management needs to be committed to the use of restorative practices rather than punitive practices. • All of the participants need to be allowed to tell their story from their own point of view. • The wrong doer, in order to change and understand the impact of his/her actions, needs to experience the emotional impact those actions have had on the victim(s). • All parties need to feel that they had a significant voice in the decision (this will encourage better participation and a greater willingness to make the plan work).
Outcomes of a restorative circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The victim is able to feel safe again. • The focus on harm and unacceptable behaviour can increase the likelihood that the wrongdoer will accept responsibility for what has happened. • The experience can enhance the wrongdoer's capacity for empathy and reduce the likelihood that he/she will re-offend. • The approach facilitates the offender's reintegration into the wider school community.

Adapted from J. McGrath, "School Restorative Conferencing," Child Care in Practice, vol. 8, no. 3 (2002), p.196

Restorative Practice Questions

When things go wrong, ask . . .

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

When someone has been harmed . . .

1. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
2. What impact has this incident has on you and others?
3. What has been the hardest thing for you?
4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

(From International Institute for Restorative Practices, Canada. www.iirp.org)

GLOSSARY

Affirmative Action: Programs or specific measures designed to make educational and employment opportunities more accessible to individuals or groups who have previously been excluded from full participation in the life of the community and/or society in general. In Canada, this term has become synonymous with initiative that promote gender equity in the workplace.

Anti-racist Education: An approach to education that integrates the perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and students from racial, and ethno-cultural minority groups, into an educational system and its practices. Anti-racist education seeks to build 'communities of difference' in which individuals are treated fairly and recognized for their differences. Anti-racist education provides teachers and students with the knowledge and skills to examine issues related to racism, power, and privilege. Antiracist education promotes the removal of discriminatory biases and systemic barriers.

Assessment: The process of collecting information on student achievement and performance. Assessment information provides the basis for sound decision making regarding teaching and learning. The assessment process reveals what a student understands, knows and can do.

Barrier: An obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to an individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

Bias: The words one uses and the way in which one interprets images, texts, a given situation, or individuals or groups, are an insight into a person's perspective or bias – one's view of the world. All information is biased as it represents the perspective of the author or editor.

Bullying: A form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Classism: Discrimination or prejudice based on social or economic class.

Community Partnerships: Relationships between institutions and diverse groups within the community in which there is recognition of the experiences of people from these groups and evidence of their involvement in the decision making of the institutions.

Controversy: Controversy can be defined as any issue, value, attitude conveyed through language or visual portrayal in a text or learning material, which creates discomfort and concern in the community and the classroom because it conflicts with values and/or sensibilities of students and the Community to a significant degree. Certain general areas of controversy may include offensive stereotyping on the bias of race, ethnicity or the degradation of a racial or ethnocultural group.

Counseling: The process of interacting with a student and/or parents to advise them in matters related to the suitability of program and level of placement.

Crown Ward: Children who are under the care of a guardian or a court whose parents no longer retain parental rights because the rights were voluntarily relinquished or taken away for the protection of the child.

Culture: The totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, language, and way of life of a group of people who share a certain historical background. Manifestations of culture include art, laws, institutions, and customs. Culture changes continually and, as a result, often contains elements of conflict and opposition.

Deconstruct: A term meaning to breakdown, to explain, e.g. deconstruct stereotype.

Disability: A term that covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others not (e.g., physical, mental, and learning disabilities, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, environmental sensitivities). A disability may be present from birth, may be caused by an accident, or may develop over time.

Discrimination: Discrimination is an act which “excludes” a person or persons or an act which treats a person or persons unfairly, usually because of prejudice. There are four identifiable types of discrimination as defined within the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Direct (Overt) Discrimination is direct and identifiable. It may consist of a name, action and/or practice for members of a target group but not for those of other groups.

Indirect (Discreet) Discrimination is difficult to identify. It may consist of comments, actions and/or practices which are done so discreetly that there may not be any correlation between the cause (discrimination) and the effect.

Discrimination Because of Association (Associational Discrimination) can be direct or indirect. It is the denial of privileges or opportunities because of one’s known association with a target group(s).

Constructive (Systemic) Discrimination can be viewed as two separate types of discrimination though they are often referred to as meaning one and the same.

- i. Constructive Discrimination refers to practices that are applied equally to all and not discriminatory on their own, but when applied, may have an adverse effect on members of a protected group as compared to members of the majority group.
- ii. Systemic Discrimination refers to results from systems (procedures) and/or policies and spreads throughout the system. It is another name for Constructive Discrimination.

