

**English Catholic Council of
Ontario Directors of Education**

2009

Catholicity Best Practices



Compiled by:
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OVERVIEW

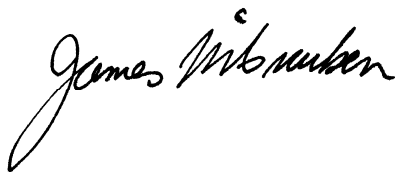
This document provides a brief overview of the faith landscape of Catholic education in Ontario today. There is so much good that is done, not only to promote Catholic faith, but also to respond to the Gospel call of hope, love, community and justice.

It is very encouraging to see that many Catholic Boards have adopted best practices like a Board Spiritual Theme and an annual adult faith day for staff. Look carefully and you will find a wealth of new ideas. By including the contact person, it is easy to gain additional information.

Please share this document with your administrative team and the people in your Board with particular responsibility for faith formation. It is my hope that the new ideas and initiatives found here will enrich Catholic education in Ontario for years to come.

Thank you for your contributions. By sharing and networking our ideas, we inspire each other to respond more deeply to the Gospel call to grow in our faith.

May God continue to bless your work as leaders in Catholic education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James G. McCracken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

James G. McCracken
Director of Education
Ottawa Catholic School Board

ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MICHAEL SCHMITT

Best Practice #1: Adult Faith Formation Retreat Series

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

The Providence Spirituality Centre, Kingston, has been contracted by ALCDSB to animate a series of retreat days for up to 25 teachers. In its first year, there were 6 sessions – 3 began at noon and ran until 9:00 pm (with the Board providing teacher supply coverage); 3 began at 5:00 pm and ran until 9:00pm. In the second year, the format was changed to 4 full day sessions, with the Board providing supply coverage for participating teachers. In both cases, participation was determined on a first come, first served basis, with preference given in year 2 to teachers who had not participated in the previous year. In its third year, the program was changed from a four-part series to which participants committed to four, stand alone sessions. As a result of this change, waiting lists have been generated.

Best Practice #2: Faith Life Liaisons

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

Faith Life Liaison is a voluntary position at each of our schools. Annually, this group is brought together for a day of prayer, planning and problem solving, all directed at supporting on-going adult faith formation at the school level. A monthly FLL newsletter is provided to all schools and support is provided from the Office of Religious and Family Life Education for school-based activities (e.g. Advent/Lenten evenings of reflection; staff retreats). As well, a central lending library of spiritual reading is coordinated in support of school-based, book clubs.

Best Practice #3: Committee for Social Justice

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

ALCDSB Committee for Social Justice includes representatives from all of our stakeholder groups as well as a representative from the Archdiocese of Kingston. The

mandate of this group is to provide curriculum supports in the area of social justice to our schools, to promote the social teaching of the Church, and to advise the Board with regard to how such Church teachings inform both our policies and practices. The Committee maintains a web site and annually promotes resources and activities related to particular issues. These have included: a “No Sweat” purchasing policy; *School Guidelines for Ethical Fundraising*; *Earth Day Kit*; *Thirsting for Justice* water campaign (includes a new Water Policy & AP which bans the provision of water in single-use, soft plastic bottles by the Board and promotes ecologically sound alternatives); support for the Board’s Eco-Schools initiative; support for secondary school exposure learning trips to developing countries; coordination of disaster response initiatives; liaison with community/Church organizations, including BAN, CCODP, KAIROS, and many more.

Best Practice #4: Catholic Character and Culture Steering Committee

Contact Information: Joanne Fisher, Superintendent of School Effectiveness, fisherj@alcdsb.on.ca; Michael Schmitt, Director of Education, schmitt@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

Formed following the second ICE Symposium (November 2006), this group of stakeholders provides leadership to the Board in the area of our distinctive Catholic character. Beginning with a coordination of the *Our Catholic Schools Consultation* (spring 2007), the committee also has overseen the development of a Board Theme (see below) as well as a resource tool (*Renewing the Vision – Strengthening Catholic Character and Culture*) which seeks to provide schools with opportunities to integrate the CGEs into the fabric of their school communities. *Renewing the Vision*, which includes a “Catholicity audit tool”, has been promoted extensively with all schools and incorporated into School Improvement Plans. As well, the group has been providing leadership with regard to identifying and strengthening linkages between our schools and the broader Catholic community. Examples of successes have included closer liturgical coordination between schools and parishes, between School Councils and Parish Councils, between schools and Church organizations (e.g. Knights of Columbus). The Committee most recently has been involved in formulating recommendations with regard to the Board’s response to the position paper of the OCCB on virtues.

Best Practice #5: Board Theme – Lord, It Is Good For Us To Be Here

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

Early in 2007, consultations between the Catholic Character and Culture Steering Committee and school Principals produced our first Board Theme. The theme has created a lens through which schools could sharpen their focus in terms of identifying aspects of our distinctive Catholic character. Supports have included: the creation of a theme logo (featured on a banner which was provided to all school sites); monthly

liturgies; and a Board theme song. The theme seems to have galvanized the efforts of all of our partners in celebrating our distinctive Catholic culture.

Best Practice #6: AQ Course in Religious Education

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

A long standing practice of the ALCDSEB has been to annually promote and facilitate some part(s) of the OECTA/OCSTA Additional Qualifications Courses in Religious Education.

Best Practice #7: Advent and Lent Resource Packages

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

Twice a school year these supplementary resource packages are distributed to schools and feature both curriculum and liturgical materials. They are followed up with workshops for teachers.

Best Practice #8: Catholic Education Week

Contact Information: Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

The Board supports both system and school-based celebrations of this important event. Of local interest is the annual presentation of several awards, including the *Archbishop Francis J. Spence Catholic Teacher of the Year*, the *Excellence in Supporting Catholic Education Award (CUPE & Support Staff)* as well as the *Student Volunteers of the Year (Elementary and Secondary)*.

Best Practice #9: Special Awards

Contact Information: Michael Schmitt, Director of Education, schmitt@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

At the end of the school year, the Board celebrates the careers of its retiring employees, an occasion which also recognizes the special contributions of individuals. *Awards include: Contribution of Catholic Education; Adult Volunteer of the Year.*

Best Practice #10: Prayer Buddy Program

Contact Information: Michael Schmitt, Director of Education, schmitt@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

One of the roles of Trustees is to establish, support and strengthen community linkages. In doing so, our Catholic educational system is understood to be vital and contributing to the overall well being of the communities we serve.

Almost a year has passed since Trustee Turkington approached the Director to enquire about initiating a “Prayer Buddy Program” at St. Thomas More and St. Paul Catholic Schools. In essence, the program works as follows: each week, students are asked if they have intentions for which others in the community can pray in support of these intentions. The intentions are forwarded (no names) to the faith community at St. Joseph Parish, specifically the Knights of Columbus, the Legion of Mary and the Catholic Women’s League. The faith community then includes these intentions in their daily prayers. Students in these schools know that others in their larger Parish community are praying for their personal intentions.

This simple, but powerful “Prayer Buddy Program” has three objectives:

1. to provide comfort, support and inspiration to the members of our Catholic school communities through the provision of prayers in support of their personal intentions;
2. to provide members of the Catholic community the opportunity to become involved in our schools and to feel part of these school communities;
3. to demonstrate a strong and united Catholic community, willing to support each other through the power of daily prayer.

The program is meeting its original objectives and is working well, as demonstrated by the 423 prayer requests that have been forwarded to “Prayer Buddies” in the 2 pilot schools. Most recently, the “Prayer Buddy Program” has been expanded to several additional schools and plans to extend the program into all of our schools are underway.

In conclusion, the “Prayer Buddies Program” is a simple, but powerful example of bringing the school community and the Parish community into a meaningful relationship. This can only serve to strengthen the community as a whole.

Best Practice #11: System Faith Day

Contact Information: Joanne Fisher, Superintendent of School Effectiveness fisherj@alcdsb.on.ca; Bronek Korczynski, Coordinator of Religious and Family Life Education, korczyns@alcdsb.on.ca

Details:

While the experience of system-wide faith day is not a new strategy for most Catholic school boards, the recent successful experience of the ALCDSB has led to the identification of a three year cycle for such faith development opportunities:

- ✚ Year One – site based faith day for all staff with support of Principal, Faith Life Liaisons, Office of Religious and Family Life Education, local Pastors
- ✚ Year Two – regional faith day for families of schools, learning networks or groupings based on another common identifier (e.g. French immersion)
- ✚ Year Three – system wide faith day, bringing all staff from all employee groups together for a single event involving the celebration of the Eucharist and one keynote speaker

For all of these events, consideration is given to making them as “green” as possible, which includes the provision of mass transportation, minimal use of paper for programs etc., provision of food. Feedback from staff is made possible through access to a post-event, on-line survey.

BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: CATHY HORGAN

Best Practice #1: Mission Trips

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant
jyoung@bhncdsb.ca

Details: Each year, a group composed of secondary students and their adult chaperones spend ten days in economically disadvantaged locations in Canada or the United States working alongside other organizations to help build suitable housing for the local residents. In the past few years the emphasis has been on building housing for survivors of Hurricane Katrina. The Mission Group becomes a part of the local community sharing the daily lives of the people they are helping. In the past, the Mission group has built housing in Winnipeg, Louisiana, West Virginia, and other locations.

Best Practice #2: Annual Staff Day

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant
jyoung@bhncsb.ca

Details: Annually, all Board employees gather to celebrate and nurture their faith. This day alternates between a coming together of all employees at a central venue one year and a school-based faith day the other year.

At our large group gatherings, the day begins with a Eucharistic liturgy. Following this is a series of keynote addresses from a well known national or international speaker. The keynote always focuses on their role as employees in a Catholic system.

In a year when there are school-based faith days, each staff, with the guidance of their principal and Faith Ambassador develop their own format for the day. Most schools incorporate a Eucharistic Liturgy and then some other “faith activities” for the day.

Best Practice #3: Adult Faith Ambassadors

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant,
jyoung@bhncsb.ca

Details: The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board has a group of committed employees called Faith Ambassadors. The group consists of an employee from each elementary school plus two from each secondary school.

The mandate of the group is to assist the principal of each school in nurturing the faith life of school staff. Twice a year the Ambassadors come together for a full day session at the Catholic Education Centre. Prayer is an important part of the day and part of the day is always kept aside for some type of personal faith development. Then, under the guidance of various Board staff or invited facilitators, ambassadors work on developing various skills that they can take back to their schools. In the past, Ambassadors have had workshops on creating a prayer service, compassionate care to adults, ideas for celebrating the liturgical year and resources that will help in creating a school-based Faith Day.

Best Practice #4: Student Faith Ambassadors for Christ

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant
jyoung@bhncsb.ca

Details: The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board has begun a pilot project in 2007-08 school year. The focus of the program is to help students develop their faith life and to assist in the development of the faith life of their school communities in the areas of prayer, sacrament, scripture, morality and tradition. Students are involved in activities in their classes, their schools and the wider community. Students in Grades 6 and 7 are the target group but depending on the schools, students in Grade 4 or 5 might also be invited. Each group of Youth Ambassadors has an adult adviser who begins the initial process of recruitment by explaining the program to the target group and then distributing the application form. After students are selected, the teacher acts as a guide and a resource in helping the students to discern what their next steps will be. The responsibility for the program rests with the students and not the teacher—faith is caught not taught. In the 2007-08 school year the program has taken a different face in each of the pilot schools but the focus of prayer and good works are common to all.

Best Practice #5: Catholic Leadership Program for Administrators

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant
jyoung@bhncsb.ca

Details: Over the past three years, the administrators of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board have participated in a programme of certification from ICE. One hour of each Administrator's meeting was *used for faith formation and updating*. A series of guest speakers including Dr. Moira McQueen, Msgr. Dennis Murphy, Father Jim Mulligan, Sister Heather MacKinnon, Michael Higgins, and others spoke to the principals on a variety of topics. At the end of the series the participants received a certificate from ICE.

Best Practice #6: Hands for Heaven

Contact Information: Joyce Young, Religion and Family Life Consultant
jyoung@bhncsb.ca

Details: During Lent, the elementary schools of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board embark on a social justice outreach program that assists Dr. Andrew Simone's organization, Canadian Food for Children. Each school gathers salt, soap, pasta and sugar. A local transport company has graciously donated one of their trucks for the transport of these goodies to the Canadian Food for Children warehouse in Mississauga. After Lent, the schools box the staples which are then picked up for shipping. On arrival at the warehouse, one group of intermediate elementary students is on hand to help unpack the transport and experience a day at the warehouse.

BRUCE-GREY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: BRUCE MACPHERSON

Best Practice #1: Faith Formation Day

Contact Information: Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life
Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: A gathering on the first professional activity day of each school year, dedicated to nurturing the faith of all adults who contribute to the work of our Board. A welcome by our Director of Education and Board Chairperson is followed by a Eucharistic Celebration, presided over by a guest priest, or our Bishop, Representatives from all staff groups participate in the various liturgical ministries. Carried in procession by representatives of each community, are visual symbols, or framed art posters of the theme, signed by individual staffs and taken back to each school as a symbolic reminder of the day. Following break, a motivational keynote speaker addresses us on the theme. The afternoon may feature a second keynote address or a series of faith-centred workshops from which to select. The day is concluded by individual staff gatherings to consolidate key insights and begin a school faith formation plan for the year. All staff members look forward to this day as an opportunity to renew friendships, learn, and celebrate our common faith.

Best Practice #2: Catholic Education Week Dinner & Speaker

Contact Information: Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life
Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: For the past three years on the Tuesday evening of Catholic Education Week, Board staff, parents, pastors, and parish community members have been invited to come together to celebrate Catholic education and our important complementary roles in the lives of young people. After a formal dinner, a motivational speaker on a topic related to the Catholic Education Week theme addresses us. For this sold-out event each year, we have been fortunate to have speakers such as Sister Clare Fitzgerald, David Wells, and this year, Father J. Glenn-Murray. A wonderful spirit of collegiality, community and celebration pervades this event.

Best Practice #3: Board-wide Advent and Lenten Retreats

Contact Information: Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life
Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: In addition to individual staff opportunities, during the Advent and Lenten season, we offer whole-Board Advent and Lenten twilight retreats, in which all staff are invited to come together for a one, or two-part experience to enter more deeply into these sacred times of preparation. We begin with welcome, a gathering prayer, and Dine together. Following this, is a two-hour evening session with prayer, song, and a homily, facilitated by a variety of retreat leaders. These opportunities are greeted enthusiastically by participants, who enjoy coming together as a community, for spiritual renewal, encouragement and friendship.

Best Practice #4: Lenten Mission Uniting Us in Reflection and Prayer

Contact Information: Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life
Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: During the Lenten season for the past three years, we have centrally prepared daily reflections to engage all of our communities in a united prayer and reflection time. These have been inspired by staff insights gathered at faith days, particular virtues, or our upcoming Catholic Education Week theme. Some schools use these as whole-school morning prayers, while other schools engage in them as individual classes. The CEC also participates in the Mission, which includes an introduction, story, reflection, Scripture, prayer, and often, a suggested activity. Large art posters with the week's overall theme, as well as the theme for each day of the current week are sent out to schools, and displayed in a central location in the school, as an ongoing visual reminder of the progression of our communal Lenten journey.

Best Practice #5: Faith Ambassadors

Contact Information: Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life
Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: Two representatives from each staff within our Board carry out the ministry of faith ambassador, primarily to foster the faith enrichment of our adult colleagues. The ambassadors come together on a regular basis for half-days to pray and learn, support each other's faith journeys, and share resources and ideas. Within the schools, many of the faith ambassadors have gathered together a faith formation team in cooperation with the principal, to plan staff prayer, retreats, and gatherings – both social and spiritual, and to develop ways to offer personal and spiritual support to fellow staff members.

Although the role of faith ambassador is directed primarily towards adult faith support and formation, faith ambassadors also act as a liaison with the religious education consultant as needed, in planning whole school events. This past year has marked the

formal beginning of the faith ambassador programme within our Board, and we are edified by the degree of enthusiasm and faith commitment of our ambassadors.

Best Practice #6: A Study of Monsignor Dennis Murphy's Articles on Catholic Education

Contact Information: Catherine Montreuil, Superintendent, catherine_montreuil@bgcdsb.org, Charlotte Lahey, Consultant, Religious and Family Life Education: charlotte_lahey@bgcdsb.org

Details: Successive monthly principal/administration meetings during this current year have begun with a professional learning/reflection opportunity around one of Monsignor Dennis Murphy's articles on Catholic Education published annually in the Catholic Register since August, 2002. The process is a learning/reflection activity accompanied by critical questions, and reporting. A number of principals have in turn, begun to order the articles and carry out a similar process with their staffs. In these days when we are deeply aware of the threats to Catholic education, these articles have provided us with rich dialogue, and an increased ability to understand, and articulate credible responses to the challenges.

**CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
OF EASTERN ONTARIO**

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: WM. J. GARTLAND

Best Practice #1: Advent to Christmas: A Journey to Bethlehem

Contact Information: Teresa McDonald, Religious & Family Life Consultant,
teresa.mcdonald@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: This support document is in the form of a binder containing specific resources for Advent in the Liturgical Years A, B and C. It also contains suggestions for school-wide Advent and Christmas activities.

Each section provides prayer services for various age groups as well as extension activities and resources for K-12 classrooms. There are several literacy connections to the Gospel readings that can provide a wonderful Advent focus for any Language Arts program. The prayer services are based on the readings of the preceding Sunday and have both an action and a candle theme associated with them.

Weekly staff prayer services are part of the package, to act as a springboard for the classroom prayer services and follow-up activities.

Best Practice #2: Lent to Easter: A Journey of Transformation

Contact Information: Paula Wheeler, Religious and Family Life Education Consultant,
paula.wheeler@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: This is a resource produced by the Office of Religious & Family Life Education for CDSBEO, with contributions from a number of talented teachers. The binder contains resources specific to Lent in the Liturgical Years A, B and C, as well as suggestions for school-wide Lenten and Easter activities.

There are six packages in each section – one for each of the five weeks of Lent that we are in school, and one for the first week of Easter. Each week is based on the Gospel of the preceding Sunday, and has a Catholic theme aligned with it. A prayer service, extension activity for the prayer service, and suggested classroom activities are included. It is hoped that staff will begin each week with the prayer service and then use the classroom activities with their students.

Best Practice #3: Education to Virtue

Contact Information: Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: This resource is intended to be used by staff and parents, and is available in PowerPoint format. The presentation compares and contrasts the Ministry of Education document, Finding *Common Ground, Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12 (2008)* with the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops document, *Character Development and the Virtuous Life: A Position Paper (2008)*.

Important and key messages in both documents are identified, as are some critical differences. The history of character development in the secular world and in the Catholic tradition are examined, with particular emphasis placed on the Ontario Bishops' invitation to use the provincially mandated focus as an opportunity to go beyond the secular view of this concept and to rediscover our traditional Catholic virtues.

Best Practice #4: Our Catholic Virtues Posters

Contact Information: Marg Shea-Lawrence, Superintendent of Education, marg.shea-lawrence@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: As a follow-up to the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops' document *Character Development and the Virtuous Life: A Position Paper (2008)*, a series of seven posters have been developed to help focus on the Bishops' invitation to rediscover our traditional Catholic virtues.

The posters focus on the seven Catholic virtues of: **Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, Justice, Faith, Hope and Love.**

Each colorful poster features a simple yet accurate definition, along with an appropriate graphic. The posters are designed for display in hallways and classrooms.

In addition, each school in CDSBEO has received a resource disk containing background information, activities, suggested literature links and PowerPoint presentations, to help highlight the virtues in each school (and for different audiences).



Best Practice #5: Restorative Practices

Contact Information: Brian Peters, Principal of Special Education, brian.peters@cdsbeo.on.ca; Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: The Religious & Family Life and Special Education Departments have worked closely with the International Institute on Restorative Practices to develop training and resource materials that introduce and sustain the use of Restorative Practices across our system

Catholic teachings around reconciliation and forgiveness have been integrated into the process, along with Gospel values and the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations. The result has been a uniquely Catholic view of traditional restorative practice thinking / training / resources.

Best Practice #6: Bravo Breakfasts

Contact Information: Wm. J. Gartland, Director of Education, bill.gartland@cdsbeo.on.ca; Bob Perreault, Communications Officer, bob.perreault@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: CDSBEO Bravo Breakfast Awards provide a public forum in which to celebrate and recognize outstanding students for their ongoing contributions to our school system and to their Catholic communities. We believe it is of vital importance to recognize the efforts, achievements, and successes of our students.

Many unsung heroes in our schools are recognized - students who are significant, positive contributors to the everyday life of their school, and who put forth their best effort to enhance the environment they share with their peers.

The students are nominated for various reasons including, serving their Parish with dedication and responsibility; overcoming personal obstacles to become valuable members of their Catholic school communities; assisting with school activities and helping teachers in any way they can – some for many years; consistently placing the needs and wants of others ahead of their own; and for displaying kindness and honesty and possessing a gentle spirit.

These students have embraced the Gospel values and are truly travelling down the path to discipleship.

CDSBEO holds regional Bravo Breakfast Awards annually across the eight counties which make up our board.



Best Practice #7: Body, Mind, Heart & Soul DVD

Contact Information Wm. J. Gartland, Director of Education,
bill.gartland@cdsbeo.on.ca; Bob Perreault, Communications Officer,
bob.perreault@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: The CDSBEO Parent Involvement Committee has produced a DVD entitled: **Body, Mind, Heart and Soul**, which presents an informative look at our Catholic school system.

This resource is used to assist Trustees, Supervisory Officers, Principals and Catholic School Council members in sharing the good news of the work taking place in our schools in association with the wider community.

Best Practice #8: Hope in Time of Loss: Crisis Response Protocol & CDSBEO Grief Kits

Contact Information: Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca; Pam Dunk, Crisis Response Worker, pam.dunk@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: This resource is intended to help support and guide a Catholic school community in dealing with the sudden death of a student or staff member.

The binder contains:

- ✚ a section on what could be the immediate response,
- ✚ a list of local community resource partners,
- ✚ information around the grief journey,
- ✚ an appendix containing templates for communicating with the school community,
- ✚ sample liturgies and prayers for bereavement and,
- ✚ specific resources for individuals who are closest to the situation.

The grief kits are maintained in plastic totes, so they can be easily transported. They contain resources that teachers and support personnel can use with students, such as story books appropriate for all age groups of students, art supplies, as well as resources regarding teen suicide to be used by a classroom teacher or adult facilitator when supporting a class, small group or individual.

Best Practice #9: Social Justice Committee

Contact Information: Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca;

Details: The CDSBEO Social Justice Committee, organized by the Religious & Family Life Education department, is made up of administrators, teachers, consultants, chaplaincy leaders and our Catholic student trustee. The assembly meets 3-4 times per year to discuss social justice issues (both locally and globally) and to brainstorm how we, as a Catholic community, could and should respond. The committee looks for ways to raise awareness and to highlight issues and for resources that can be used in schools to further our commitment to Catholic social teaching.

This group is also very involved in the planning and facilitating of our annual CDSBEO *Just Us* Grade 10 Youth Symposium.

Best Practice #10: Faith Day – September 28th, 2007

Contact Information: Marg Shea-Lawrence, Superintendent of Education, marg.shea-lawrence@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: All education staff, including teachers, educational assistants, principals and senior administration, along with trustees and local clergy, attended a one-day professional activity event which focused on our Board Theme ***Called to Serve as Disciples of Christ***. The proceedings took place under a big top tent at scenic Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg, Ontario.

We began our day with a Celebration of the Eucharist, offered by Most Reverend Brendan O'Brien, Archbishop of Kingston. The morning Liturgy was followed by a keynote address from Director of Education Bill Gartland. Director Gartland's focus was on our board theme, as it relates to the important service we provide to ensure success for all.

Following a picnic lunch and time for staff to tour Upper Canada Village, we were addressed by the afternoon keynote speaker, Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, Bishop of St. George's and Labrador City, NFLD. Bishop Crosby offered an insightful reflection on the call to discipleship and the important role we play as Catholic educators. Bishop Crosby brought his own experience with the loss of Newfoundland's Catholic schools to bear on his reflections and suggestions to us. This day was very well received by all who attended.

Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario plans to hold these Board-wide Faith Days once every two years. Every year, all school staff participates in school-based Retreats which focus on their role and vocation as Catholic educators.

Best Practice #11: Catholic Education Coalition






Contact Information: Marg Shea-Lawrence, Superintendent of Education,
marg.shea-lawrence@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: CDSBEO Catholic Education Coalition is an assembly of partners, composed of teachers, support staff, parents, clergy, principals, senior administration and trustees from across the eight counties of the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario. This group come together, on a regular basis, to discuss ways in which we are called to **Preserve, Proclaim and Promote Catholic Education**.

The goals of the Catholic Education Coalition are:

1. To strengthen the link between School, Home, and the Parish.
2. To gather system and governmental support for our Catholic School System.
3. To work with students and staff to preserve, proclaim and promote Catholic education.

CDSBEO Catholic Education Coalition Activities include:

-  Regular meetings
-  Catholic Education Symposium
-  Regional Events, including hockey matches, liturgies, and local symposiums
-  The development of resource materials for distribution in the wider community
-  Catholic Education Week Committee

Best Practice #12: Catholic Education Week Mass

Contact Information: Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious and Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: Annually, on the first Monday of Catholic Education Week, we gather at Holy Cross Parish in Kemptville to celebrate the Eucharist. Since the entire school board community cannot be present at this liturgy, we invite each school to send a representative group, consisting of a *principal, teacher, support staff member, parent(s), 2 students, and the local parish priest*. CDSBEO Trustees and Senior Administration are also in attendance.

The Eucharist is celebrated by one of our three Archbishops/ Bishops. Each school community is presented with a 'symbol' reflective of the Catholic Education Week theme. This symbol is blessed and taken back to the local school for use throughout the week ahead. The item is meant to stand as a reminder of our unity as a Catholic school board community.

Each year, we invite one of our school choirs to lead us in song during the liturgy. A light luncheon follows the Eucharist, which gives everyone an opportunity to visit with one another before heading back to school in the afternoon.

Best Practice #13: Board Theme

Contact Information: Marg Shea-Lawrence, Superintendent Education, marg.shea-lawrence@cdsbeo.on.ca; Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdsbeo.on.ca

Details: Every two years, senior administration identifies a Board Theme. Themes from previous years have included:

- ✚ Being the Body of Christ ... as Communities of Hope!
- ✚ People of God...Transforming the World!
- ✚ Called to Serve ... as Disciples of Christ!

The Religious and Family Life Education Department develops resources to support schools in bringing the board theme to life. These include links to the Religious and Family Life Education Program, to children's literature, to social justice activities and prayer services, etc. We specifically work to ensure that our Board Theme and the resources we develop relate to the Character Education Initiative of the Ministry of Education.

In order to assist schools with promoting the board theme, each school receives a banner with the theme and logo on it for display and use in the school throughout the two-year period.

Best Practice #14: *Just-Us* Youth Symposium

Contact Information: Tom Jordan, Principal of Religious & Family Life Education, tom.jordan@cdbeo.on.ca

Details: The *Just Us* Youth Symposium is designed for Grade 10 students as they are approaching their senior years at high school and will provide leadership for the younger students in years ahead.

The annual Symposium features speakers on topics that are of concern to youth. It is designed to provide opportunities for students to consider ways in which they can volunteer in their local communities. Key principles of Catholic Social Teaching are at the heart of this event. We gather over 300 high school students from all schools across the board in one central location for the day. The Religious and Family Life Education Department provides Chaplaincy Leaders with resources to facilitate **pre** and **post symposium** activities. This ensures that the students arrive at the event with an awareness of what to expect and they go back to their local schools prepared to take action.

Past presentations and topics have included: the environment, water for third world peoples, uranium mining in Lanark County, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, and the Ryan's Well Foundation, to name but a few. We always end our day with a beautiful Liturgy of the Word that is prepared and led by students.

DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOHN B. KOSTOFF

Best Practice #1: System-wide Faith Day

Contact Information: J. B. Kostoff, Director of Education, john.kostoff@dpcdsb.org

Details: Each year, either at the family or board level, we conduct a faith day. This includes a liturgy in the morning and workshops or staff renewal in the afternoon. All employees are invited, as well as school council members, parish priests and religious and retired employees. Approximately 8,000 people attend this year's event. Faith Day takes place near the start of the school year. Alternatively, we have held a family of schools liturgy, using a three-year cycle.

Best Practice #2: Pastoral Planning Day for Secondary Schools

Contact Information: J. B. Kostoff, Director of Education, john.kostoff@dpcdsb.org

Details: Our Secondary Principals, Chaplaincy Team Leaders, Pastors, Bishop, Trustees, Religion-Faith Consultants, Religion Department Heads and Superintendents gather for a one-day meeting to review our board's commitment to the Catholic nature of our school, review our yearly school Pastoral Plans and raise issues of concerns. The meeting serves as a clearinghouse for matters of concern and to share information. The meeting is held yearly at the beginning of the school year.

Best Practice #3: Quarterly Parish Newsletter from the Directors Office

Contact Information: B. E. Campbell, General Mgr., Communications & Community Relations, bruce.campbell@dpcdsb.org

Details: Quarterly, the Director, through the Communications & Community Relations Department, produces an informational newsletter for our pastors. The newsletter provides an overview of school, board and general education-related issues, details of board decisions, and other matters of potential concern or interest.

Best Practice #4: Regular Meeting with the Archbishop and the Directors of the Area

Contact Information: J.B. Kostoff, Director of Education, john.kostoff@dpcdsb.org

Details: Each year, the Directors and Chairs of the Board of the five GTA boards meet with the Archbishop to discuss issues of mutual concern. The meetings last approximately four hours and the agenda is a co-operative process reflecting school, board and diocesan concerns. Minutes are produced and follow-up undertaken.

Best Practice #5: Zone Meetings

Contact Information: J.B. Kostoff, Director of Education, john.kostoff@dpcdsb.org

Details: Monthly Zone Meetings are held by our priests and our local Bishop. If items are related to Catholic education, our schools, etc., the Director is invited to attend. This is a good opportunity to hear and address pastoral concerns about local schools or board issues as well as to explain board decisions on various matters.

DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: PAUL PULLA

Best Practice #1: System-Wide Mass

Contact Information: Lisa True, Consultant for Religious & Family Life Education, lisa.true@dcdsb.ca, Dominic Pullano, Adult Faith Animator dominic.pullano@dcdsb.ca

Details: An early evening joint system-wide Mass hosted by the Board and all employee groups is held twice annually in the spring and fall in a local parish. Celebration of the Eucharist is followed by a social hour for Board employees, Administration, Trustees and Parents. The fall Mass is celebrated in conjunction with World Teacher's Day. At this Mass all new teachers are commissioned. During the commissioning they are given a Bible, a crucifix and candle for their classroom prayer tables.

Best Practice #2: Secondary School Student Senator/Leadership Training.

Contact Information Tracy Barill, Superintendent of Education, Resource to the Student Senate Committee, tracy.barill@dcdsb.ca

Details: An ongoing formation process for students focused on social justice initiatives and leadership development. It involves student representatives from each Secondary School who meet once a month. A year end celebration includes a full day retreat and celebration of the Eucharist. This day is prepared by the student senators group who invite a larger body from each Secondary school to participate.

Best Practice #3: Annual School Faith Awareness Day

Contact Information: Lisa True, Consultant for Religious & Family Life Education, lisa.true@dcdsb.ca

Details: The Durham Catholic District School Board devotes a full designated PA day to focus on faith awareness and development for all school staff. This is planned and co-ordinated to reflect local needs and is integrated into the overall school staff development plan for the year. School Faith Ambassadors in the elementary schools and Chaplains in our secondary schools play a significant role in assisting and resourcing for this day.

Best Practice #4: Courage to Serve Retreat

Contact Information: Dominic Pullano, Adult Faith Animator,
dominic.pullano@dcdsb.ca

Details: The Courage to Serve Program is offered to interested staff on an annual basis. This retreat provides an opportunity for both personal reflection as well as group sessions to discuss the challenges of building a faith community at the school level. Each retreat takes place over two days in a setting away from the workplace. It is residential, with the participants staying at the facility for the entire time. The group of participants engages in a combination of large and smaller group sessions, as well as having the opportunity for focused personal time through times of silent reflection. Group sessions employ ‘third things’ (readings, poems, stories, and scripture passages) as a means to explore vocation and practice.

Best Practice #5: Ongoing Adult Faith Formation Programs

Contact Information: Dominic Pullano, Adult Faith Animator,
dominic.pullano@dcdsb.ca

Details: As part of staff development, retreat opportunities including weekend and twilight retreats for employee groups are provided throughout the school year. Web-based resources and reflections are provided to staff during appropriate times in the liturgical calendar.

Best Practice #6: Faith Ambassadors Program

Contact Information: Dominic Pullano, Adult Faith Animator,
dominic.pullano@dcdsb.ca

Details: Principals of all Elementary schools appoint a least one staff member as faith ambassadors to promote adult faith formation among the staff. Faith ambassadors meet annually as a whole group. They also meet in Family of Schools with Secondary Chaplaincy leaders as mentors to share ideas and receive in-service.

Best Practice #7: How Faith Meets Pedagogy in Durham Catholic – “Heart, Head and Soul”

Contact Information: Lisa True, Consultant for Religious & Family Life Education,
lisa.true@dcdsb.ca,

Details: Consistent with the Board’s Mission Statement and Gospel Values, the Catholic Curriculum Maps developed by the Catholic Curriculum Corporation are being implemented in all of our schools K-12. They are a tool which assists teachers in

integrating our Faith throughout all aspects of the curriculum. These maps support a Catholic Social Teaching theme for each grade level which directly relates to our Religion and Family Life Program. By inculcating Gospel Values into all areas of the curriculum we are offering a truly distinct education rooted in Christ-centered Character formation.

HALTON CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MICHAEL PAUTLER

Best Practice #1: Faith Day

Contact Information: Joan Doyle, System Chaplain, Halton Catholic District School Board, doylej@hcdsb.org

Details: Yearly, all teaching and on-teaching staff of each school gather for a day dedicated to faith formation. Each school community plans a day that inspires and draws together a sense of mission and vision for their community. This day of spiritual renewal can include a Eucharistic celebration, liturgy, motivational speakers and retreat format activities.

Best Practice #2: Focus on Faith Initiative

Contact Information: Joan Doyle, System Chaplain, Halton Catholic District School Board, doylej@hcdsb.org

Details: In the Halton Catholic District School Board, faith infuses every aspect of our work. Staff responds to the call to build strong Catholic learning communities.

- ✚ In 2006, a Focus on Faith Steering Committee comprised of Trustees, Senior Administrators, Parents, School Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff and Union Affiliates, was struck to identify board-wide strategies that support this call.
- ✚ The following strategies were determined for implementation during the 2007-2008 school year.

A Board Theological Theme for 2007-2009 was identified:

A Focus on Faith Committee chose to focus on an important theological theme for the Board community for 2007-2009, consistent with the Board's Mission Statement and Governing Values, as a means to align and support Catholic initiatives and our call to build strong Catholic learning communities.

- ✚ The theological theme is, "And God saw that it was good."
- ✚ The following statements from scripture, Church documents, and the Ontario Catholic Trustees Association highlight key teachings from our faith tradition that are foundational to our theme.

A Board Prayer 2007-2009 was developed:

A prayer in support of the Board's 2007-2009 Theological Theme, "And God saw that it was good", was written for students and staff.

Unifying Catholic Themes for Each Grade, Kindergarten to Grade 12 were adopted:

The Halton Catholic District School Board is rooted in, and envisions education based on the true model of moral character, Jesus Christ. By inculcating gospel values into all of our pursuits, we work for the highest ideal of human character.

- ✚ Christ-centered character formation in our schools is guided and supported by the Unifying Catholic Themes identified for each grade, Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- ✚ These Themes are drawn from the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church, and find their source in the Kindergarten to Grade 8 Religious Education and Family Life Education programs, and in the Grades 9 to 12 Revised Ontario Catholic Secondary Curriculum Policy Document for Religious Education.
- ✚ Catholic Curriculum Core Maps have been developed to support the Catholic Theme for each grade level.

A Multi-Faceted Approach to Support Our Focus on Faith was adopted:

The Halton Catholic District School Board's School Improvement Framework is used to provide a systematic, multi-faceted approach to respond as a Catholic system to Ministry and Board initiatives.

An Image to Support Our Focus on Faith Theological Theme was created:

The Focus on Faith Committee chose the image of rippling water to support the theological foundations of the Board Theme, "And God saw that it was good".

Staff Communication Strategy was determined:

The Board, through its Focus on Faith Committee, issue regular Focus on Faith Updates to provide our Faith Community with information about the Focus on Faith strategies and initiatives.

Best Practice #3: Theological Education Leadership Sessions (T.E.L.)

Contact information: Sister Mary Heather MacKinnon, SSND, mhmackinnon@cogeco.ca Joan Doyle, System Chaplain, doylej@hcdsb.org

Details: The Theological Education Leadership Sessions are aimed at fostering and advancing the faith of our Catholic leaders with a Catholic philosophy of education and the strategies needed to meet the challenges they face as they serve as Catholic Educational Leaders. The Halton Catholic District School Board has focused on an

important theological theme for the Board community for 2007-2009 as a way to support Catholic initiatives and our call to build strong Catholic learning communities. This theological theme is: "And God Saw That It Was Good." All TEL Sessions for 2007-2008 relate to this profound proclamation of our faith. Participants select three sessions from a series of sessions being offered for the current school year. Topics include:

What's good about me?

What can we learn about helping young people to remember who they are and how to live by their highest values? TEL Session #1 will offer participants a chance to become familiar with Roman Catholic teaching on virtues as a basis for disciplinary practices in our schools that are rooted in a gospel vision of the dignity of the human person and in our Christian principles of character education.

Would you mind opening our meeting with a prayer?

This TEL Session will offer participants a chance to learn how (1) to create a spontaneous prayer or blessing; (2) to gain confidence when presiding at a prayer celebration; and (3) to create simple and non-threatening faith-sharing opportunities for staff meetings.

May I please see you for a minute?

This TEL Session will give participants the opportunity to become more familiar with pastoral skills that are more and more critical to the role of an administrator in catholic education today.

Are You Really Listening?

Like Choice #3, this TEL Session will give participants the opportunity to become more familiar with pastoral skills that are more and more critical to the role of an administrator in catholic education today. This TEL Session focuses on how we can more genuinely enjoy our differences and strengthen our personal or professional relationships when we know how to listen and be heard.

Why do Catholics genuflect in church, use holy water, celebrate novenas, or pray to Saint Blaise and Saint Anthony?

This TEL Session will offer participants the opportunity to come to a better understanding of the origin and meaning of various Catholic traditions and customs and their contemporary role in catholic education today.

The Joy of Conflict Resolution

This is a series of **three** TEL Sessions in which participants form a book study club to explore a gospel vision and the practical means for dealing with unresolved conflict that can take its toll on our school communities and our relationships with one another.