Poisoned Environment is also a form of Discrimination. This includes offensive or threatening comments or conduct which may, in some instances, have the effect of “poisoning” the environment for the person affected. As a result, those individuals are subjected to terms and conditions of employment or services that are quite different from those experienced by individuals who are not subjected to the same type of comments of treatment. In such instances, the right to equal treatment may be violated.

Diverse Groups: For the purposes of this document, “diverse groups” include but are not limited to those with different abilities, challenges and exceptionalities, sexual orientation, family structure, economic status, racial and ethno-cultural groups as well as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people who are frequently omitted from the curriculum.

Diversity: The presence of wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Dominant Group: A group that is considered to the most powerful and privileged of groups in a particular society and that exercises power and influence over others through social and political means.

English Literacy Development (ELD): ELD programs are for newcomers whose first language is a language other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools. Students in these programs are generally from countries in which their access to education has been limited, or where they may have had limited opportunities to develop language and literacy skills in any language. They arrive in Ontario schools with significant gaps in their education.

English Language Learners (ELLs): ELLs are students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario’s schools, and who may require focused instructional supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English. These students may be Canadian born or recently arrived from other countries. They come from diverse backgrounds and school experiences, and have a wide variety of strengths and needs.

English as a Second Language (ESL): ESL programs are for students born in Canada or newcomers whose first language is other than English or is a variety of English significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools.

Ethnic: An adjective used to describe groups that share a common language, race, religion, or national origin.

Ethnicity: The shared national, ethnocultural, racial, linguistic, and/or religious heritage of a group of people, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

Ethnocultural Group: A group of people who share a particular cultural heritage or background. Every Canadian belongs to some ethnic group. There are a variety of ethnocultural groups among people of African, Asian, European, and indigenous North, Central, and South American backgrounds in Canada. Some Canadians may experience discrimination because of ethnocultural affiliation (ethnicity, religion, nationality, language).

Equity: A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Eurocentric Curriculum: A curriculum that affirms primarily the experiences and achievements of people of Anglo-Saxon and Western European background, and minimizes and marginalizes the experiences, contributions and achievements of people of other origins.

First Nations, Métis, Inuit (F.N.M.I.): An inclusive term which denotes the original inhabitants, or indigenous peoples, of Canada and their descendants. These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.

Gender: A term that refers to those characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed.

Harassment: In any form, harassment is disruptive and undesirable, affecting the well-being of an individual in the working and/or learning environment. It may include one or a combination of the following but is not limited to:

- Jokes, innuendoes, comments, slurs (written or verbal)
- Ridiculing because of physical characteristics or dress as in the case of creed or country or origin
- Singling out of individuals for humiliating or demeaning “teasing”
- Conduct or comments which are motivated by consideration of a person’s membership to a target group
- Display of cartoons, pictures or graffiti which are known or ought reasonably to be known as unwelcome

Harassment is a form of discrimination which tends to emphasize or define a relationship in which parties are viewed as unequal. It is demeaning, intimidating and restricts the lives of its victims.

Personal Harassment within the Grounds of The Ontario Human Rights Code is:

- i. repeated, intentional, offensive comment, behaviour or action made by individuals who know or ought reasonably to know that such behaviour or comments are demeaning to an individual or cause personal humiliation
- ii. misuse of power such as intimidation, threats, blackmail and/or coercion occurs when an individual uses his/her authority or position, with its implicit power, to undermine, sabotage or otherwise interfere with the career of another employee.

Sexual/Gender Harassment is defined as any unsolicited or unwelcome sexual behaviour, comment, action, suggestion or physical contact that creates an uncomfortable environment for the recipient. Sexual harassment may also be a single sexual advance particularly by one in authority that includes or implies a threat and/or reprisal made after a sexual advance is rejected. Sexual harassment is a problem which primarily affects females however males as well can be victimized. Forms of sexual harassment, as defined by this Policy, includes, but is not limited to:

Generalized Sexual Annoyances are behaviours that are hostile, intimidating or offensive, but have not direct link to any tangible job benefit or harm:

- sexually suggestive remarks (written or verbal)
- sexual jokes (written or verbal)
- sexual body language or leering
- unwanted questions or comments of a personal nature (reference to one's body, attire, marital status, sexuality, lifestyle, etc.)
- display of sexual materials (degrading pictures, cartoons or graffiti, etc.)
- unnecessary physical contact (touching, patting, hugging, grouping, etc.)
- unwelcome requests for social or sexual encounters.