Best Practice #4: Faith Fair

Contact Information: Mrs. Kathryn Perrino, Teacher, St. Paul Catholic School, Burlington, Ontario, perrinok@hcdsb.org

Details: For the past 6 years, St. Paul School, Burlington has set aside 1 day for total faith immersion, where the students from JK- grade 8 are involved in activities for the

day that revolve around our faith. Activities include: workshops, plays, hands on activities and prayer celebrations. The day is planned around various themes, ranging from: "Saints Alive- Our Catholic Saints", which involved a class play, a science fair type demonstration of the Saints Museum, and the making of school kits for kids in Haiti. Another theme was "Stories Jesus Loved", where students attended workshops on familiar Old Testament stories, and made a craft or had their faces painted at "Daniel and the Lion's Den" and other activities. Also, the theme: "Being the Light of Christ" was used, whereby students were involved in mission work, made candles, bookmarks and fridge magnets that focused on the message of following Jesus. As well as a small rock musical that taught about the foundations of Catholic values was incorporated into the day. Other faith activities have included: creative dancing to hymns, drumming workshops for hymns, recitation of the Rosary and creating posters based on the Faith Fair theme.

Best Practice #5: Home, School, Parish Partnership Initiative

Contact Information: Michael Chiarelli, Vice-Principal, St. Dominic School, Oakville
chiarellim@hcdsb.org

Details: St. Dominic Parish in Oakville, Ontario has launched an initiative to encourage the entire school community to take a more visible and active role in the life of the Church, and more specifically, at designated Sunday Masses. Working together with its feeder elementary schools, St. Dominic Catholic School and St. Joseph Catholic School, intermediate classes at each school take turns planning and organizing one Sunday Mass per month.

Under the direction of the Parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Animator, and a parent volunteer, the students receive instruction in their classrooms to prepare them to take on the various roles they will fulfill at the Mass, including: student greeters, lectors, general intercessions, gift bearers, and assisting as altar servers. Each month, at the designated Family Mass, the participating students and their families, as well as the entire school community, are invited to witness their faith in this very direct and meaningful way. This has proven to be a wonderful opportunity to build student theological leadership, encourages greater family participation at Masses, and strengthens the partnership between parish, school and home.

Best Practice #6: DREAMS Program

Contact information: Mrs. Fiammetta Mazzetti, Superintendent of Education,
mazzettif@hcdsb.org

Details: DREAMS stands for Dominican Republic Education and Medical Support. This is an initiative through the Scarboro Missions, whereby students help build homes for the local people. Mr. Dunn, chaplain at Assumption Secondary School, organized the activity. For the first two days the group, along with another group from Bishop Tonno's Catholic Secondary School in Hamilton, stayed at Father Arturo Convent as guests of Sister Mary Joe who hails originally from New Brunswick. She runs the

convent school as well as 16 other schools in San Jose de Ocoa, oversees an Orthopedic clinic, as well as a metalworker's training facility and a woodworking facility right on the convent site. The students also stayed at Escuela de la Morita for the remainder of the seven days. The students worked as labourers during the day, shared experiences with the children and local people in the afternoons and spent most of our evenings around a campfire reflecting on our experiences. On the Sunday, students participated in a prayer service out on a cliff surrounded by mountains. The students describe their experience as: "a truly spiritual experience" and "life-altering experience that we will never forget."

Best Practice #7: Adult Staff Retreat Experiences

Contact Information: Mrs. Joan Doyle, System Chaplain/Faith Animator, Halton Catholic District School Board, doylej@hcdsb.org

Details:

HCDSB Annual Staff Retreat

Recognizing the spiritual and personal benefits of taking time away from work and daily activities to reflect and pray, in 1999 the HCDSB decided to offer an Annual Staff Retreat. Generously subsidized by the Board with the participant paying only a nominal fee, this annual retreat experience is open to any employee, from administrators to custodians. Organized around a theme, the retreat offers the opportunity for quiet personal reflection, group discussions, prayer and liturgy, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Although the actual time away is only 24 hours, Friday evening to Saturday afternoon, participants always feel as if they have been away much longer and depart the retreat experience refreshed and renewed. This year we will be celebrating our 10th Annual Staff Retreat experience.

Twilight Retreats

Several times throughout the year in our various school communities, staff comes together for a few hours after a school day to pray together and share their faith. These Twilight Retreat experiences not only benefit the spiritual life of our staff members but help to build community within the school setting.

An annual gathering of Principals at the Mt. Mary Retreat Centre in Ancaster each January provides the opportunity for reflection on their experience as servant leaders in our schools. This twilight retreat, while only for a short time, provides our Administrators with time away from their schools to pray together, to offer each other mutual support and to ask for God's continued guidance in this educational ministry.

Twilight Retreats offer the opportunity to come together as members of a small community, around a common theme or purpose, to break bread together, and to find strength and support as we continue our journey of faith with God's help.

Best Practice #8: Religious Education Courses

Contact Information: Danielle Ross, Executive Assistant, Director's Office, Halton Catholic District School Board, rossd@hcdsb.org or Andrea Swinden, Administrative Assistant, Director's Office, Halton Catholic District School Board, swindena@hcdsb.org

Details: The Board pays the fees for teachers to enrol and complete Religious Education courses sponsored and offered by the Board. (Part 1 – mandatory for all teachers and Parts 2 and 3 are optional for teachers and mandatory for school administrators). As well, Board funding is provided to teachers enrolling in two Board-approved courses per year at the Masters or Doctorate level in Religious Education, Theology or Divinity.

Best Practice #9: Pastoral Animators and Chaplain Leaders

Contact Information: Joan Doyle, System Chaplain, Halton Catholic District School Board, doylej@hcdsb.org

Details: Full-time Chaplaincy Leaders at each of our Secondary Schools provide spiritual support for all staff and students through a ministry of presence. The following are some of the faith experiences they bring to their school community: daily prayer, pastoral counselling, retreat experiences for both students and staff, prayer services throughout the Church liturgical year, organizing community out-reach projects and social justice activities, arranging with local clergy for Eucharistic celebrations and opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and witnessing to their own faith. At each of our elementary schools, one or two staff members are designated as Pastoral Animators, who with the pastoral team, plan Eucharistic celebrations and staff retreat experiences, and assist the school community in planning social justice activities and community out-reach projects. Chaplaincy Leaders and Pastoral Animators meet regularly with the System Chaplain/Faith Animator for regular in-services on topics to assist them in their ministries.

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: PATRICIA AMOS

Best Practice #1: Faith Fair

Contact Information: Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education

Details: One of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations is that the graduate is expected to be a discerning believer formed in the Catholic faith. In an effort to help students to achieve this expectation, a Faith Fair has been established for the Elementary School students of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

A Faith Fair is an exposition of student work based on research of a religious topic. The Faith Fair serves the following purposes:

- ✚ to glorify God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit;
- ✚ to celebrate and promote fervour for our Catholic faith;
- ✚ to encourage and promote increased knowledge of the doctrinal content of the Born of the Spirit and the We Are Strong Together Religious Education programs;
- ✚ to unite students with their teachers and their parents as they study topics related to their faith; and,
- ✚ to promote ecumenism and vocations.

Elementary students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade Eight are eligible to participate in The Faith Fair. Student presentations are based on research of prescribed, grade-appropriate religious topics selected from the Born of the Spirit and We Are Strong Together Religious Education programs.

Best Practice #2: Diversity

Contact Information: Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education

Details: All Grade Seven Elementary students and fifteen students from each of the Secondary Schools attend Board-sponsored Diversity Conferences at Tim Horton Onondaga Farms. Pre-Conference, Conference and post-Conference activities address curriculum expectations in Religion, Language Arts, History, Media Literacy and Drama, and focus on issues of peace, social justice and inclusion. Students who attend the Diversity Conference are confronted with the realities of people who are marginalized because of their racial or ethnic background, their physical or intellectual disability, or any other quality that makes them appear “different” to those who do not know them as

persons. This insight acts as an encouragement to the students to direct their charitable activities to those people, many of whom are numbered among “the least among us” that Jesus talked about. Students are also invited to involve themselves in efforts that challenge racism, sexism, ageism, lookism, ableism, classism and all the other issues that act as barriers to the full recognition of every member of society as a person and as a child of God.

Best Practice #3: Christian Service Animators

Contact Information: Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education

Details: The tradition of Christian Service within the HWCDSB resulted in the establishment, in 1999, of the position of Christian Service Animator within each secondary school. These persons, who provide five hours per week of animation, support, encouragement and documentation of the Christian Service within their respective schools, are part of creating a culture of Christian Service within the HWCDSB. At present, they are primarily retired teachers who combine extensive experience in social justice and international development with student leadership expertise.

In their role as animators, they encourage students to walk on “The Two Feet of Christian Service” by becoming involved in service which both meets the immediate needs of others (charity) and that works to change the structures which create those needs (justice). They are also working to strengthen the element of structured reflection on Christian Service, so that students become more aware of those unjust structures, as well as the action of God in the process of solidarity with those who are poor, disabled, or marginalized in any way.

Best Practice #4: Culture of Life Committee

Contact Information: Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education

Details: The term “Culture of Life” is taken from Pope John Paul’s 1995 Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*. The purpose of the Committee is to promote a pro-life culture within the HWCDSB by focusing student effort and activities specifically on beginning- and end-of-life issues.

The Committee consists of Board and Diocesan personnel, along with representatives from each high school who heads the Culture of Life student group within each school. In addition to activities within each school, these groups collaborate on such initiatives as the Life Chain Silent Witness against abortion on Respect Life Sunday in early October, the Culture of Life Leadership Conference in February, and the March for Life in Ottawa in May.

The Committee also works to promote student awareness by bringing speakers into the secondary schools to speak to each grade level about a prescribed topic: chastity in

Grade 9, pro-life issues in Gr. 10, sexuality in Gr. 11 and bioethical issues in Gr. 12.

Best Practice #5: Pilgrimage

Contact Information: Nancy DiGregorio, Superintendent of Education

Details: The Pilgrimage “Walk with Christ: Justice for the Poor” is an annual Board-wide event that combines the three activities of prayer, fundraising for international development projects, and consciousness-raising about the inequalities between the Developed North and the Developing South. It takes place on a Sunday in late October with Grade 7 and 8 students from all the elementary schools joining with secondary students from all the high schools, along with parents and school staff to begin with prayer and then walk approximately ten kilometers to the site of the Eucharistic celebration which is the “holy place”—the destination of every pilgrimage.

The funds raised from the Pilgrimage support the DREAMS (Dominican Republic Educational and Medical Service) program which is sponsored by three high schools within the HWCDSB, the St. Joseph Family of Homes in Haiti, and the St. Joseph’s Nansana Technical Training School in Kampala, Uganda.

Much of the educational value of the Pilgrimage takes place in the weeks leading up to the event, with special announcements, events, and guests visiting the schools to help make students more aware of the importance of their Walk with Christ: Justice for the Poor.

HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MARTHA DUTRIZAC

Best Practice #1: Religion Advisory Teachers

Contact Information: JoAnn MacGregor, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:

Religion Advisory Teachers

A teacher from each elementary school is a member of the committee for **Religion Advisory Teachers**. They meet in a learning and professional growth setting each term and collaborate in their planning to assist staff in preparing religious celebrations, act as a liaison with the school and parish and provide resources/materials for classroom and home use. A half day release each term is provided to complete these responsibilities. The Religion Advisory Teachers participate in an annual one-day retreat focused on faith development, reflection and service to others.

Best Practice #2: Catholic Community of Caring – Character Education Initiative

Contact Information: JoAnn MacGregor, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:

Catholic Communities of Caring

Catholic Communities of Caring is a K-12, school wide program built around five core values that empower young people to be responsible and caring members of a catholic community: Caring, Respect, Responsibility, Trust, and Family. These five values serve as a foundation and umbrella for school activities and initiatives in our communities and our catholic schools. In schools that are caring, respectful, responsible, trustworthy and family-oriented communities, children, teachers and school staff are at the center of education as the values are woven into every aspect of school life and the existing catholic curriculum.

The Community of Caring Program is an evidence-based, nationally recognized character education program, founded in 1982 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver to care for those with intellectual disabilities. Huron Perth Catholic DSB is the only school board in the province that uses this program and chose this focus because it clearly reflects and emphasises what we already do in our work and service as a Catholic system.

By creating a positive school community, the program enables children to feel supported, cared about, and included - characteristics that yield enduring dividends for all children, including those with special needs. Frequent newsletters, resources,

steering committee activities and celebrations of our staff and students enhance the actions in HPCDSB.

Best Practice #3: Catholic Community of Caring Student Leadership Forums

Contact Information: JoAnn MacGregor, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:**Catholic Communities of Caring Student Leadership**

To create the **Student Leadership Forum**, students from each school (intermediate-senior) who have a positive Catholic role model and leader within his/her school are identified. These students, as part of the Forum, have opportunities to continue to build Catholic leadership skills. The specific goal is to support the learning and understanding of what it means to infuse our Catholic Community of Caring and Stewards of Creation board initiatives into the daily life of each school. Student leadership forums offer students an opportunity to have a voice, be responsible members of society and give back to their community.

Planning and participation in the day includes discussion and focus on enhancing core values of caring, respect, responsibility, trust, inclusion, the importance of family centered on our faith, system-wide community service projects, reflections, prayers and sharing ideas.

Best Practice #4: Integration of Curriculum into our Catholic Faith – Catholic Curriculum Corporation Core Maps

Contact Information: Dan Parr, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion and Family Life Coordinator

Details:**Catholic Curriculum Core Maps**

The Curriculum Maps are an essential resource to assist in integrating all areas of the curriculum with our Catholic faith. Building knowledge and an understanding of the “Maps” through job-embedded professional learning is critical for teachers to see all parts of the curriculum through a Catholic lens. These CCC “Maps” are a tool to make connections to the current Religion and Family Life programs and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

Best Practice #5: Social Justice Service Learning Activities

Contact Information: Dan Parr, Superintendent of Education; Lisa Philips & Nathanael Mateus-Ruiz, Huron-Perth CDSB Chaplaincy Leaders

Details:**Social Justice Activities**

Students in the secondary panel actively promote social justice issues by travelling to impoverished countries to assist our neighbours. Students have experienced change in their lives by assisting with rebuilding areas from disaster such as the Dominican Republic and New Orleans. It is our practice that secondary students make presentations to elementary school students and to present at a Board meeting. Huron-Perth students are travelling to Kenya, in partnership with the *Free the Children* foundation, to build a school for students. Social justice actions allow us to celebrate who we are as a Catholic Community of Caring.

Best Practice #6: Catholic Student Leadership Awards/Activities

Contact Information: Dan Parr, Superintendent of Education; JoAnn Macgregor, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:**Student Trustee Awards**

A grade eight student from each of our elementary schools is chosen as a faith ambassador for their school and celebrated with the **Student Trustee Award**. These students have consistently embraced faith-filled core values of caring, respect, responsibility, trust and the importance of family. They attend a retreat day which focuses on faith and is aligned with the Catholic Education Week theme. Their gifts are celebrated as they reflect and collaborate with peers. At the conclusion of the retreat day, parents, school, and board members celebrate these students for their faith leadership by presenting awards and concluding with the celebration of the Eucharist.

Applause Awards

The **Applause Award** is presented to those students who consistently demonstrate kindness, compassion, helpfulness and empathy towards others. Two students from each school are nominated by their school staff and recognized as a person who puts forth effort to make their school a better place. The student and his/her parents are hosted at a breakfast where their efforts are presented by their teacher and principal. The breakfast is a Catholic community celebration to acknowledge and celebrate their Catholic leadership. Local businesses are proud sponsors of this event.

Student Trustees

One student from each secondary school is chosen by the students to represent the school population as a **Student Trustee**. These individuals are a part of trustee deliberations and events, including system Masses, trustee retreats and monthly board meetings. The student trustees represent a voice for the secondary youth population and keep the board and Trustees updated on current events in each of our two secondary schools.

Stuff that Bus

Stuff that Bus is a food drive focused on a one day “blitz” to support the St Vincent de Paul in HP. Each school collects and sorts healthy food items for the local chapter. Student leaders from each school, staff and Steering Committee members assist by collecting the non-perishables on a day during Education Week. Bus companies

generously donate their services. We have made connections to our Board theme, the Catholic Graduate Expectations, the Catholic Curriculum Corporation maps, Religion & Family Life programs, and Literacy to name a few.

Best Practice #7: Faith Day

Contact Information: JoAnn MacGregor, Superintendent of Education; Dan Parr, Superintendent of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:

School Based Faith Development Day

Each year one professional development day is designated as a **Faith Day** designed for all school staff to participate in a meaningful day focused on faith development. Guidelines and expectations have been developed to assist the principal, the Religion Advisory teacher/chaplain and the planning team to focus on goals and expected outcomes. Mass, prayer services, small and large group work and reflection time, community service projects, guest speakers, and faith building activities are examples of the planning and the focus of the day.

Best Practice #8: Catholic Education Week System Mass & Mother Teresa Awards

Contact Information: Martha Dutrizac, Director of Education; Elaine DeCorte, Assistant to the Director; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion and Family Life Coordinator

Details:

Catholic Education Week System Mass

As a Catholic school board, we participate in a **System Mass** during Catholic Education Week to celebrate our distinct roles as Catholic leaders, educators and supporters. The annual education week theme is carried throughout the week and highlighted at the Mass. This Mass is very uplifting, with the music ministry and participation provided by Huron-Perth Catholic DSB staff. An informal dinner and networking follow the Mass.

Mother Teresa Faith in Action

The Catholic Education Team of the Huron-Perth Catholic DSB hosts an annual ***Mother Teresa Faith in Action Award***. This award is given to ten dedicated individuals, at the Catholic Education Week System Mass, who demonstrate the fundamental and essential qualities of Catholic education that are part of our Board's Mission Statement:

- ✚ Witnessing our faith;
- ✚ Creating nurturing, Christ-centred learning environments;
- ✚ Promoting social justice, awareness and action;
- ✚ Nurturing and celebrating each individual's gifts, self-worth and potential.

Best Practice #9: Partnership with Kings University College

Contact Information: Martha Dutrizac, Director of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:

Catholic Partnerships

King's University College at the University of Western Ontario has developed a dynamic partnership with Catholic Boards in the Diocese. Huron Perth works in collaboration with the other partner boards to establish rich learning opportunities for staff and students within the context of a Catholic university setting. The following are some examples of the opportunities that have grown out of this partnership.

Summer Institute

A committee from Huron-Perth Catholic DSB, London District Catholic School Board, St. Clair Catholic District School Board and King's University College at the University of Western Ontario, sponsored a two day **Summer Institute** for all educators in the three boards. The theme of the first annual institute was *'Together We Gather in Hope and Faith – Catholic Educators: Partners in the Journey'*. Examples of the activities over the two and a half days are evening and morning prayers, celebration of the Eucharist and keynote speakers such as Father Jim Mulligan, Father Michael Prieur and Father Con O'Mahony.

Carpe Diem

Carpe Diem is another venue to develop faith in partnership with Kings University for secondary students. This is a day focused on building leadership skills within a Catholic context and within a Catholic university setting. A variety of workshops are offered to widen perspectives on global social justice and ecological issues, to develop deeper insight about inclusion and the dignity of each human person, the importance of a caring culture in our school communities, and ways to promote hope in today's society.