Coercion/Solicitation of Sexual Activity represents explicit sexual harassment and entails abuse of authority or status, resulting in a direct work-related consequence, such as gain or loss in a tangible job benefit. When complaint of sexual harassment involves a child sixteen (16) years of age or under, the complaint must immediately be referred to the Children's Aid Society.

Sexual Harassment is NOT:

- i. an occasional compliment or remark;
- ii. relationships between consenting adults which are voluntary and are based on mutual attraction; the normal exercise of supervisory responsibilities, including training, counselling and disciplining when necessary.

Sexual Crimes refers to acts which, when reported to the police, are considered crimes. Sexual harassment must not be confused with sexual assault. Allegations of rape and/or sexual assault will be adjudicated by the Courts and not the Board.

Inclusive Education: Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surrounds, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

Invisible Minority: People who may experience social inequities on the basis of factors that may not be visible, such as a disability or sexual orientation. The term may refer to a group that is small in number or it may connote inferior social position.

Minority Group: A group of people within a given society that has little or no access to social, economic, political, cultural, or religious power. The term sometimes connotes inferior social position. Social subordination is the chief characteristic of a minority group. As such, minority status does not necessarily correlate to population.

Multicultural Education: An approach to education, including administrative policies and procedures, curriculum, and learning activities, that recognizes the experiences and contributions of diverse cultural groups. One of the aims of multicultural education is to promote understanding of and respect for ethno-cultural and racial diversity.

Power Dynamics: This is the process by which one group defines and subordinates other groups and subjects them to differential and unequal treatment.

Prejudice: A set of opinions about or attitudes towards a certain group, or individuals within it, that casts that group and its members in an inferior light and for which there is no legitimate basis in fact. The term is derived from the word “prejudge”. Prejudicial attitudes are very resistant to change because concrete evidence that contradicts the prejudiced view tends to be dismissed as “the exception to the rule”.

Protected Grounds: This refers to the basis on which the Ontario Human Rights Code exists to provide accommodation and protect everyone in Ontario from discrimination and harassment. The specific protected grounds include: race, colour, place of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, same-sex partnership status, pardoned conviction, and disability within the meaning of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Race: A group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by culture, language, social practice or heritable characteristics. The term is often used to designate the social categories into which societies divide people according to such characteristics. Race is also often confused with ethnicity. There are ethnic groups within racial groups.

Racialization: The process through which groups come to be seen as different, and may be subjected to differential and unequal treatment.

Racialized Group: A group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of race, colour, and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment.

Racism: A set of implicit or explicit beliefs, erroneous assumptions, opinions, and actions based on an ideology of inherent superiority of one racial group over another. Racism is evident within organizational and institutional structures and programs, as well as in the thinking and behavioural patterns of individuals.

Silenced Voice: This refers to the suppression or omission of the perspectives of a marginalized person or group, and, or any action or decision that prevents a person or group from offering their perspective. It is the absence of perspective or representation of a person or group that has traditionally been marginalized.

Sexism: Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination directed against people on the basis of their sex or gender. Sexism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Social Justice: A concept based on the belief that each individual and group within a given society has a right to equal opportunity, civil liberties, and full participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional, and moral freedoms and responsibilities of that society.

Stereotypes: Overly simplistic, or unfounded assumptions about a group of people that results in disregard for individual differences amongst group members; usually, negative preconception that characterizes each member of that group as being one and the same.

Visible Minority: A group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of factors that may be visible, such as race, colour, and ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment. The term may refer to a group that is small in number or it may connote inferior social position. (*See also; Racialized Group.*)

ONTARIO CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

1. A DISCERNING BELIEVER FORMED IN THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY WHO:

- a. Illustrates a basic understanding of the saving story of our Christian faith.
- b. Participates in the sacramental life the church and demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of the Eucharist to our Catholic story.
- c. Actively reflects on God's Word as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.
- d. Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good.
- e. Speaks the language of life..."recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it." (Witnesses to Faith)
- f. Seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship.
- g. Understands that one's purpose or call in life comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life's journey.
- h. Respects the faith traditions, world religions and the life-journeys of all people of good will.
- i. Integrates faith with life.
- j. Recognizes that "sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey" and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of redemption (Witnesses to Faith).

2. AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR WHO:

- a. Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values.
- b. Reads, understands and uses written materials effectively.
- c. Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others.
- d. Writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada's official languages.
- e. Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.

3. A REFLECTIVE AND CREATIVE THINKER WHO:

- a. Recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges.
- b. Creates, adapts, and evaluates new ideas in light of the common good.
- c. Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems.
- d. Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience.
- e. Adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience.
- f. Examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society.