TASK (Teachers as Scholars at King's)

TASK is a dynamic program hosted by King's University College (a Catholic, co-educational, liberal arts college affiliated with The University of Western Ontario). In partnership with London District Catholic School Board, the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board and the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, King's faculty offer an opportunity for Catholic educators to participate in seminars of interest to them. The philosophical underpinning of TASK is that intellectual ideas inspire and transform all educators across grade levels and disciplines. TASK provides a rare opportunity for educators and faculty at King's to share their passion for teaching and learning and to focus on what all dedicated educators support in their classrooms – thoughtful intellectual engagement and discourse.

Best Practice #10: Catholic Education Team

Contact Information: Martha Dutrizac, Director of Education; Lori Lynn Stapleton, Religion & Family Life Coordinator

Details:**The Catholic Education Team**

The team is a natural growth and extension that came out of the two ICE Symposia (2002 and 2007). This Catholic steering committee includes representation from all members of our Catholic community and meets to initiate discuss and planning aligned to the Board Strategic Plan. Discussions are centred on expected outcomes of the Strategic Plan with a focus on the challenges and opportunities facing Catholic education. The Team collaboratively plans activities and events to promote and celebrate our Catholic Community of Caring, allowing us to keep current and continue to focus on the gift of our Catholic education.

Our board Chaplain attends these meetings and review current events within the Deanery and the Diocese. Chaplaincy leaders update on secondary students engaging in ways to promote social justice. Various faith focussed committees report such as our Religion Advisory Teachers, Catholic Community of Caring members, Eco Schools and Stewards of Creation. We continue to develop our partnerships with our local parishes, the Catholic Curriculum Corporation, When Faith Meets Pedagogy Conference and the London Diocese.

Best Practice #11: Deanery Dinner

Contact Information: Martha Dutrizac, Director of Education; Elaine DeCorte, Executive Assistant to the Director of Education

Details:**The Deanery Dinner**

The **Dinner** is an annual event that celebrates the Huron Perth Catholic community. It is a wonderful opportunity for the priests of the Deanery to come together and share a meal with members of our school communities. Religion Advisory Teachers, Principals and Vice-Principals, Chaplaincy Teams, Pastors of parishes in Huron-Perth Catholic DSB, the Learning Coordination Team, Trustees and Senior Administration of the board look forward to this event where we continue to build our parish and school partnership and talk about the gift of Catholic education. Guest speakers for the evening always include passionate advocates for Catholic education and Catholic leadership. Past speakers have included Sister Joan Cronin, Noel Martin, Father Fragomeni and Dr. Patrick Duignan.

HURON-SUPERIOR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOHN STADNYK

Best Practice #1: System Wide Opening Liturgy

Contact Information: John Stadnyk, Director, jstadnyk@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: Our opening day has traditionally been a PA day where all Board employees gather to open the school year with a liturgy that focuses on and introduces the OCSTA educational theme for the year.

It is also an opportunity for the Director to address all employees with our system's direction for the school year. This past year began with a Eucharistic liturgy which celebrated the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste Marie who have been instrumental in Catholic education as teachers, administrators and as builders of schools. Our readings and prayers focused on our call to be disciples of Jesus who through their ministry are invited to live and share the Good News by planting seeds and nurturing them in ourselves and those we serve.

During this liturgy we also welcome and commission all new hires into our Catholic community. The community gathered blesses them and promises to support and help nurture their vocation as Catholic teachers.

Best Practice #2: Celebrating our Faith Day

Contact Information: Focus on Faith Committee Beth Lozon, blozon@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: A system wide faith based day begins with a Eucharistic liturgy in which Board employees, trustees, clergy, parish assistants and administration are invited along with trustees, clergy, parish assistants and administration. District personnel come to the city. Following the liturgy we have a keynote address, which this year highlighted areas of concern in Catholic education. Fr. James Mulligan spoke to the threat on Catholic education.

Staffs join together for a communal meal, followed by an afternoon of faith-focused reflection and sharing of the heart. This year families of schools met to focus on the threat to Catholic education and ways to help promote the gift we have. The reflections from the afternoon are direction used by schools, parent groups, trustees and clergy to help promote and protect Catholic education. This faith based day is held in the fall so as to give direction and support to staff. It is also an event where the individual and collective talents of our staff are shared throughout the liturgy.

Best Practice #3: Parish and School Partnership – Elementary School/Church Chaplaincy Program

Contact Information: Superintendent Maria Esposito mesposito@hscdsb.on.ca, Mark Frolick - mfrolick@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: The Parish Council and Superintendent met to discuss the possibility of a teacher being funded equally by the Parish and the Board to work as a liaison between the school and the parish. This individual would work for both the parish and the Board in the effort to bridge the gap between home, school and parish.

This was brought to the Board of Trustees who agreed to the collaborative venture with the church. With a successful first year, the two groups met to discuss ongoing support for this project for a second year. Mark Frolick, a teacher with our Board, has provided the connection between school and parish and has created opportunities that have helped students make connections with the parish.

In discussion with the Parish and school administrators, the value of Mark's position in supporting the teachers through faith formation of students, while introducing them to the parish has been invaluable. Mark is doing at the elementary level many of the same projects and programs that the Leaders of Chaplaincy are doing at the high school level.

Best Practice #4: Board Funded Staff- Student Retreats

Contact Information: Faith Animator Beth Lozon blozon@hscdsb.on.ca, Stephanie Romiti CSJ - Religious Education and Family Life Consultant sromiti@hscdsb.on.ca, Chaplaincy Leader, Rose Marie Valade, St. Mary's College – smchaplain@hscdsb.on.ca, Chaplaincy Leader, Mary Anne Amadio, St Basil Secondary, sbsschaplain@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: The Board has provided for the faith formation of both staff and students through the retreat program.

The Board Faith Animator provides individual school staffs with the opportunity to partake in twilight retreats. This ongoing opportunity provides staff with time for prayerful reflection. These occasions encourage and assist staff in their personal faith formation. As well, the Faith Animator is a resource to the High School Leaders of Chaplaincy, who provide for the training for senior students who wish to be Christian Life Day leaders. This is a school-based student retreat team who facilitate the Christian Life days for junior students in the high school. These teams of trained youth are beginning to use their training in facilitating retreat days for senior elementary students as well.

Our Religious Education and Family Life Consultant coordinates the schedule for the National Evangelization Team (NET) who facilitates elementary and secondary retreats for our community of schools in the district and the city. The Board provides direct financial assistance for the elementary schools. The secondary Chaplaincy/Religious Education Departments include the financing costs in their budgets. Our parishes have provided us with the space to facilitate these days and help with billeting the NET team.

ROCC - Rebuilding our Catholic Church was a pilot school/church program that was initiated by Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, which has financially sponsored the program. ROCC, a retreat training program that trains senior elementary students in the ROCC program with the hopes that they will return to their elementary schools once in high school to assist as leaders with elementary school retreats at all levels. It is a faith development experience for the student leaders. Since its inception three years ago, high school students have been trained in the process. This endeavour will hopefully provide for education and faith formation of both the participants and the leaders. This is another church and school collaborative initiative.

Lastly, the Board in collaboration with CPCO, provides opportunity each year for principals, vice-principals and the administrative team to partake in time for personal and spiritual reflection under the direction of a retreat leader. This provides the school administrators time to bond on a variety of levels as well as prepare them as the spiritual leaders of their schools.

Best Practice #5: Developing Catholic Leaders

Contact Information: John Stadnyk, Director, jstadnyk@hscdsb.on.ca, HSCDSB
O.E.C.T.A. President Ivana Coccimiglio, icoccimiglio@hscdsb.on.ca, and HSCDSB
C.P.C.O. President Peter Cerra, pcerra@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: For the past three years, OECTA, CPCO and the Board have brought together OECTA reps, principals, vice-principals, curriculum support staff, managers, senior administration and trustees for awareness and leadership building opportunities.

In order to build strong and healthy partnerships these groups have been brought together for an afternoon of team and relationship building. The speakers have addressed topics such as: “Leadership in our Time” (Sr. Clare Fitzgerald) which focused on being Catholic leaders in our Catholic schools, and “Understanding Emotional Intelligence” (Dr. Arthur Perlini), which assisted those present with being more aware of our actions and how they support or diminish relationships which in turn affects the productivity of what we are doing. This past year Fr. James Mulligan joined us to speak on Catholic leadership in these times of uncertainty. He challenged the group to be leaders in protecting and promoting Catholic education.

These workshops have further promoted already strong partnerships and encouraged our leaders to even greater cooperation with one another.

Best Practice #6: Parish and School Partnership – Becoming a Catholic Community

Contact Information: Principal Gail Rebek, grebek@hscdsb.on.ca

Details: The St. Jerome’s Parish Council and Family of Schools Principals met to discuss ways to connect students with the parish on a personal level. As the school is

most often the primary Catholic community for the children it was thought that if they had the opportunity to experience the church and its community they might feel more a part of the parish. A collaborative program was designed that would bring students to the church facility to participate in faith-based activities led by the school and parish community members. Events are on a monthly basis using the liturgical calendar. Each grade level from the family of schools gather together to participate. This creates community amongst the family of schools, as well as the church.

- ✚ September- School Eucharistic Liturgy become connected with the Pastor and Parish
- ✚ October - Saints Day Costume Party
- ✚ November - Advent Comes Alive
- ✚ December - Celebration of St. Nicholas Day
- ✚ January – Getting to know Ministries in the Church
- ✚ February - Ash Wednesday Service
- ✚ April – CCODP Think Fast Activity and Poor Man’s Lunch/Learning the Stations of the Cross
- ✚ May – Living Rosary and Making a Rosary
- ✚ June - Call to Follow - Grade 8 Retreat

Several of the activities are lead by the Catholic High School Christian Life Day Leaders and Faith Ambassadors. Refreshments are served as part of the activity by parish members and the CWL.

The Board and the parish mutually financially support this project.

KENORA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: PHYLLIS EIKRE

Best Practice #1: Spiritual Development Day

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: A gathering on the first day of a new school year of all teachers, educational assistants, administration, priests, trustees, and representatives from school councils to provide spiritual nourishment and focus to our mission as Catholic school educators. The day, held in the gymnasium of one of our schools, begins with a Morning Prayer Service, an address by the Director of Education, sessions with a very motivational/inspiring keynote speaker throughout the day, and ends with the celebration of the Eucharist.

Throughout the years we have been blessed with excellent and inspirational resource persons such as Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI, Dr. David Roy from the Bioethical Institute in Montreal, Dr. Mark McGowan from the Toronto School of Theology, and many others.

Best Practice #2: System Retreat

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: This is an optional retreat opportunity provided on the first Saturday in May by the KCDSB to all its employees, trustees, priests/pastoral workers, and representatives from school councils, retired teachers, and some community services.

This retreat has been held for a number of years at Andy Lake Resort, a most beautiful place in God's creation, isolated in the bush yet only a half-hour drive from Kenora. It begins at 8:30 a.m. and ends with the celebration of Eucharist at noon followed by lunch. Both body and spiritual nourishment are exceptional. This is always an extremely positive experience for a community that desires to gather, to be nurtured spiritually, to pray, and to celebrate together.

We have had some of the most inspiring retreat directors for this occasion, such as Jamie McCracken from the Ottawa-Carleton School Board, Archbishop Weisgerber from Winnipeg, Msgr. Pat Stilla and Bishop Colli from Thunder Bay, Sister Clare Fitzgerald from Boston (with Bishop Colli able to join us as presider for the Eucharistic Liturgy), Fr. Fred Olds from St. Bernadette's Parish in St. Boniface, Fr. Gerry Ward from Winnipeg, and Fr. Patrick Fitzpatrick who also does chaplaincy for OCSTA.

Best Practice #3: Local Symposiums on Catholic Education

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: Following the two provincial symposiums on Catholic education --- in November 2002 on *“Enduring Truths, Changing Realities, Re-igniting the Spirit”* and in October 2006 *“Navigating through Turbulent Waters”* --- the KCDSB held its own local symposiums on those topics, providing an excellent opportunity for dialogue with different representatives of the Catholic community --- educators, parents, students, and clergy.

With the excellent leadership of a symposium committee, and the catering assistance of our high school students and their teacher in the “Hospitality & Tourism” class, we had a wonderful evening of discussions on the distinctiveness, identity, purpose, and vision of Catholic education at the May 2007 local symposium.

The provincial report, which ICE made available at the beginning of this school year, and which Sister Joan Cronin spoke on at the Trustees Diocesan Conference in Thunder Bay earlier this Fall, provides for further reflection, action, and hope for the future of Catholic education.

Best Practice #4: School and System Liturgies

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: Recognizing the need for praying together as a Catholic educational community, the fact that we have only three priests from our three Catholic parishes (2 Roman Catholic & 1 Ukrainian Catholic), the need to empower our Catholic school educators in preparing/leading prayer, as well as the need for meaningful/inspiring/quality liturgies:

1. We schedule, as a system, with in-put from school principals and priests, a school liturgical calendar for: Opening School Year/Patron Feast/Closing School Year Eucharistic Liturgies; and School Prayer Services for Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, Advent/Christmas, Ash Wednesday/Lent/Easter, Marian, as well as two Penitential Prayer Services with the Sacrament of Reconciliation for Advent & Lent...
2. Prayer Services for Trustees at their monthly board meetings; and a special commissioning rite at the inaugural meeting...sometimes with a Eucharistic liturgy...
3. Prayer Services prepared at the board level for all schools and held at the same time for events such as: the victims of the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina disasters; the death of Pope John Paul II...
4. Providing assistance, through the religious education coordinator, to school staffs in preparing/leading school liturgies...

5. Providing a chaplain for the high school...
6. We end the school year with a system Eucharistic liturgy for all employees of the board. It is hosted alternately by our Catholic parishes. It is followed by a special luncheon to celebrate retirees and a tour of Lake of the Woods on the MS Kenora.

At their request, provided a presentation on school liturgies at the Thunder Bay Diocesan OCSTA Conference in Fall 2008 which was very well received and which provided opportunity to share School Prayer Services with OAPCE and other Catholic boards/schools in our diocese.

Best Practice #5: Social Justice Outreach

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca ; Dean Woodbeck, Chaplain of St. Thomas Aquinas High School; dwoodbeck@kcdsb.on.ca ; school administrators.

Details: Recognizing the gospel imperative that “what you have done to the least of your brothers and sisters, you have done to me” (Mt 25); that “in a world marked by oppression and war, we are commanded to work for justice and peace” (This Moment of Promise, OCCB); that the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations remind us to develop in our students “attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and promote social responsibility...”; some of the ways the schools/board office respond to social justice outreach are the following:

1. students from St. Thomas Aquinas high School assisting at Agape Table ...
2. students visiting the elderly at Pinecrest Nursing Home ...
3. Hampers/food bank for Salvation Army and shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child...
4. Fundraising for: Development and Peace, Holy Childhood, Holy Cows (schools for orphans in Uganda), Salvation Army, Newfoundland Catholic schools, El Salvador “Agua Caliente” village youth centre, Agape Table in Kenora, “Locks for Love” for cancer patients, “Youth in Philanthropy” for local community organizations foundation fund, assistance for local family whose house burned down, assistance for one of our students with severe medical needs, collecting truckload of new or gently used shoes for people without any, Heart & Stroke Foundation (Jump Rope), Cancer Society (Terry Fox Run), etc.

Best Practice #6: Faith Formation Conference “Catholic Schools in our World”

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: This was an unprecedented opportunity in February 2009 for everyone employed by the KCDSB (schools/board office closed for the day), as well as

priests/pastoral teams/parent reps, etc. to participate in deepening awareness of what a precious gift we have in Catholic Education, in engaging in dialogue in seeking new ways to respond to the changes and challenges to sustain and nurture our distinctive identity, vision and mission for excellence in education within a Christian environment. The excellent quality of speakers was evident throughout the day with keynote speaker Sister Joan Cronin, the Executive Director of the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) who spoke on *“Re-imagining Catholic Education for the 21st Century”* and Michael Reist, a secondary school teacher from Dufferin-Peel CDSB, who spoke on *“Character Education from a Catholic Perspective”*. The breakout workshops were hosted by the two keynote speakers as well as Msgr. Pat Stilla from Thunder Bay on *“Catholic Education: Celebrating Today’s Challenges”*, Bronek Korczynski from the Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB on *“The Catholic Graduate Expectations”*, Sister Mary Coswin from St. Benedict’s Monastery in Manitoba on *“Spirituality in our Daily Lives”*, and Mariette Martineau from Kenora on *“What Does it Mean to be Catholic Today?”*. Each speaker provided much thought-provoking input for reflection and dialogue.

Best Practice #7: First Reconciliation & First Eucharist Workshops & Resources for Grade 2 Religious Education Teachers

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: To supplement the CCCB Grade 2 program First Reconciliation and the “We Belong to the Lord Jesus” Born of the Spirit Eucharistic program, the religious education coordinator provides a half-day workshop for each Grade 2 religious education teacher in the board, a resource binder and box of materials for each of the two sacraments.

For First Reconciliation: the binder contains information/activities/sample prayer services, a list of further resources for children/adults available upon request from the Catholic Education Centre, etc. The box has VHSs such as First Reconciliation Kit; The Skateboard, The Little Lost Lamb, The Stray, The Prodigal Son, The Good Samaritan, Parables for Kids Volume 1 & 2, Jimmy and the White Lie; books such as “Because I Love You” and “You are Mine” by Max Lucado, “Small Acts of Kindness” by James Volbracht, “The Hurt” by Teddi Doleski, “Leonard the Llama that Lied” by Susan Cameron, “Nobody Loves Fergie” by Nancy Cocks, “The Prodigal Son” by Hublar and Van den Burghe, “Two Lads and a Dad” by Marilyn Lashbrook, “He Is My Shepherd: The 23rd Psalm for Children” by Haidle, “The Shepherd and the Hundred Sheep” by Michael Hudak, “The Little Lost Lamb” by Gerri Berger Haines, “The Lord is My Shepherd: Psalm 23” by Rob Lewis, “The Gospels” (Novalis) OR “Bible for Young Catholics”; music CDs with songs that reflect the theme of Reconciliation and forgiveness.

For First Eucharist: workshop and resource binder/box appropriate for that sacrament.

Best Practice #8: OECTA/OCSTA AQ Courses in Religious Education

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: For many years the religious education coordinator/course director annually promoted and held in the fall/winter sessions one of the three parts of these excellent courses in religious education for our teachers for credit and for others in the parish who desired to audit them. For the past three years, thanks to the extra financial assistance from OECTA/OCSTA in providing a summer course director, all three courses were made available during the summer. Being a small board, at times with very small numbers of new teachers, it is becoming more difficult in having sufficient participants to hold the course annually. However, we do everything possible to continue to promote and to assist the teachers.

Best Practice #9: History of the Kenora Catholic District School Board

“Go, Therefore and Proclaim...”

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: “Go, Therefore and Proclaim”^(Mark 16:15): A History of the Kenora Catholic District School Board, written by Dr. Robert Dixon, provides the story of the efforts of the Roman Catholic community in Kenora and the surrounding district to provide schools that reflect the philosophy and values of our Catholic Christian heritage. Dr. R. T. Dixon has written a fascinating account of the events from the beginning of 1881 to 2008, with some of the early highlights emphasizing the contributions of the Religious Orders, the survival and flourishing of the separate schools, the financial hardships, low salaries, high pupil-teacher ratios, and basic accommodation due to non-access to corporate assessment. Based on very extensive documentary research and interviews with participants, Dr. Dixon brings to life the complex history of our small board on the western edge of Ontario that starts small and builds gradually to ultimately become a board that is recognized provincially as one of the top Catholic boards in the province.

Dr. Bob Dixon was selected by Dr. Allan Craig, our former Director of Education, as the writer because of his depth of knowledge of the history of Catholic Education in Ontario, his involvement in Catholic Education for almost half a century, and his recognized expertise on the history of Catholic education in Ontario. His story deepens our awareness of what a precious gift we have in a publicly funded education system distinctive from its very beginnings, and through it, empowers us with a renewed sense of stewardship for Catholic education as we face new changes and challenges in our present time and in the future.

Dr. Dixon provided the principals, coordinators and administrators with a half-day workshop (May 2008) during which time he truly enlightened us with the history of our board. He will be returning on the last day of the school year (June 26, 2009) to speak to our system staffs and specially invited guests during which time we will each receive a copy of this fascinating history of ours.

Best Practice #10: Catholic Education Week

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: Co-ordinating of involvement of schools/board with the three local Catholic parishes --- activities such as Catholic education week message presented at each of the Sunday Eucharistic liturgies by an administrator/teacher of the board, school choirs doing the music ministry at some of the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy, prayer of the faithful included at each of the Sunday Eucharistic liturgies, brochure with Catholic Education Week message and school activities to which the parishioners are invited to attend, a system retreat at Andy Lake at the beginning or end of Catholic Education Week encouraging employees of the board, priests and pastoral teams to attend.

Best Practice #11: Revision “Fully Alive” Workshops

Contact Information: Sister Maria Ciccarelli, snjm, Religious & Family Life Education Coordinator; mciccarelli@kcdsb.on.ca

Details: Following the June 2007 successful launch for Grades one and two revision of the OCCB Fully Alive Family Life program, we have now provided workshops for all our teachers from grades one to four and implemented the revised programs at those levels. In September 2009 we will provide the workshop and implementation at the grades five and six levels. We are very grateful to all those who have made the revision of this excellent program possible.

LONDON
DISTRICT CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: WILMA DE ROND

Best Practice #1: Admissions Policy

Contact Information: Mark Weaver, Assistant Superintendent of Business

Details: We have a very specific admissions policy that requires one of the parents to be Catholic and that child will be baptised Catholic. Even though challenges exist in declining enrolment we have maintained this practice with very few exemptions.

Best Practice #2: Spirit Awards/Stewardship Awards

Contact Information: Tamara Nugent, Superintendent of Education

Details: During Catholic Education week, we have a recognition evening of students in elementary and secondary who exemplify the Catholic Graduate Expectations and are nominated by his or her school community. At this awards evening, we also recognize an adult in our community who has continued to support, recognize and exemplify the good news of Catholic Education in our community

Best Practice #3: Spotlight

Contact Information: John Boles, Communication Officer

Details: This is our weekly electronic system newsletter that goes out to all of faculty and staff and is available to parents through our website. It highlights the weekly and upcoming events in our system, which exemplifies Catholic education.

Best Practice #4: Faith Leadership Course

Contact Information: Sharon Wright Evans, Superintendent of Education

Details: This is an adult faith formation program, which is available to all faculty and staff. We invite after hours guest speakers to bring information on any number of topics relate to our Catholic faith. For example, Father Mulligan will be speaking on Catholic Education. We also emphasize leadership through faith and encourage principals, vice-principals, superintendents, managers, supervisors from all departments to attend a similar program offered during working hours.

Best Practice #5: Open Access – Catholic Graduate Expectations**Contact Information:** Wilma de Rond, Director

Details: Our secondary schools have a protocol, where all non-Catholic students registering within the school must meet with a guidance counsellor and a Vice-Principal. These meetings emphasize the Catholic Graduate Expectations and our expectation that all students graduating from one of our schools will meet these expectations. We also provide a strong and vibrant chaplaincy program, which emphasizes community and participation in all faith aspects of our schools by all students.

Other best practices:

1. Partnership with Kings College – lecture series on social justice issues
2. Student Catholic Leadership – we do a variety of things including a very hands on approach to Student Senates with regular meeting with secondary school prime ministers, for Grade 11 female students which promotes Catholic identity, values and leadership etc., students who are not in leadership, but have been identified as having leadership abilities are targeted for a one day conference, Catholic Student Leadership Day provides an opportunity for student leaders across the system to get together for faith, fun and leadership development (we believe in working with students to develop their Catholic identity so when they leave us they'll have had some very specific leadership and direction from us)
3. Catholic School Councils and District Council – have really moved forward on the promotion of Catholic Education and the parents role in a strong Catholic education system
4. Elementary schools – monthly recognition of students who exemplify the virtues emphasized in the gospel, Catholic Graduate Expectations and character development.

Best Practice #6: Catholicity and Stewardship Committee**Contact Information:** Wilma de Rond, Director of Education

Details: This committee is comprised of parents, teachers, principals, parish representatives, priests, school council members, faculty of education representative and is chaired by the director. The committee has two mandates: to advise the board of trustees on matters related to the Catholic nature of our board and to communicate to our broader community the good news of Catholic education. Committee is currently working on a fair wear/fair purchasing policy and preparing for the celebration of Catholic Education Week.

NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOHN CROCCO

Best Practice #1: System-Wide Faith Day

Contact Information: John Crocco, Director of Education, john.crocco@ncdsb.com; Frank Iannantuono, Superintendent of Education, frank.iannantuono@ncdsb.com; Khayyam Syne, Administrator of Staff Development and Principal of Religious Education, khayyam.syne@ncdsb.com

Details: This day of intense spiritual celebration and community building, is one that brings together all members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, including Trustees, Senior Administrators, Principals/Vice-Principals, Teachers and non-teaching support staff to highlight and recognize the “gift that is Catholic Education.”

The day is structured around a highly motivational keynote address by a speaker who is well recognized for his/her role, in the tenets of Catholic Education. In addition the entire physical environment is further “electrified” by the music provided by secondary school choirs and bands as well as high-tech audio-visual supports.

Mass is celebrated by the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharine’s and formal addresses are made by the Chair of the Board and Director of Education. The day ends with entire school and central office staffs coming together and becoming involved in activities designed to strengthen the formation of their faith as stewards of Catholic Education.

Best Practice #2: Adult Faith Formation – All Staff (Teaching and Non-Teaching) Sr. Admin/Principals and Vice-Principals/Managers Faith Formation

Contact Information: John Crocco, Director of Education, john.crocco@ncdsb.com ; Khayyam Syne, Administrator of Staff Development and Principal of Religious Education, Khayyam.syne@ncdsb.com; Faith Animators, Father Charles Mosier and Dino Sicoli.

Details:

1. Through the Faith Animators for the Niagara Catholic District School Board, a series of workshops are organized for all employees of the board to attend. They are scheduled from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. throughout the year and deal with themes as simple as “Learning How to Pray” to more liturgical like “Lenten Reflections: Preparing for the Passion.” The majority of these themes are submitted by school Faith Formation teams at the beginning of the year and delivered by either board staff, parish priests or other professionals.

The model that is followed at these events, is based on Jesus' behaviour at Emmaus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. There are seven steps adhered to, viz., Adults' Current Life Situations; Scripture; Connection of scripture with the latter two; Connection of Sacraments with the same; Connection with service to others; Personal Prayer and culminating with breaking bread together.

- Each year, as part of the Advent celebrations in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines, leads the administrators and parish priests in Faith Formation before the Christmas break. Each participant receives a gift of a book (e.g. "In the Footsteps of St. Paul"; "Catholic Education: A Light of Truth"), in order to prepare for the gathering. The Bishop presents his reflections on the book followed by a Prayer Service. A luncheon designed to show appreciation for the strong relationship that exists between the schools in the system and the parish priests.

Best Practice #3: Grades 8 and 12 System Masses

Contact Information: Yolanda Baldasaro, Superintendent of Education, yolanda.yolanda.baldasaro@ncdsb.com; Khayyam Syne, Administrator of Staff Development and Principal of Religious Education, khayyam.syne@ncdsb.com

Grade 8 Mass

The Grade 8 Mass occurs each November. Eight masses are celebrated in the location where the Family of Schools' High School celebrates their community mass. The chaplain of the Family of School's High School coordinates the mass with the assistance of the grade 8 teachers. The mass is conducted to introduce the soon to be, High School students to the liturgical life of their high school. This mass permits the grade 8's to witness the form of Eucharistic celebrations common for the secondary level. The increased exposure assists in promoting retention between the elementary and secondary schools

Gr. 12 Mass

The Grade 12 Mass occurs each year in May as a celebration for all of our Secondary School graduates. This event is quite an exciting spectacle as it brings together well over two thousand graduates who have completed in the majority of cases, thirteen years of Catholic Education. In many instances they have been together for their entire elementary and secondary careers and as a result, the sense of community is that much greater.

Students are treated to a rousing welcome by other students, Trustees, Senior Administrators, teachers and members of the community. This event is planned primarily by the Niagara Catholic District School Board's Student Senate and Student Trustees and culminates with an address by the Chair of the Board, Director of Education and the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharine's. This half-day celebration of Catholic Education has as its final segment, Mass celebrated by our Bishop.

Best Practice #4: Partners in Catholic Education / Annual Spring Convention

Contact Information: Yolanda Baldasaro, Superintendent of Education, yolanda.yolanda.baldasaro@ncdsb.com; Khayyam Syne, Administrator of Staff Development and Principal of Religious Education, khayyam.syne@ncdsb.com

Details:

1. Each year, under the auspices of the Niagara Catholic District School Board's Regional School Council, Catholic School Council Chairs, Clergy, Trustees, Senior and School, Administrators, gather in community to celebrate and appreciate the involvement of both the clergy and parent body in the pursuit of Catholic Education.

This half-day program consists of official addresses by the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharine's, Chair of the Board, Chair of the Regional Catholic School Council, and Director of Education.

A keynote address by a prominent figure in Catholic Education e.g. Fr. Tom Rosica follows and then a Prayer Service led by the Bishop of St. Catharine's. The event culminates with a luncheon.

2. Another exciting program that reaches out to the Catholic Parent Community and again under the mandate of the Regional Catholic School Council is the annual Niagara Catholic District School Board, Regional Catholic Council Spring Convention. This event held at a local Secondary School, takes place on a Saturday in mid-April and consists of an agenda and list of activities that are designed to attract parents to become more involved in their children's schools. The format of the day, consists of a keynote address by a prominent figure in Catholic Education, e.g., Sr. Clare Fitzgerald, Publishers/ Community Partners display, lunch (prepared by secondary school Foods Technology Program students) and one workshop in the afternoon. A highlight of the day, in addition to the keynote address is the entertainment provided by students and accompanying prayer service.

Best Practice #5: Catholic Education Week

Contact Information: Frank Iannantuono, Superintendent of Education frank.iannantuono@ncdsb.com; Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education; (leeann.forsyth-sells@ncdsb.com); Frank Iannantuono, Superintendent of Education (frank.iannantuono@ncdsb.com); Robert Ciarlo, Superintendent of Education robert.ciarlo@ncdsb.com

Details:

Grade 7 Mass

1. The Grade 7 Mass occurs annually on the Monday of Catholic Education Week. Eight masses (corresponding to the number of our Catholic Secondary Schools) are celebrated in Parish Churches within the Diocese, gathering together the Gr. 7 students of each Family of Schools. The Chaplain of each of the Secondary

Schools, co-ordinates the mass with the assistance of the Gr. 7 teachers. This mass is conducted with the theme of Catholic Education Week, using uniform readings and prayers. This mass celebrates our Catholicity as well as encourages the collective identity of the students who will attend the same secondary school.

Catch the Spirit Awards

2. "The future of our church and society depends on young people taking positions of leadership and responsibility. Our catholic educational system calls students to not only achieve a high degree of academic excellence, but also to realize their social responsibility to bring gospel values to the world in which they find themselves leading with a sense of justice and service."

The Catch the Spirit Award is a recognition that is given to a student in each of the schools of the Niagara Catholic District School Board who embodies the above statement. The students are recognized at an evening celebration with Parents and Family Members, Principals, Vice-Principals, Senior Administrators and Trustees. The students receive a trophy and certificate presented by the Director of Education and local Trustees. In addition, their names are engraved on a plaque, which hangs permanently in their respective schools. The ceremony also features entertainment and talent displays by fellow students.

Celebrating Staff Excellence

3. Each year during Catholic Education Week and as part of the many activities that characterize this week, the Niagara Catholic District School Board, hosts a celebration for staff in recognition of the great effort expended in the co-curricular programmes that exist its schools. This gala affair allows for performances, keynote addresses and testimonial speeches in appreciation of staff. This event culminates with a dinner that is prepared by the chefs and students involved in the board's Food's Technology programs.

NIPISSING-PARRY SOUND CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: ANNA-MARIE BITONTI

Best Practice #1: Faith Ambassadors

Contact Information: Karen Fabbro – Cobb, Senior Education Official
cobbk@npsc.edu.on.ca

Details: One staff member from each school was chosen to take on the role of Faith Ambassador to become further engaged in their faith and share it with others in their school community. Our Faith Ambassadors are a team of peers ministering to peers who take on the following leadership activities:

- ✚ Model good forms of prayer and provide prayer resources to those who need them
- ✚ Provide leadership in prayer as well as assist and call others into leading prayer at the school, staff and system level
- ✚ Initiate liturgies in response to the school's unique needs and invite local priests to assist in services
- ✚ Encourage, support or create volunteer programs in the school and organize groups to help with charity
- ✚ Help raise consciousness about the needs of the poor, both at home and around the world
- ✚ Connect the school community to sharing information on serious illness or death of anyone connected with their school community and provide an appropriate Christian response

Best Practice #2: Duke of Edinburgh Program - St. Joseph – Scollard Hall Secondary School

Contact Information: Joanne Benard, Superintendent of Education
benardj@npsc.edu.on.ca

Details: The Duke of Edinburgh's Young Canadians Challenge is a self – development program available to all young Canadians, earning them life skills to make a difference with themselves, their communities and their country. Many of our St. Joseph – Scollard Hall students are involved in this program and have been honoured with bronze and silver awards on behalf of the British Royal Family for their remarkable volunteer efforts in our community. In 2007 - 2008, a group of our St. Joseph – Scollard Hall Duke Of Edinburgh participants, The Outsiders, worked together to raise funds and travel to Costa Rica to build a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center for teens.

Best Practice #3: The Distinguished Catholic Graduate Award

Contact Information: Anna-Marie Bitonti, Director of Education
bitontia@npsc.edu.on.ca

Details: The Nipissing – Parry Sound Catholic District School Board of Trustees presents *The Distinguished Catholic Graduate Award* annually to one secondary school Grade 12 graduate. The recipient of this award is a graduate who exemplifies the board's mission as a Catholic Education system by:

- ✚ Reaching his or her full potential
- ✚ Being a contributing member of society
- ✚ Living the richness of his or her faith and;
- ✚ Embracing lifelong learning

Best Practice #4: God Squad

Contact Information: Nancy Ann Hedicann, Pastoral Animator, St. Joseph-Scollard Hall Catholic Secondary School hedicann@npsc.edu.on.ca

Details: The God Squad is a school-wide faith development opportunity open to students in Grades 9 to 12 in our secondary school. The number of student participants in the God Squad range between 40 and 75 each year. Students participate in music ministry, drama, liturgical dance, and liturgical celebrations and in social justice activities. The events organized by the students have included: food drives; school masses including Thanksgiving, Grade level masses, Christmas, Lenten mass, Mother's Day as well as family masses; prayer services; soup kitchen fundraisers; Operation Warmth; Bear Day (a welcome for Grade 8 students event); and a day of silence. The God Squad also provides support through song or dance at Board and local parish events.

**NORTHEASTERN
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: GLENN SHECULSKI

Best Practice #1: Tools: Toronto Ontario Opportunities for Learning and Service

Contact Information: Mike Buhler, Pastoral Care Worker, buhlerm@ncdsb.on.ca

Details: Senior students from O’Gorman High School engage in a four-day faith building opportunity through service. Students take a prayerful approach to learn about the issues of people on the streets. Students work in soup kitchens and shelters serving people in need.

Participants stay in a Church and prepare meals together, break bread together and pray together.

Students have a chance to work in the Out of the Cold Shelter doing tasks such cleaning up mats, cleaning bedding and preparing the shelter for those who need to stay there.

Students are afforded the opportunity to go through a walk in different neighbourhoods and hear the story of personal experience through the eyes of the guide who has lived on the streets.

Students go to Mass together as a group before they leave Toronto.

Best Practice #2: September Professional Development Day: The Call to Holiness and Saintliness: Becoming Saints

Contact Information: Liz Mulholland, Supervisor of Student Achievement
liz.mulholland@ncdsb.on.ca

Details: During this first professional development day of the school year, school staffs began the day with a Mass in each of their individual Parishes. The teachers then returned to their schools and were introduced to the theme The Call to Holiness and Saintliness: Becoming Saints by examining the Video clip "Saints: Gospel Artists". Discussion ensued as to how we are called to be Saints. Questions such as: What words / images come to mind when you think of a saint? How do you react to John Paul II’s call to be saints of the new millennium? How do you react to the statement “we are all called to be holy” were pondered.

Research of School Saint or Church name took place. Teachers explored the historical and theological background of the Saint. Brainstorming and planning for the School feast day ensued. Plans were shared with other schools. A discussion as to how the Beatitudes are a blueprint for holiness unfolded. Particular attention was focused on how we can live the Beatitudes in our schools.

The session concluded with an article study, “Families, where are the saints of the third millennium?”

Best Practice #3: Faith Ambassador Program

Contact Information: Mike Buhler, Pastoral Care Worker, buhlerm@ncdsb.on.ca

Details: Representatives from each school come together for fellowship and personal faith development in order to nurture the faith development of the students with whom they work. Our Faith Ambassadors have taken a leadership role in each school. As we meet before each liturgical season they are often instrumental in launching faith based activities for each season (faith based read alouds, social justice campaigns such as food drives to name a few.)

Three of our Ambassadors attended Where Faith Meets Pedagogy and had the opportunity to share their experiences with their colleagues. There is an opportunity for service. The Faith Ambassadors worked in a food bank. This opportunity allowed them to experience the power of service. They were then able to share the experience with their students.

Faith Ambassadors are in constant communication with one another and a source of support. An example of this is illustrated through the connections made between two classrooms in different geographical locations. One classroom writes prayer cards for members of the community and sent cards of prayer to other classroom. The two classrooms are now faith pen pals.

Best Practice #4: School and System Liturgies

Contact Information: Mike Buhler, Pastoral Care Worker, buhlerm@ncdsb.on.ca

Details: This year we launched our board Faith theme: We are the light of the world.

All schools participated in the We are the Light of the World Liturgy at the same time.

Prayer Services take place for Trustees at their monthly board meetings, for principals at their monthly meeting and for Curriculum team members during their regularly scheduled meetings.

Schools participate in liturgies throughout the liturgical year Schools prepared a liturgy based on their saint or Church name and celebrated the feast day.

The high school participated in an Earth Hour liturgy with the lights off and candles used to illuminate the darkness.

The curriculum team has been preparing brochures as a resource for teachers to use during each liturgical season.

Best Practice #5: Engaging Parents: Improving Student Achievement Symposium (November 2007)

Contact Information: Glenn Sheculski, Director of Education

glenn.sheculski@ncdsb.on.ca

Details: This interactive workshop, sponsored by CPCO, OECTA and OAPCE, for parents, teachers and school leaders allowed for the opportunity for all stakeholders to work as partners in Catholic education.

Participants were able to understand the vital role that each of the partners plays in shaping and sustaining a strong Catholic educational system.

An understand the role of an active, inclusive Catholic School Council in creating caring, welcoming school communities was fostered.

Identification of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations to more deeply appreciate the mission of our Catholic Schools took place.

Strategies for enhancing all types of parental involvement and the benefits to student achievement were shared.