4. A SELF-DIRECTED, RESPONSIBLE, LIFE LONG LEARNER WHO:

- a. Demonstrates a confident and positive of sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others.
- b. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability.
- c. Takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership.
- d. Responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner.
- e. Sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life.
- f. Applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills.
- g. Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.
- h. Participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

5. A COLLABORATIVE CONTRIBUTOR WHO:

- a. Works effectively as in interdependent team member.
- b. Thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work.
- c. Develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society.
- d. Finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good.
- e. Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others.
- f. Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals.
- g. Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others.

- h. Applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.

6. A CARING FAMILY MEMBER WHO:

- a. Relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner.
- b. Recognizes human intimacy and sexuality as God given gifts, to be used as the creator intended.
- c. Values and honours the important role of the family in society.
- d. Values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer.
- e. Ministers to the family, school, parish and wider community through service.

7. A RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN WHO:

- a. Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions.
- b. Accepts accountability for one's own actions.
- c. Seeks and grants forgiveness.
- d. Promotes the sacredness of life.
- e. Witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.
- f. Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures.
- g. Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society.
- h. Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.
- i. Respects the environment and uses resources wisely.
- j. Contributes to the common good.

(Source: Institute for Catholic Education, 1998)

ONTARIO CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS
Elementary School Version

I AM A BELIVER!

- I believe that God is an awesome God
- I believe in and have faith in God
- I believe that God is always with us
- I believe that we can talk to God anytime and anywhere, through prayer
- I believe in the stories in the bible
- I believe in the stories of Jesus' life, death and resurrection
- I believe in the Church community, in celebrating Mass and in the Seven Sacraments
- I believe in forgiveness

Because I am a believer, I will live my life like Jesus.

I HAVE A VOICE!

- I speak write and listen as Jesus would want me to
- I care about others and speak up for them
- I am honest
- I think carefully before I react or speak
- I respect all people and their languages
- I listen to the Word of God

Because I have a voice, I will use it lovingly and I will live my life like Jesus.

I HAVE IDEAS!

- I have thoughts and opinions that matter
- I make good choices
- I have hope for the future
- I solve problems with knowledge, understanding and prayer
- I know we are all equal

Because I have ideas, I have a purpose and I will live my life like Jesus.

I AM A LEARNER FOR LIFE!

- I use my gifts and talents given to me by God
- I always do my best
- I build on my strengths and know my weaknesses
- I set goals
- I accept change
- I am proud of the good things I do
- I am thankful for the gifts of others

Because I am a learner for life I can reach my dreams by living my life like Jesus.

I AM A TEAM PLAYER!

- I cooperate with others in all that I do
- I value everyone's work
- I respect and listen to others
- I think of others before myself
- I follow rules of fair play
- I work hard in school so that I can build my community and make it a better place.

Because I am a team player, I know that "together is better" and we will live our lives like Jesus.

I CARE!

- I love God, myself and my family
- I care about and respect my "family" at school, at church, in my community and the world
- I care about and respect God's creation and everything in it

Because I care, I pray for all my families and I will live my life like Jesus.

I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES!

- I am a peacemaker
- I am fair
- I am forgiving
- I follow rules and do my share
- I help the poor and care for people in need
- I stand up for what is right
- I know that all life is precious
- I respect and protect the world and all that is in it.

Because I accept my responsibilities, I can make a difference and will live my life like Jesus.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Human Dignity: The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is at the core of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

Community and the Common Good: In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Our church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.

Rights and Responsibilities: Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Participation: All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society. In the words of the U.S. bishops, “The ultimate injustice is for a person or a group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.”

Solidarity: Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity means that “loving our neighbour” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Role of Government: Since we are social beings, the state is natural to the person. Therefore, the state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. Since, in a large and complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis, citizens need the help of government in fulfilling these responsibilities and promoting the common good. According to the principle of subsidiarity, the functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible, as long as they can be performed adequately. If they cannot, then a higher level of government should intervene to provide help.

Promotion of Peace: Catholic teaching promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. In the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II, “Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.” There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings.

ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE DES ÉVÊQUES CATHOLIQUES DE L'ONTARIO

A STATEMENT FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH
ONTARIO'S EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY

Over the past few months, individuals and groups have approached the Bishops of Ontario to share their concerns about recent trends in the world of public education. Of particular concern to them is the issue of homosexuality: what we should teach about this to our students, and when; how we should accompany students who experience same-sex attractions; what kind of policies boards and schools should implement to ensure safe environments for these students. The Ministry of Education of Ontario has published a number of directives and policy documents in response to these questions that are to be implemented by all publicly-funded schools, including Catholic schools. It is acknowledged that the Ministry reflects a social mindset around these issues that does not correspond to Catholic teaching, leading to the question: will these directives force Catholic schools to betray their own principles and act in ways that contradict their purpose and identity?

The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO), through its Education Commission and its catechetical offices, the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) and the *Office de l'éducation de la foi catholique de l'Ontario (OPÉCO)*, has been following these issues very closely. We have voiced our concerns to the Ministry and sought to help them formulate policies that respect the integrity of Catholic schools. We have collaborated with various partners in the Catholic educational community to ensure that the Church's teaching on these issues is well-known and understood. We have published letters to clarify these teachings and give guidance on instructional and pastoral programs and services. Here are a few of the major interventions of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario over the past few decades.

In the late 1970's, as more and more boards were developing programs in family life and sexual education, Ontario's Catholic Bishops published Guidelines for Family Life Education, a text which was revised and republished in 1987. In it, we read what would become the consistent message of the Bishops during the following decades:

People with homosexual tendencies should be encouraged to cooperate with God's grace in seeking to respond positively to their Christian vocation. They must be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming, or at least bearing with, their personal difficulties. They have personal rights to be respected and a special need to grow in self-worth. However, no pastoral method can be employed which would condone homosexual genital relations, for they are contrary to the essential nature of the sexual act. (No. 82)

During the 1980's, the ACBO sponsored and published a program of Family Life Education that implemented its own guidelines, known as the *Fully Alive!* Series. The issue of homosexuality was presented in grade seven classes in order to help students understand a reality they were hearing about more and more often, and to introduce them to the Church's teaching in this area in a way appropriate to their age-group.

In 2003, the Education Commission wrote a doctrinal message to all involved in Catholic Education, recalling the Catholic school's mission to teach sexual morality to its students, recalling the Church's teaching on homosexuality and proposing directions for pastoral care of students experiencing same-sex attraction. This doctrinal message later became the first part of a more amplified resource entitled *Pastoral Guidelines to Assist students of Same-Sex Orientation*.

This resource included, along with the Commission's message, a collection of personal stories to help teachers, staff and parents understand what some students can be experiencing: a series of guidelines on accompanying students with same-sex orientation; a second series of guidelines on creating a safe school environment for these students; a number of statements presenting the theological foundations of the bishops' message; a series of reference texts including a letter from the Vatican's Congregation for the Faith on the Pastoral Care of *Homosexual* Persons; relevant excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and a statement from the American Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family entitled *Always Our Children*. All these texts are to be read in harmony with the bishops' doctrinal message that introduces the resource.

Early this year, the ACBO became aware of a policy directive (memorandum) from the Ministry of Education known as PPM 145, some passages of which concerned students who self-identify as homosexual. The ACBO's Education Commission contacted the Catholic Boards across the province to advise them of certain details within this PPM which did not correspond to the Bishops' own pastoral guidelines, and called on the Boards to respect the integrity of their schools as they implemented various provisions of this PPM. To our knowledge, all Catholic Boards in the province have responded positively to our invitation.

More recently, much public attention has been given to the Ministry of education's directive that each Board must develop a policy regarding equity and inclusivity. The issue of sexual orientation is but one of many that is addressed by this directive. The Catholic School Boards of Ontario have worked together to develop a **Catholic version template** policy that could help each individual board respond to the Ministry's directive. Last April, the ACBO studied this template and decided to endorse in principle the statements contained therein respecting the denominational rights of Catholic schools.

In other words, the Bishops believe that the proposed template will help ensure that our schools will remain faithful to Catholic teaching as they move forward with the Ministry's directive. Each board must now develop its own policy, and the ACBO has invited each board to consult its own Bishop in this process. Of course, writing a policy is one thing, implementing it is another. The ACBO will continue to monitor this process, in collaboration with its partners in Catholic Education.

The Bishops of Ontario believe that it is possible for publicly-funded Catholic schools to be faithful to their identity and mission while responding to the legitimate demands made upon them by the society in which they operate. This is no easy task, but is facilitated by the goodwill and collaboration of all those who care for Catholic education. It is in this spirit that we present this summary of our past activity in this area as a pledge of our continued vigilance and leadership.

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF ONTARIO

October 4, 2010

Quick Facts

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/EquityQuickFacts.pdf>

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