NORTHWEST CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MARY-CATHERINE KELLY

Best Practice #1: Board Faith Development Day

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator, kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: Each fall all staff members are gathered together for our annual Faith Development Day. We begin the day with the celebration of the Mass, with music provided by the host school staff. One of the trustees welcomes the group on behalf of the Board and the director then gives an address. After nutrition break our keynote speaker is introduced and speaks until noon. Lunch is provided and then the keynote speaker engages the group in activity or conversation until dismissal.

Some years we have bussed our outlying school staffs to a central location and other years we have connected via video-conferencing equipment, and have celebrated Mass separately at each end of the Board. Connecting physically is really the best option but also the most costly.

Our staffs have enjoyed a variety of inspirational, intellectual and musical presenters over the years. The day gives us the opportunity to connect with members of our educational community within the context of our Catholic faith.

Best Practice #2: New Teacher Catholicity Workshop

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator, kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: Each year, as soon as the new teachers have settled into their routines, the Board provides them a Catholicity day. The group is gathered together to meet other new teachers, to pray and to learn.

The day begins with introductions and a prayer service. The Director or Superintendent of Education welcomes the group. The Catholicity Coordinator then animates the day. The following themes are covered over the course of the day: a short history of Catholic education in Ontario, the importance and purpose of Catholic education, expectations of Catholic teachers, Catholic values and the Catholic Graduate expectations, characteristics of a Catholic school, integration of Catholicity into the curriculum, authentic teaching and assessment, available resources and prayer.

The day is interspersed with prayer, music, reflection, sharing and discussions. Treats and lunch are provided, and Board pins are presented to each new teacher.

New teachers genuinely appreciate the day as it very much feels like a retreat and they receive a great deal of helpful information.

Best Practice #3: Commissioning service

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator, kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: At the beginning of each year a special day is set aside to commission the teachers for their vocations during the parish Mass. After the homily the priest calls the principals forward, and they in turn call each teacher forward. Every person receives a taper, which is lit from the Christ candle, and a short ceremony ensues.

In this way the staffs recognizes our dependence on the Lord Jesus to sustain us in our vocations. We also realize that we are part of the larger church community and responsible to that community to spread the Good News and the tenants of the faith.

The ceremony is both meaningful and empowering.

Best Practice #4: Adult Faith Formation

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator, kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: In addition to the annual Faith Development Day, the Board is supporting several initiatives to further develop the faith life of teachers. Half day release is being provided for every teacher for extra catechesis. The OECTA AQ Religious Education course is also being provided connecting four communities using the Board video-conferencing equipment. Personal prayer books and support materials are provided for all staff for the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Best Practice #5: Communications for Catholic Education:

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator, kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: A focused effort is being made to communicate a positive and informative Catholic message to our communities this year. Posters have been developed and are being displayed in our public buildings advertising our Catholic schools and what they represent. Calendars were sent to all families at the beginning of the year, highlighting school and liturgical information. Monthly newsletters are sent to all parishes and stakeholders. Kindergarten welcome bags with informational, educational, and Catholic based contents are being given out at registrations. A concerted effort is being made to have press releases, articles, photos and advertisements placed in local newspapers.

Best Practice #6: Teaching Gospel Values and Developing Character

Contact Information: Kathleen Mueller, Catholicity Coordinator,
kmueller@tncdsb.on.ca

Details: Based on a survey of parents in the district, ten values were chosen to be the focus for the ten months of school. Each month a division-level package is sent to each teacher and principal. The package includes staff and student prayers, quotes, Bible references and stories, literature connections and lessons, ideas for integrating into curriculum areas, posters, calendars with daily quotes, prayers or activities, resources and music suggestions. Schools are encouraged to use the value of the month for their “big idea” theme. “Teaching Catholic Values and Developing Character” Kits have been placed in each library with the resources needed to carry out the suggested activities. New resources are added as the year proceeds. Teachers are asked to collate their packages into binders that were provided at the beginning of the year.

OTTAWA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JAMES G. MCCRACKEN

Best Practice #1: Christian Community Day

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: Early in the fall of each year, the Ottawa Catholic school board community gathers for Christian Community Day. This event sets out the Board vision for the coming year. Over 3,000 teachers, administrators and support staff attend the day. Employees look forward to hearing the messages of the Director of Education, the Archbishop and keynote speakers as well as reuniting with colleagues. Christian Community Day has become a tradition that has strengthened our Catholic educational community. It is an adult faith experience that is valued by employees serving to unite all in a common Gospel vision.

Best Practice #2: Faith Mentors

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: Principals benefit from having a staff member who is committed to the faith life of the school, and is provided with professional development to assist them. Some Catholic teachers welcome the opportunity to deepen their commitment to the Catholic faith and develop their sense of spiritual leadership. Faith mentors have been established in the elementary schools of Ottawa Catholic. After experiencing two full days of formation in adult faith, liturgy and religious education, faith mentors return to their schools with sound liturgical practice and strategies for strengthening the home-school-parish relationship.

Best Practice #3: Catholic Symposium Conversation

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: The *Our Catholic Schools* conversation began with all principals engaging in the questions, and the implementation of an adult faith package that allowed school staffs, school councils and students to engage in the process. Over 5,000 people participated and documented their responses to the five questions. This material was

condensed into a publication with themes that became the basis of the Board's Character Formation model.

In November 2007, the Director of Education hosted a symposium meeting with representatives from all the partners in Catholic education. Speakers were drawn from the Ottawa Catholic educational community including students, priest, principal and teacher. Drawing on the parable of the sower, participants responded to two key questions:

- ✚ To develop support for publicly funded Catholic education, what is it that we celebrate in Catholic schools?
- ✚ To build support for publicly funded Catholic schools, how do we respond to challenges with creative initiatives?

A resource package was developed to bring this same conversation back to schools and school councils. A DVD of highlights from the day, including statements from the Director of Education, James G McCracken and Archbishop Prendergast. Schools and school councils are using these resources as part of their professional development and adult faith formation.

Best Practice #4: Character Formation and the Virtuous Life

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: Drawing on information from various committees within the Board, and from participants in the Catholic Symposium, a model for character formation was developed, critiqued, and is now being implemented. The Gospel values of faith, hope, love, community, dignity of persons, excellence, justice and stewardship for creation form the template that is our guide to 'Virtues Education'. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as expressed in scripture and Church tradition, is at the centre providing direction, motivation and spiritual depth to each of these values.

Materials have been produced for homes, parishes and schools to promote education of virtues. An example is a pamphlet for families providing ways to develop virtuous character in our children. The resource book for schools includes a component for adult faith.

Best Practice #5: Board Spiritual Theme

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: For the last several years, the Board has adopted a Spiritual Theme that provides focus and system support to adult faith formation. Linked to the Character Formation model, one Gospel value is taken, developed and used to form the basis for prayer, liturgy and adult faith development. For example, the most recent theme was '*We Care for God's Creation*'. This theme gives school communities a spiritual context within which to gain a greater appreciation for the environmental issues facing society.

It also provides a focus for faith development in appreciating the love and gifts of the Creator.

A theme banner, logo and power point presentation give visual expression. A theme package provides extensive prayer resources as well as spiritual quotes and an outline of Church teachings on the theme. A theme song is composed, performed and recorded providing musical expression. Board staff and students have embraced the theme and used it in a variety of creative ways.

Best Practice #6: Parish – School Dialogue

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: A group has been formed to meet and discuss ideas for strengthening the parish/school relationship. Pastors, principals, a chaplaincy leader and the Religious education Coordinator and Consultant meet to share best practices and discuss any issues of concern. The focus of the group is to be creative and pastoral in meeting the needs of school communities: students, families and staff and to encourage commitment to Catholic education.

Best Practice #7: Adult Faith

Contact Information: Janet Bentham, Religious & Family Life Coordinator, Student Success Dept. janet.bentham@ottawacatholicschools.ca

Details: Principals (on a monthly basis), Vice-Principals and various staffing groups within the school board community have opportunities for Adult Faith sessions with the Religious Education Coordinator and Consultant. The sessions focus on scripture with an exegesis and hermeneutical emphasis. Participants are provided opportunities to reflect and share about these theological topics and make connections to personal life and professional practice.

Principals and Vice-Principals are provided with a retreat experience in the fall of each school year. This provides time for reflection and Adult faith formation on the Board spiritual theme. The Catholic Leadership Framework is the starting place for developing strong Catholic leadership skills. Leadership challenges and theories are examined from a faith perspective and the connection of faith to professional practice and interpersonal relationships is addressed as each SUPRINCO meeting. An example is the examination of 'adaptive challenges' and how our faith and discernment can be seen as effective tools for success.

**PETERBOROUGH VICTORIA
NORTHUMBERLAND AND CLARINGTON
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOHN MACKLE

Best Practice #1: System Faith Day

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvnccdsb.on.ca

Details: A gathering of all PVNCCDSB employees takes place every other year at St. Peter's Secondary School, Peterborough. The focus in October 2007 was "Ministering to Youth", and our keynote speaker was David Wells, Director of Religious Education, Plymouth Diocese, England.

This past October, 2008, was a school-based "Faith Day". Each principal was responsible for the planning and co-ordination of this day with his/her staff community.

Best Practice #2: Catholic Virtues into Action Project








Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvnccdsb.on.ca

Details: A system committee identified the following monthly Virtues:

September - Respect	February - Compassion
October - Empathy	March - Forgiveness
November - Justice	April - Stewardship
December - Patience	May - Tolerance
January - Responsibility	June - Honesty

Each month, as part of the Director's Meeting, a principal and our Faith Animator present an introduction to the Virtue via Gospel reading, reflection, and prayer.

Principals receive the following electronic resources each month:

-  Principal Message re – Virtue for school newsletter
-  Prayers/Quotes for the month
-  Prayers of the Faithful for monthly school liturgy
-  Monthly bulletin board ideas
-  Resources for classroom teachers
-  Virtue discussion points for Catholic School Council meeting
-  Message for Parish Bulletin.

Our Communications Department has also prepared posters, bookmarks, mugs to promote this Virtues project.

Best Practice #3: Leaders Today

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvncdsb.on.ca

Details: PVNCCDSB has engaged Leaders Today to present a motivation talk to all students K-12. In addition, selected students (approximately 25 per school) will participate in integrated hands-on workshops to inspire, motivate, and provide students with the tools to be social action leaders. These “volunteer ambassadors” in elementary schools receive a half-day workshop, and secondary students receive three full day workshops.

All grade 10 students will also be researching social service/charitable agencies in their local areas and presenting background information on the mission/mandate of the agency they research. Each secondary school will be eligible for a \$5,000.00 grant to present to the agency they believe is most in need of financial support.

Best Practice #4: “Imparting the Spirit” Catholic Student Leadership Award

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvncdsb.on.ca

Details: The Principals and Vice-principals’ Association of our Board annually presents a Catholic Student Leadership Medal to one student for each of our 38 schools.

This award recognizes a student who consistently demonstrates many of the outstanding qualities described in our Catholic School Graduate Expectations:

- ✚ A Discerning Believer
- ✚ A Reflective, Creative, Holistic Thinker
- ✚ A Self-directed, Responsible, Lifelong Learner
- ✚ A Responsible Citizen
- ✚ A Collaborative Contributor
- ✚ An Effective Communicator.

The information from the nomination package for each student is summarized and published in a booklet which is distributed to all who attend the evening Awards Ceremony, held on the Wednesday during Catholic Education Week.

In addition to award recipients and their families, all principals, vice-principals, many school staff, trustees, senior officials, and our Bishop attend this celebration of student excellence and leadership.

Best Practice #5: Administration Retreat

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvncdsb.on.ca

Details: Each year all principals, superintendents, and managers gather for a two-day spiritual retreat. This past January 2009, Doug Finbow presented our retreat, “The Dream of God: Educating for Creativity, Wholeness and Just Living”.

The retreat included six sessions:

1. “The Dream of God”
2. Spirituality and Creativity
3. Sabbath, Shalom and Wholeness
4. Living Toward Solidarity and Justice
5. Walking to God: Dream
6. God: Dream in Our School Communities.

Best Practice #6: Annual Spiritual Theme – over the past five years

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvncdsb.on.ca

Details:

2004-2005 Discipleship: Being the Body of Christ

Discipleship is a life disciplined in God’s word, a life disciplined in prayer, and a life disciplined in love. We are the Church, a body of people centred in Jesus.

2005-2006 Called to Serve: “I am the vine, you are the branches” John 15:1

This image calls us to a relationship of intimacy between Christ and ourselves, and challenges us to develop rich and supportive relationships with our students and colleagues.

This image calls us to take seriously Christ’s presence in our lives and our call to discipleship, to bear fruit, to be of service to others.

This image calls us to recognize that bearing fruit isn’t optional – showing love, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, commitment to Jesus’ Church, an eagerness to worship and hear God’s word and live the Gospel message is a critical part of our ministry.

2006-2007 Empowered by the Spirit: “I will pour out my spirit upon all” Acts 2:17

The Holy Spirit makes us able to take part in God’s work in the world and makes it personal. The kingdom becomes my vision for living. God’s hope for all becomes my hope for all. God’s sorrow over people’s situations and actions becomes mine too. If the Holy Spirit has me, God is not distant but close up and real. The human spirit soars because of the Holy Spirit.

2007-2008 Believe, Love, Act: “Love one another as I have loved you” John 13:34

We are challenged to become architects of a Catholic culture in our schools:

- Believe - create a Gospel Culture
- Love - create a Culture of Relationships
- Act - create a Culture of Service.

The heart and soul of Catholic education is the character of Jesus Christ who proclaims the good news that God wills for us, the fullness of life.

2008-2009 Believe, Love, Act: “Love your neighbour as yourself” Luke 10:27

- Believe - We are a community of believers living out the call of our Baptism through personal faith in Jesus and witnessing together the Good News of the Gospel.
- Love - We are reminded that the greatest commandment has three parts: love God, love neighbours, and love ourselves which is a circle or triangle because we need to know God loves us and learn to love ourselves as God loves us before we can truly love our neighbours.
- Act - Jesus did not simply preach the Gospel, He lived it. The life of Jesus was a life of ministry, of service, self-giving, healing, and advocacy for others.

Best Practice #7: Student Poverty Fund

Contact Information: John Mackle, Director of Education, jmackle@pvnccdsb.on.ca

Details: The number of families living in poverty across our Board continues to grow. Our region’s poor students face the greatest risk of health problems, difficulties in school, and stress-related illnesses.

“Vibrant communities ensure that basic needs are met. There is no family without a roof over its head. No child goes to school hungry. No person suffers from abuse or violence without having a safe place to go. No family lives as an island – without help and support when needed.”
Caledon Institute of Social Policy

Documentation clearly indicates that the poor are more vulnerable to abuse, criminal influence, and despair. Poor students have little hope and few choices.

To meet our challenge, “Helping to Alleviate Poverty”, we propose establishing a Student Poverty Fund. Our objective will be to raise charitable funds to counter the effects of poverty on the students within our schools.

The PVNC-SPF will be administered by an Advisory Committee which will be comprised of representatives from all employee groups as well as our important Catholic partners.

Our initial fund-raising effort to establish the PVNC-SPF will be the PVNC Annual Charity Golf Tournament, Saturday, June 27, 2009.

Last June 2008, our first Annual Charity Golf Tournament raised over \$10,000.00 which was donated to our Habitat for Humanity staff build. Between July 2008 and October 2008 a new home was built by PVNC staff. The key to this new home was presented to the family at a special ribbon cutting ceremony and home blessing in early November 2008.

RED LAKE
ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD

SUPERVISORY OFFICERS: KEVIN AND JOANNE DEBNAM

Best Practice #1: Reflection Day (Holy Thursday)

Contact Information: Betty Brush, Consultant, Religious Studies, Religion and Family Life, Suzanne Chartier-White, Principal, 807-727-2365 principal@stjohnsredlake.com

Details: Holy Thursday afternoon, students are placed in multi-age groupings and meet in the various classes for craft and other activities based on scripture and scriptural symbolism. Afternoon activities conclude with a liturgy focussing on Holy Week and the connections between the activities and Christ's passion, death and resurrection.

Best Practice #2: Virtues/Bead program

Contact Information: Suzanne Chartier-White, Principal, 807-727-2365
principal@stjohnsredlake.com

Details: Based on material obtained from Dufferin-Peel CDSB. A virtue is selected for each month. At the beginning of the month, the virtue is "launched" with a short liturgy. Teachers incorporate the virtue into their daily teachings. Students use digital cameras to make "posters: depicting the virtue and post them throughout the school. Adults in the building carry beads that they hand out when they see the virtue (or other behaviours that bear reinforcing) being displayed by students. Beads go into glass jars, and at the end of the month, bead totals are counted up and averaged as beads/student for every class. The class with the highest number of beads per student gets to select a class reward from a classroom menu they have created with their teachers (e.g. extra recess time, pizza for the class, etc.). The winning class is announced at the following month's liturgy, and the process begins anew.

RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MICHELE ARBOUR

Best Practice #1: Yearly Catholic Community & Corporate Focus

Contact Information: Michele Arbour, Director; Andrew Bray, Board Chair

Details: Each year, our board adopts a primary focus, taken from our vision statement, to guide our activities at a system-wide level with a distinctive Catholic orientation. Our 2008-09 Catholic Community Focus is: *In a spirit of affirmation and celebration today, we strive to foster a world view shaped by the Catholic conversation about life's meaning and purpose.* Within this focus, three specific objectives guide our strategic planning for the year:

- ✚ Raise the profile of Catholic education across Renfrew County
- ✚ Support the faith formation of students, staff and the larger Catholic School community
- ✚ Support the needs of the poor, both locally and globally

These are important points of reference for all our system-wide activities throughout the school year. They help ensure what we do is consistent with our Catholic belief and identity.

Best Practice #2: School Faith Portfolios

Contact Information: Michele Arbour, Director of Education; Andrew Bray, Board Chair.

Details: Each year, every school in our system compiles a faith portfolio highlighting its activities, which enhance and celebrate its Catholic identity. These portfolios are put on display for members of our school communities to peruse and review.

Best Practice #3: Annual Christian Community Day

Contact Information: Tony Cosentino, Religious Education & Family Life Resource Teacher

Details: Our annual Christian Community PA Day brings our entire board staff together to address and celebrate the distinctiveness of our Catholic school system. Our guest speakers have included Noel Martin, Sister Clare Fitzgerald, Msgr. Dennis Murphy, Dr. Mark McGowan, and Brian McGowan. The highlight of our day is Eucharist with our

Bishop, followed by workshops with a special emphasis on enhancing the Catholic dimension of our schools.

Best Practice #4: OECTA/OCSTA Religious Education AQ Courses

Contact Information: Tony Cosentino, Religious Education & Family Life Resource Teacher

Details: The OECTA/OCSTA Religious Education AQ Courses offered in our board continue to have a positive and lasting impact on teaching and non-teaching staff that have taken them. Many course candidates acknowledge the importance these courses have played in their coming to a more adult understanding of their Catholic faith. Participation in these courses has led them to make a deepened commitment to witnessing this faith as members of the parish worshipping community, with colleagues and with students in the classroom.

Best Practice #5: Strong Diocesan Presence

Contact Information: Michele Arbour, Director of Education; Jason Dedo, Director of Adult Faith Formation and Leadership Development, Diocese of Pembroke

Details: In September 2006, our board entered into partnership with the Pembroke Diocese whereby one of our teachers was seconded to work as *Diocesan Director of Adult Faith and Leadership Development*. A number of our staff and principals have enrolled in our diocesan adult faith development courses, which are now being coordinated by this teacher. This new partnership continues to build greater understanding and closer cooperation between our diocese and board.

Best Practice #6: Adult Faith Development Series for Administrators

Contact Information: Michele Arbour, Director of Education

Details: Representatives of our Board's leadership met with our board Chaplain to identify key topics for a series of faith development seminars this winter and spring. Our Chaplain will be leading board administrators through bi-monthly reflection sessions on adult faith themes in keeping with our year's Catholicity focus.

SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: MICHAEL O'KEEFE

Best Practice #1: Faith Day

Contact Information: Joan Gallagher-Main, Adult Faith Animator

jgallagher@smcadsb.on.ca

Details: Traditionally in September each year, a board-wide staff day of Faith is celebrated. Each year is a different format, such as in families of schools, in regions and all together in one location. In 2005, all staff gathered at the Martyrs Shrine, which included a Pilgrimage, mass, a variety of workshops and other activities. In 2008 the board staff will gather in one of two locations to celebrate our faith through the inspiration of Father Tony Ricard.

Best Practice #2: When Faith Meets Pedagogy

Contact Information: Brian Beal, Superintendent of Programme & Services,

bbeal@smcsb.on.ca

Details: We support, through payment of registration and/or accommodation costs, the attendance of as many staff as possible to attend this annual professional development event. This is a joint venture with OECTA. Many of our staff are workshop facilitators.

Best Practice #3: Faith Ambassadors

Contact Information: Joan Gallagher-Main, Adult Faith Animator,

jgallagher@smcsb.on.ca

Details: Each school and board office location has representation of two or more staff members who come together as a whole group and in more frequent regional meetings to share resources, best practices, and to nurture their own faith development. Along with principals and chaplains, faith ambassadors minister to their peers.

Best Practice #4: Catholic Values

Contact Information: Diane Legg, Director of Corporate Communications & Public Affairs, dlegg@smcadsb.on.ca

Details: This has been an extensive process of gathering key stakeholders and representatives from all partners in our school board community to identify the values inherent to Catholic education in Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka. This spring marked the official launch our Catholic Values at a board-wide evening event which included a Celebration of the Eucharist with His Worship, the Most Reverend Thomas Collins, Archbishop of the Diocese of Toronto, liturgical music and dance and small group discussions regarding the celebration of Catholic values at the local level.

Best Practice #5: Courage to Serve

Contact Information: Karen Connolly, Executive Director of Courage to Serve – Canada
kconnolly@smcgsb.on.ca

Details: Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board is a founding member of this initiative to support Adult Faith development. This is a retreat format offered to teachers and to support staff throughout the year with an introductory retreat and two year cohort programmes that are followed up with alumni retreats.

Best Practice #6: Catholic Education Week

Contact Information: Sherry Chapman, Coordinator, Religious Education & Chaplaincy Services
schapman@smcgsb.on.ca

Details: Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board incorporates the theme for Catholic Education Week in our work over the entire school year, including our annual school calendar, our communications and correspondence and as the theme for the year's faith development. Sub themes are introduced in stages throughout the year leading up to the celebration of Catholic Education Week.

Best Practice #7: Religion Professional Activity for New Teachers

Contact Information: Sherry Chapman, Coordinator, Religious Education & Chaplaincy Services
schapman@smcgsb.on.ca

Details: Simcoe Muskoka Catholic offers full day professional development sessions for teachers new to teaching Religion.

Best Practice #8: Catholic Education Charitable Foundation

Contact Information: Michael O'Keefe, Director of Education
mokeefe@smcgsb.on.ca

Details: This is a new initiative in the developing stages.

Best Practice #9: Technology and Literacy Strategies

Contact Information: Sherry Chapman, Coordinator, Religious Education & Chaplaincy Services schapman@smcdsb.on.ca

Details: The Program Department incorporates technology and literacy strategies into all elementary religious education and family life in-service activities.

Best Practice # 10: Orientation for New Employees

Contact Information: Joan Gallagher-Main, Adult Faith Animator
jgallagher@smcdsb.on.ca

Details: Twice a year the Human Resources department gathers together new employees in every position for a half day of Orientation activities and workshops, all focused around one of our Catholic Values: Service. Each person is given a bible as a welcome gift. We begin the Orientation with a prayer service which weaves together the yearly theme and St. Paul's theology that we are all One Body in Christ, valuing each person's gifts and contributions to the shared mission of Catholic Education. A key component of the Orientation day is a workshop on Working in a Catholic School Culture. Key points are our relational theology, emphasis on Community as the core of Christian culture, the bonds between home, school and Church, and our Catholic Values.

Best Practice # 11: On-line Prayer Intentions and Bereavement Folders

Contact Information: Joan Gallagher-Main, Adult Faith Animator,
jgallagher@smcdsb.on.ca

Details: Every employee has access to the on-line Prayer Intention Folder, to which anyone can post requests for prayer. These come almost daily, and hundreds of employees respond with prayer and encouraging messages. Likewise, the Bereavement Folder enables all employees to offer prayerful support to grieving community members, and further connects us in faith.

Best Practice # 12: Board Office Staff Prayer

Contact Information: Joan Gallagher-Main, Adult Faith Animator
jgallagher@smcdsb.on.ca

Details: Board Office staff come together weekly for prayer, and daily during Advent and Lent. Faith Ambassadors and prayer teams lead prayer, prepare liturgical celebrations, and spear-head charitable endeavours throughout the liturgical year. When possible, students and staff from schools join the Board office gatherings with presentations and participation.

ST. CLAIR CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: PAUL WUBBEN

Best Practice #1: Living Faith Awards

Contact Information: Todd Lozon

Details: On a yearly basis, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board recognizes individuals from across the district, which makes a significant contribution to the mission of Catholic education. The awards are presented at the annual Employee Recognition Celebration. A brochure is published, which includes the names, photographs and a brief description of the honourees' contributions. The brochure is distributed to all schools, parishes and board partners. It is an excellent way to pay tribute to those who support the mission Catholic education and at the same time profile our schools and our board.

Best Practice #2: Twilight Retreats

Contact Information: Shirley Eveleigh

Details: Three times a year, about 40 people from across the district gather at the Catholic Education Centre to hear a speaker, then engage in dialogue on a topic related to our faith. Guest speakers have included Fr. John Comiskey and Fr. Michael Prieur. Bishop Ronald Fabbro has also accepted our invitation and most recently spoke on the topic of "Catholic Schools and the Church's Mission of Evangelization." Invitations are open to anyone across the district, including all union presidents (teaching and non-teaching) and representatives of the trustees, senior administration and CPCO. It is always a relaxed and engaging evening, which includes a complimentary dinner.

Best Practice #3: Priest/Principal Meetings

Contact Information: Paul Wubben

Details: The Director of Education meets with the Bishop bi-annually, the Episcopal Vicars annually, and also attends the monthly meetings of the Deaneries of both counties in the district. Due to this frequent contact, there has been greater openness on behalf of the priests, to meet with principals and discuss issues of mutual concern. Past discussions have centred on declining enrolment, child sexual abuse and the pressures that priests and principals face in their respective leadership roles.

Best Practice #4: Student Support Fund**Contact Information:** Shawn Moynihan

Details: CPCO has organized a fund, which is supported by all schools to offer monetary support to students and families in need. The fund has helped families who have experienced tragic events, such as fire, death, illness, or who find themselves in a time for crisis for some other reason. The fund has also served to help students who need eye glasses, an epi-pen, a snowsuit, or families who need groceries. The response time to a request is 24 hours. Monies are generated through school fundraising activities, corporate donations and collections made at professional development days or special events. The fund is intended to be exhausted at the end of each year. Any monies which remain would be used to send needful students to camp for the summer.

Best Practice #5: Welcoming Families with a Children's Book**Contact Information:** Todd Lozon

Details: The St. Clair Catholic District School Board has developed and published a new children's book, which is used as a welcoming gift to families who choose Catholic education at JK and SK registration time. The book, *Yellow Bear Goes to Catholic School*, is a faith-based story, which recounts the positive experiences of a child who is entering the Catholic school system. *Yellow Bear Goes to Catholic School* is a unique product, and one that highlights the mission of Catholic education and the difference it makes in the lives of our students and their families. It is printed by Maracle Press and is available for purchase by all interested boards.

Best Practice #6: Catholic Leadership Discernment Program**Contact Information:** Dr. Frank Leddy

Details: The Catholic Leadership Discernment Program has been designed for educators across our district to discern their role within our Catholic school system. Four sessions have been designed to help them develop their leadership potential. This year's program included opportunities for candidates to learn the significance of 'emotional intelligence', to reflect on their role in building an authentic faith community, to discuss leadership roles in our system and to learn key practices of successful leaders. The program has been an excellent avenue for leadership candidates to understand the integral role of the administrator in shaping the Catholic culture of our schools.

Best Practice #7: Liturgical Theme and Banners

Contact Information: Joanne Forster

Details: Each year, a board liturgical theme is developed. This theme, which is based on Catholic teaching and rooted in scripture, is the foundation for all school-based prayer services and liturgical celebrations. It is also the recurring theme in the development of opening and closing prayers for all staff and administrative meetings throughout the year, including meetings of the Board of Trustees. Banners, which illustrate the liturgical theme, are produced and distributed to each school at the annual system-wide Mass each September.

Best Practice #8: School Faith Ambassadors

Contact Information: Joanne Forster

Details: The Faith Ambassador is a voluntary role taken on by a staff member in the school, or a committee of staff members with a key contact person. The Faith Ambassador is someone who has a strong and mature faith and who has the ability to share his/her faith with others and to help nurture and enhance the faith life of the staff by planning and leading opportunities for staff faith development. The Faith Ambassador brings the staff together for prayer and assists other staff in the preparation of school Masses and prayer services and helps to build a core of faith leaders to provide support and resources for staff.

Best Practice #9: School Virtues Program

Contact Information: Mary Jane Courie

Details: Beginning in September 2009, this program will focus on virtues, which are identified from the Catholic Graduate Expectations. Each month will highlight a different virtue. A curriculum is being written, which will include classroom discussion, prayers and liturgical celebrations for the schools.

Best Practice #10: Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations for Elementary Students

Contact Information: Lucy Pranovi

Details: In a joint project with the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board, our two boards undertook to review and re-write the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations in language which is more appropriate for elementary school students. The elementary OCGEs were then produced for classroom and school use in three printed formats: flip charts, posters and banners, which were made available at cost to all Catholic school boards in Ontario.

SUDBURY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: CATHERINE MCCULLOUGH

Best Practice #1: Aboriginal Faith Day

Contact Information: Dawn Wemigwans, Aboriginal Lead, wemigwd@scdsb.edu.on.ca

Details: Our board Faith Day was a celebration of faith and aboriginal culture. The day began with a welcome to the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, a Eucharist celebration including smudging, a Grandfather drumming group, a student drumming group, and student and community dancers. This day of celebration and rejuvenation was an incredible testimony to how culture and our Catholic faith are intertwined.

Best Practice #2: iPray Celebrations

Contact Information: Joan Yawney, Religious Education and Faith Development Consultant, yawneyj@scdsb.edu.on.ca

Details: Teachers and students who are part of a one to one MacBook program use their computers to create prayer services / reflections to share faith. They have used programs such as iMovie, Garage Band, Photo Booth and Comic Life to share their perspectives and create multi-media presentations. We have found that using technology engages students in celebrating our Catholic faith and helps them understand the relevance to their daily lives.

Best Practice #3: Character Education at Sudbury Catholic Schools

Contact Information: Joan Yawney; Religious Education and Faith Development Consultant; yawneyj@scdsb.edu.on.ca

Details: Character Education in connection with our Catholic faith has allowed for some unique opportunities. As part of our Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways, our schools have embraced our Catholic virtues as the "Big Ideas" encouraging students to make connections anchored in the real world. They are encouraged to share their own experiences as much as possible.

Best Practice #4: Tribes Training

Contact Information: Cindy Blinn, Academic Consultant, blinnc@scdsb.edu.on.ca

Details: Tribes training has been embraced at a board wide level. Teachers, EA's, Chaplains, and Administrators are encouraged to use Tribes in collaboration with our Catholic Faith to build a culture for learning in our classrooms, schools, and community.

Best Practice #5: Red Bird "Msko Bneshiinh" Singers (Grandfather Drumming Group)

Contact Information: Jennifer Petahtegoose, Native Studies Teacher, petahtj@scdsb.edu.on.ca

Details: In reaching out to aboriginal and non-aboriginal students, one of our secondary schools has begun a student "Grandfather Drumming Group". Adolescence is considered to be the stage of life referred to as "The Wandering Life." It is a time when young people are searching for truths. Our drum group allows them to grow in a healthy way - in mind, body, and spirit. The students join together with Elders, share traditional teachings and drum as a form of prayer to the Creator. They then share their drumming through participation in Eucharistic Celebrations, Remembrance Day Celebrations, Earth Day Celebrations and before sports activities.

SUPERIOR NORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: VALERIE PICHETTE

Best Practice #1: Faith Development

Contact Information: Valerie Pichette, Director of Education, vpichette@snedsb.on.ca

Details: Gerry Fallon, a well-respected, retired principal was hired to provide a faith development in-service for our teachers. They will meet three times for one half day between January and May '08, by school clusters and by division. The program will seek to provide teachers with a fuller understanding of their role as evangelizers through God's Word in Scripture and Tradition. It will provide a further understanding of the spiritual needs of the learners and knowledge of methodology in imparting the faith to young children.

Best Practice #2: Celebration of Excellence

Contact Information: Colleen Winters, Executive Secretary to Director, cwinters@snedsb.on.ca

Details: A Celebration of Excellence Banquet is held annually on the Saturday following Education Week. All employees are invited. They are welcome to bring their spouse or partners. Years of service pins are presented. Retirees are honoured. Special presentations are given to individuals who were nominated and chosen for special recognition; Service in Catholic Education and an Award of Merit. For more information regarding the disbursements of costs or other details contact Colleen at the Board Office by calling (807) 825-3209 ext. 24.

Best Practice #3: Faith Day

Contact Information: Valerie Pichette, Director of Education, vpichette@snedsb.on.ca

Details: Annually on the last Friday of September, all employees of Superior North Catholic gather in one of our communities to celebrate our faith. The day begins with Mass celebrated by the Bishop of the Diocese we are in. The liturgy is followed by the address of a prominent keynote speaker. We have been fortunate to have Sister Claire Fitzgerald, Father Eugene O'Reilly, and Father Norm Roberts. The keynote speaker also presents to the group after lunch. The gymnasium is decorated with art from across the board. A concluding liturgy takes place in the afternoon sponsored by the staff hosting the Faith Day.

Best Practice #4: Rosaries

Contact Information: Marylyn Turcotte, Librarian, St. Martin School, Terrace Bay,
mturcotte@sncdsb.on.ca

Details: Annually at St. Martin School the children make Rosaries. Older students, affectionately called knot heads, because they tie the knots, CWL members and grandparents help the younger students make their rosaries. These rosaries are blessed at the Living Rosary Celebration in May and mailed to a school in need as chosen each year by the students. They have sent rosaries to New Orleans, Africa and many other developing countries.

THUNDER BAY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOHN DE FAVERI

Best Practice #1: System Faith Day

Contact Information: Fr. Ciaran Donnelly, System Faith Animator,
cdonnell@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: On an annual basis, staff from across the system come together to reflect on their mission within Catholic Education. This was the first year that the Board undertook a new format for the Faith Day in that it was a full-day celebration for our system. The day was marked by a liturgy held at St. Patrick's Cathedral presided over by the Bishop of the Diocese of Thunder Bay and concelebrated by many members of the clergy. Many staff was involved in the music, liturgical dance, and coordinating functions. A keynote speaker followed, and after lunch, staffs return to their schools for a follow-up reflection/activity.

A broad-based planning committee including our school Faith Ambassadors assumed responsibility for organizing this day. Given the extremely positive feedback, plans are to repeat this format

Best Practice #2: Faith Ambassador Program

Contact Information: Fr. Ciaran Donnelly, System Faith Animator,
cdonnell@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board began developing an adult Faith Ambassador Program in the spring of 2008. Each school nominated 2 staff to be the first of these ambassadors. A commissioning ceremony, presided over by the Bishop, was held in the fall of 2008. By using models from a variety of other Catholic Boards, our committee is working on tailoring a program to meet the needs in our Board. It will aim to improve the spiritual climate among all adults through a variety of initiatives within and among all work locations.

Best Practice #3: Diocesan Conference

Contact Information: John De Faveri, Director, jdefaver@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: In partnership with OCSTA, the Diocese of Thunder Bay holds an Annual Conference for the Catholic Community. Attendees include trustees, senior Board staff

from Northwestern Ontario, principals, and clergy. This is an annual opportunity for all stakeholders to dialogue about local issues to ensure the long-term viability of Catholic Education in Northwestern Ontario.

Best Practice #4: Catholic Virtues in Action

Contact Information: Martina Cevero, Religious Education/Family Life Resource Teacher, mcevero@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: A committee of educators from within the TBCDSB developed a distinctive Northwestern Ontario approach to Catholic Character formation, honouring the symbols and traditions of our aboriginal community. Our graphic is organic; incorporates the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectation; and our virtues which are reflective of our Catholic tradition demonstrate respect for the seven grandfather teachings. A large poster is visible in all schools and Board buildings, on our webpage, and a smaller one is in classrooms. Monthly, resources packages are sent to schools to help teachers with the delivery of this curriculum. In addition, a small reflection on our Catholic Virtue of the Month is prominent on our webpage.

Best Practice #5: Catholic Parent Involvement Committee

Contact Information: Frances Garofalo, Superintendent of Education, fgarofal@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: Superintendents, Principals, and Trustees gather in the fall of each year with the Catholic School Council chairpersons for a commissioning service held in one of our schools. The commissioning of the chairpersons is presided over by the Bishop. It is a sign of encouragement and support for the service volunteered on behalf of parents and the community. This past year, the presentation focused on the launch of our Catholic Virtues in Action.

Best Practice #6: Religious Education AQ Course

Contact Information: Fr. Ciaran Donnelly, System Faith Animator, cdonnell@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: Our System Faith Animator delivers the OECTA/OCSTA Religious Education AQ Courses for the Northwest region. The course is delivered to teacher-candidates in the pre-service program as well as staff from all Boards throughout Northwestern Ontario. Many educators take advantage of the program.

Best Practice #7: Virtual Religious Education/Family Life Conference

Contact Information: Martina Cevero, Religious Education/Family Life Resource Teacher, mcevero@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: Within our Board's electronic information system, we have a Religious Education/Family Life Conference folder, an important resource for our teachers and staff to access information and materials to assist them in the delivery of our Religious education program. It is readily accessible to all teaching staff. As time passes, messages are archived in subfolders within the Conference folder (Advent/Christmas; Catholic Education Week; Catholic Virtues in Action; Celebrating the Word; Crisis Response/Grief; Curriculum; French Resources; General Resources; K-6; 7-8; Lent/Easter; Liturgies; Living Rosary; Mary and the Rosary; Music; Prayer Services; Prayers; Remembrance Day; Sacramental Preparation; Sacraments; Saints). The Conference folder has also become a way for staff to share knowledge and resources with each other.

Best Practice #8: Senior Elementary School Chaplain

Contact Information: Fr. Ciaran Donnelly, System Faith Animator, cdonnell@tbcdsb.on.ca

Details: The Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board has undertaken a review of Chaplaincy in schools throughout the system. Our Board is organized in elementary schools (K-6), Senior Elementary schools (gr. 7&8) and high schools (gr. 9-12). It became evident that Chaplaincy services were needed in our Senior Elementary schools, and as a result, our Chaplains were reassigned such that our two high schools share a Chaplain and our three Senior Elementary schools now also have a Chaplain assigned to them. Our preliminary feedback is that this support is a wonderful addition to the work being done in our senior elementary schools. To facilitate this work, our System Faith Animator and our Principals work together closely to support our students and Chaplains.

TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD CATHOLIC

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: ANN PERRON

Best Practice #1: Religion/Family Life Calendar Outlines

Contact Information: Ralph Peter, Coordinator of Religious Education

ralph.peter@tcdsb.org

Details: The TCDSB provides every year a resource document to help teachers plan out their Religion and Family Life programs. The resource shows teachers where each Unit, Theme and lesson occurs on a week-to-week basis. Major Liturgical seasons and feast days are also highlighted. Teachers are also reminded when the Family Life Theme Letters should go home to parents.

Best Practice #2: Religion Reps for Each School

Contact Information: Ralph Peter, Coordinator of Religious Education,

ralph.peter@tcdsb.org;

Details: Religion Reps gather by region to discuss issues related to the Religion Family Life Curricula three times a year. Reps meet with the Religion/Family Life Resource teachers in order to relay important information to their colleagues.

Best Practice #3: Religion/Family Life Event

Contact Information: Ralph Peter, Coordinator of Religious Education

ralph.peter@tcdsb.org;

Details: Each year Religion Reps and other interested people come to a late-afternoon/early evening event to hear a noted speaker on a variety of theological issues. Issues that have been presented are: Anti-violence and the Theology of Ecology.

Best Practice #4: Religion/Family Life Website

Contact Information: Ralph Peter, Coordinator of Religious Education,
ralph.peter@tcdsb.org

Details: This site is open to all who are interested in discovering the programs, policies and expectations of the Religion/Family Life programs. Frequently asked questions from both teachers and parents are included. Also posted, are the expectations from the Religion/Family Life programs, report card comments and the Family Life Thematic letters.

Best Practice #5: Foundations: Discerning Catholic Leadership

Contact Information: Mark Fenwick, Superintendent Curriculum & Accountability,
mark.fenwick@tcdsb.org

Details: This program invites teachers to discern through a Theological/Spiritual lens whether they feel they are being called to Catholic Leadership. The course is intended to be taken by people who have not yet begun their Principal Qualifications. Some have discerned that they are being called to this ministry while others discern themselves out of this direction at this time in their lives.

**Best Practice #6: The Saints of the Toronto Catholic District School Board
Calendar**

Contact Information: Ralph Peter, Coordinator of Religious Education,
ralph.peter@tcdsb.org

Details: A calendar is created each year highlighting the various feast days of the namesakes of our schools. Those schools that are not named after saints have their feast days celebrated on the anniversary of their birth or death of their patron. Major Liturgical seasons are also highlighted.

Each week the names of the schools that are celebrating their feast days are listed in the Director's Bulletin.

Best Practice #7: Day of Service

Contact Information: Mark Fenwick, Superintendent Curriculum & Accountability
mark.fenwick@tcdsb.org

Details: TCDSB Secondary School Students through Chaplaincy offer a variety of services throughout the city of Toronto. The Student support Share Life Agencies and other charities. This daylong experience connects our students to the social dimension of the Gospel within their communities.

Best Practice #8: Tanzania 2008

Contact Information: Steve Carey, Teacher – Catholic Teachers’ Centre,
steve.carey@tcdsb.org

Details: 10 Secondary Students led by Secondary School Teacher, Mr. Steve Carey in conjunction with the Precious Blood Fathers travel to Tanzania for one month during the summer to help construct a windmill to bring water to a remote village. The students will witness the Church in action and will be active participants in proclaiming the Gospel through their service.

Best Practice #9: Catholic Teachers’ Centre

Contact Information: Mark Fenwick, Superintendent Curriculum & Accountability
mark.fenwick@tcdsb.org

Details: An Adult Faith Formation Centre has been in place for a number of years to lead prayer, retreats and address the faith needs and questions of the TCDSB staff teachers, support staff etc. The membership of the centre is staffed by both elementary and secondary teachers who have formal post graduate theological and pastoral training to assist them in this ministry.

WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: ROGER LAWLER

Best Practice #1: Pastoral Care Teams

Contact Information: Glenn Sheculski / Jonathan Wright

Details: Each site identifies a core team who collaborate with the principal to take leadership in issues of Pastoral Care.

Core competencies of the Pastoral Care Teams includes liturgical coordination, adult faith formation, compassionate and critical care responses, as well as fostering communities of inclusion and justice. Teams may also be responsible for introducing system level initiatives such as the Professional Standard of Ethics or the Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Protocol as well as coordinating charitable initiatives, wellness opportunities, and responding to any other of the site's unique needs connected to the core competencies.

Site based teams meet five times a year to celebrate and worship, to network and discuss best practice, to receive system level direction and professional development. They provide feedback from their sites as to the needs of the various communities and to advocate for supports that are necessary to foster Catholic communities of faith, hope, and love.

Best Practice #2: Professional Standard of Ethics

Contact Information: Roger Lawler / Bruce Rodrigues

Details: In 2006-2007 the system introduced a Professional Standard of Ethics, based on the system's mission and guiding principles, which articulates who we are when we operate at our best. The PSE was developed through a lengthy process of discernment and collaboration between all partners in the system.

Based on the six core principles of *integrity, dignity of persons, accountability, fairness, collaboration, and stewardship*, the Professional Standard of Ethics calls us to the daily practice of just behaviour in fulfillment of the Gospel vision of community.

During the 2007-2008 school year, individual sites began the implementation process for the PSE by requesting that all sites engage in a minimum of five or six opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and practice throughout the year. A team, representing the various partners in our communities, developed a support guide, which included liturgical

experiences, kinaesthetic and reflective activities, and case studies for discussion and dialogue. Pastoral care teams took the lead in coordinating implementation at the site level with many electing to devote a major portion of the Spiritual Development Day to the subject.

The PSE will continue to be embedded into our practice in the coming years and has become a major decision screen for site/system planning and response.

Best Practice #3: Celebration of Excellence

Contact Information: John Shewchuk

Details: The Celebration of Excellence programme takes many forms throughout the school year. It aims to identify those people who demonstrate best practice in all facets of Catholic education.

We celebrate those graduates of our system who have provided an outstanding example of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations in action through the 'Distinguished Graduate Award'. The 'Chair's Award' recognises the significant contributions of an individual to Catholic Education at the local or provincial level while the 'Community Partner Award' celebrates the relationship we have with our local partners. The 'John Sweeney Award' is offered in recognition of a graduate who attend Saint Jerome's University who demonstrates perseverance, loyalty, integrity, as well as academic excellence and a commitment to Church, school, and community.

Individual sites identify staff members of distinction who are recognised at an annual event while teachers and administrators who have served Catholic Education for 15 or 25 years are also recognized.

Best Practice #4: Elementary Chaplaincy Programme

Contact Information: Glenn Sheculski

Details: The commitment of the WCDSB to providing access to pastoral counselling and faith leadership through chaplaincy programmes extends beyond the secondary school into the elementary communities.

A chaplaincy team, dedicated to the elementary panel, works together to provide a ministerial presence for our younger students. They work with staff to provide faith exploration and liturgical experiences. They enhance and supplement the work of the Parish's School Liaisons as well as coordinating the residential retreat programme that every grade eight student has the opportunity to attend.

These experiences become a touchstone for all of our elementary graduates and are a wonderful celebration of the fullness of Catholic Education as moving beyond the comprehension "...of God but rather to be apprehended by God in love."

Best Practice #5: Celebration of WCDSB Commitment To Catholic Education**Contact Information:** Carol DeVrieze/ Mary Bender

Details: A series of promotional videos articulates the WCDSB's commitment to providing quality, inclusive, and faith based education. The videos are available on the Board's website, provided to all new teachers, and screened at parent evenings, recruitment sessions, and other community gatherings.

One video provides an overview of the WCDSB's history and current practice by interviewing students, staff, parents, and graduates. A second film examines the various pathways for student success and articulates the system commitment to inclusion, integration, and compassionate decision-making. Another video demonstrates the various successes of our continuing education and international language programme while the final instalment welcomes new teachers and describes the various supports and opportunities for professional growth.

Best Practice #6: Spiritual Development Day**Contact Information:** Glenn Sheculski / Jonathan Wright

Details: Annually the WCDSB commits a PD day to the celebration and intentional development of the faith lives of its staff. The day is not an isolated event but rather a dedicated time to draw together the many opportunities for spiritual growth offered through the Pastoral Care Teams, chaplaincy programmes, and faith formation activities.

The day is an opportunity for staff to come together in worship, reflection, and celebration of the gift of Catholic Education. It recognises that educators cannot provide that which they do not first possess and makes a commitment to the holistic growth of all employees. The nature of the day operates on a three-year cycle. Triennially, the entire system gathers together in a massed celebration and the work is then continued at a site level for the following two years.

Sites respond to a system-wide focus, such as the Professional Standard of Ethics, and, through the coordination of the Pastoral Care Teams, provide an itinerary that responds to the unique needs of its members. Activities may include liturgies, guest speakers, reflective activities, and community action. This year the staff of the Catholic Education Centre is spending a half-day going out to various community justice agencies to offer a variety of services. This action not only becomes a living witness of the WCDSB's commitment to the social gospel but also serves as an opportunity for personal growth and connection with the poor and vulnerable.

Best Practice #7: Diocesan Mass to celebrate Catholic Education

Contact Information: Jonathan Wright

Details: The Diocesan Mass was inaugurated this year in the WCSDB and will be held annually throughout all of the constituent Boards in the Diocese of Hamilton. Community members and stakeholders from each system gather to celebrate and recommit themselves to the principles of Catholic Education at a Mass presided over by the Bishop.

Best Practice #8: Bishop’s Banquet

Contact Information: Vic Degutis – Revenue Development Office (519 578 3660)

Details: The annual dinner with keynote address is a fundraiser for faith formation programmes within the system which honours the local ordinary or auxiliary Bishop. The event is organised by the Waterloo Region Catholic Schools Foundation and features student performances and a silent auction.

Best Practice #9: Youth Leadership Conference

Contact Information: Bruce Rodrigues

Details: The annual conference allows student leaders to hear a keynote address from a community leader (ie. the Kielburger brothers) and attend a series of workshops on subjects ranging from visionary leadership to facilitation skills.

**WELLINGTON
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: DON DRONE

Best Practice #1: Bishop's Dinner for Catholic Education

Contact Information: Don Drone 519-821-4640 ext. 214

Details: This annual fundraising/awareness dinner attracts over 500 people from the public or private sectors. Its purpose is to highlight the contributions of Catholic education to our community and to raise money for the creation of a new Student Retreat Centre located at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph.

Best Practice #2: Spiritual Development Day

Contact Information: Allan Asselin, Catholicity Council Chair 519-323-2586

Details: Our District stages an annual keynote address panel on the many dimensions of Catholic education. Over 800 faculty and staff participate in the session at the River Run Performing Arts Centre. Speakers have included Sister Clare Fitzgerald, Joe Egan, Kathleen Chesto, Monsignor Dennis Murphy, Bishop Grecco, Noel Martin and Archbishop Tom Collins.

We schedule a dedicated full day to Catholicity. Morning sessions at each site are directed toward a key scriptural theme and its applicability to our work. The afternoon session (as described below) is connected to the morning small group work.

Best Practice #3: Memorial Mass

Contact Information: Allan Asselin, Catholicity Council Chair 519-323-2586

Details: Each year, our Catholicity Council prepares a Memorial Mass that is dedicated to those in our community who have passed away. The meaningful liturgy is followed by a meal in which all participants engage.

Best Practice #4: Advent & Lenten Series

Contact information: Allan Asselin, Catholicity Council Chair 519-323-2586

Details: Each year the Catholicity Council sponsors two series of early morning (6:00 a.m.) seminars that feature many aspects of the work of the Church, its clergy and the laity. Sessions are at Loyola House, a Retreat Centre, and have been well attended.

Best Practice #5: Student Video on Catholic Education

Contact Information: Allan Asselin, Catholicity Council Chair 519-323-2586

Details: We have a small committee of secondary students who have written a story line and produced a video on the meaning of Catholic education from a student perspective. The faculty advisor and the small student team introduced this to a gathering of all faculty and staff in the District.

WINDSOR-ESSEX CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: JOSEPH BERTHIAUME

Best Practice #1: Together in Faith Day

Contact Information: Betty Brush, Consultant, Religious Studies, Religion and Family Life, betty_brush@wecdsb.on.ca

Details: Together with our Director of Education, Trustees, Bishops, local parish pastoral teams, a dynamic keynote speaker, and other friends of Catholic education, all WECDSB employee groups gather for a morning of inspiration and celebration of our Catholic faith. An enthusiastic team of employees, garnering a variety of gifts and talents, coordinates this annual spirit-filled event. In keeping with the church season, an engaging Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated. Employees are invited and prepared to serve in liturgical ministries. An ensemble of board musicians provides music ministry and prayerfully engages us in lively ritual song. Each year our keynote speaker inspires us to live out the gospel message through word and action.

Past keynote speakers have included Fr. Tony Ricard from New Orleans; Matthew Kelly, author; inspiring people to become the best version of themselves; and Catholic education visionary, Sister Clare Fitzgerald.

Best Practice #2: System-wide Employee Retreats

Contact Information: Betty Brush, Consultant, Religious Studies, Religion and Family Life, betty_brush@wecdsb.on.ca

Details: The tranquil surroundings of Holy Family Retreat Centre in Harrow Ontario, on the spectacular cliffs overlooking Lake Erie, is the setting for our Board sponsored, system-wide, employee retreat days. Through the lens of the current liturgical season of the church year, and the goals of the Pastoral Plan of our Diocese of London, this directed retreat experience inspires retreatants to focus on their personal relationship with God, the Catholic Church, the sacraments, and their living-style as Disciples of Christ, and stewards of God's creation. Each retreat includes prayer, faith sharing, and private reflection time and culminates with full, conscience and active participation in a Eucharistic Liturgy. Participants report that the day is both engaging and inspiring. They return to their schools, renewed, encouraged and spiritually charged.

Best Practice #3: Student Retreats

Contact Information: Linda Staudt, Superintendent of Education
linda_staudt@wecdsb.on.ca

Details: Annual retreat days are provided for students from grades 8 through 12. Themes are drawn from each grade religion curriculum or Catholic Education Week resources. Campus ministry leaders and facilitators from the Windsor-Essex Deaneries engage our young people in conversation around life events and our Catholic faith. Campus Ministers come together to plan the high school retreats so that one common retreat is delivered to each grade level system wide. Further, each term grade 11 Catholic Studies students from each of our high schools come together at one location to celebrate the Eucharist, to listen to an inspirational speaker and to share a pizza lunch. All of our retreat days focus our Catholic students on living out the faith as Disciples of Christ and stewards of creation.

Best Practice #4: School visits with Auxiliary Bishop Robert Anthony Daniels

Contact Information: Linda Staudt, Superintendent of Education
linda_staudt@wecdsb.on.ca

Details: In an effort to enhance the School-Church relationship, Auxiliary Bishop Tony visits with both elementary and secondary students in their school environment. In a series of short assemblies, our Bishop embraces the opportunity to converse with students and answer their questions. He explains his ministry in the Diocese and Universal Church, his liturgical attire, his calling to the priesthood, and his days as a student in our system. With warm and hospitable words, his desire is to meet all the students in the Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB.

Best Practice #5: Catholic School Council Social and Commissioning

Contact Information: Linda Staudt, Superintendent of Education
linda_staudt@wecdsb.on.ca

Details: Board Administration, Superintendents, Supervisors and Trustees gather at the Catholic Education Centre with the Catholic School Council chairpersons, for prayer, a commissioning service, and breaking bread. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” **1Cor 12:27** is the theme for the commissioning of the CSC chairpersons. As a gesture of thanks and a sign of encouragement and support for service volunteered on behalf of parents and the community, our guests of honour, stewards within our Catholic school system, are then treated to a buffet dinner and presentation. Following the time spent networking, our Catholic School Council Chairpersons, standing for all that Catholic education represents, are then sent forth in faith and service.

YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: SUSAN LAROSA

Best Practice #1: Faith Ambassador Program

Contact Information: Les Miller, Coordinator, Religious & Family Life Education
les.miller@ycdsb.ca

Details: Faith Ambassadors work to improve the spiritual climate among the adults in schools and at the Catholic Education Centre through local activities and in partnership with local schools.

They are provided with financial, administrative and spiritual resources for their activities. See www.ycdsb.ca/html/Religion/Faith%20Ambassador%20Handbook.pdf for more information. Ambassadors support staffs and host events within their schools. They also meet with other schools in their area to plan larger events such as evenings of reflection, masses, and guest speakers. All staff is welcome to attend area events.

Best Practice #2: Daily Prayers for Children

Contact Information: Les Miller, Coordinator, Religious & Family Life Education
les.miller@ycdsb.ca

Details: YCDSB Prayers for Children was written to meet a need within our board for good Canadian prayers and reflections to be read over morning announcements or in the classrooms. Such prayers are intended to weave together the school year and the liturgical year. Schools in York Catholic District School Board are part of an every increasing set of circles of belonging: the school, the parish, the York Catholic District School Board, the Regional Municipality of York, Archdiocese of Toronto, the Province of Ontario, Canada, The Roman Catholic Church, the earth, and all of God's creation. Any reflections and prayers have to reflect these different communities to which the students belong as well as their personal communities: family, friends, class, and clubs.

We are members of the Roman Catholic Church. Our liturgical calendar is the main temporal thread around which all the others are woven. Our prayer is not only spiritually nourishing but also educational. Teaching students the rhythm of the liturgical seasons, the language of liturgy, and some of the traditional prayers is an important function of a Catholic school. Our prayers bring the prayer of the Church to the students in these ways:

1. Recognizing memorials and feast days of saints and other important church events;
2. Celebrating the major seasons of the church year such as Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter;

3. Using familiar prayers of the Church in month long blocks to help students learn the prayer from memory, to unite them with Catholics around the world and in history who have prayed the same words, and for the sheer beauty of these prayers;
4. Using scriptural readings extensively that reflect the themes of the month;
5. Presenting, on most Fridays, the following Sunday's Gospel in a way that is suitable for children.

Best Practice #3: Fully Subsidized Religious Education Courses (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

Contact Information: Denise Dupuis, Consultant Religious & Family Life Education and AQ Course Director

Details: YCDSB fully funds over 320 teachers each year to take the Religious Education Additional Qualifications Courses (parts 1, 2 and 3). This is part of a strategy of Adult Faith Formation which nurtures teacher spiritual development. Courses are offered in the Fall (September to December) and in the Summer (June-July)

Best Practice #4: Faith Day

Contact Information: Les Miller, Coordinator, Religious & Family Life Education
les.miller@ycdsb.ca

Details: Faith Days are held annually. All staff members attend events related to faith development in their schools, areas or as a whole board. The faith day themes are associated with Catholic Education Week Themes. Central Religious Education staff supports these activities with logistical support and provision of resources.

Best Practice #5: Prayer Resources

Contact Information: Les Miller, Coordinator, Religious & Family Life Education
les.miller@ycdsb.ca

Details: Religious Education staff provides varied resources for prayer services and other liturgical celebrations for students and staff. These include Gifts of Love, 70 prayer services for adults within the community. (See www.ycdsb.ca/html/Religion/giftsoflove.html.) Audiovisual prayer serves and reflections are made available to each school. Prayer services for Elementary and Secondary school students have also been prepared as part of the YCDSB Character program.