

Understanding Our Catholic Schools

Ontario has four distinct and equal education systems —English Catholic, English public, French Catholic and French public. Each of these systems has a unique mandate. Within this framework it becomes increasingly important for Ontario's Catholic schools to offer a truly distinctive form of education, one rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, the message of His Gospel and the traditions of the Catholic Church.

It is important for Catholic schools not only to be different in fact, but to be seen and known to be different. We must enter into dialogue and educate others about Catholic education: its purpose, our history and how Catholic education and its graduates have contributed to our communities.

The London District Catholic School Board ...

The objective of the London District Catholic School Board is to develop in our students a love of God, people and self, an appreciation of prayer and a moral foundation to assist them as they journey through life.

The London District Catholic school system has 48 elementary and 8 secondary schools providing a full range of education experiences from Junior Kindergarten through to the completion of secondary school.

The London District Catholic School Board educates and serves more than 22,500 students throughout Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin Counties and the cities of London, St. Thomas, Woodstock and Strathroy.

“When we graduate a student, we don't ask ‘what did you learn,’ but ‘who did you become?’”

... Sister Clare Fitzgerald

Articulating Our Hopes

Our Catholic schools belong to all of us who value and support an education for our young people. It is the goal of Catholic Education to “provide young people with the knowledge, skills, character development and spiritual formation they will need to be successful in life and in the light of the tradition and teachings of the Catholic faith.” (OCCB, 2005) Although many of us have been involved in Catholic schools for a long time, we may not have had the opportunity to examine and articulate exactly what it is that we hope for the future of Catholic schools and our graduates.

Where Can I Learn More?

Information is available from:

LDCSB Stewards in Catholic Education Webpage
<http://www.ldcsb.on.ca/comm/committee/stewardsfront.asp>

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations
<http://www.ldcsb.on.ca/comm/news/graduate.pdf>
Spotlight on the London District Catholic School Board
www.ldcsb.on.ca

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB) and the Institute for Catholic Education
www.occb.on.ca

Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
www.ocsta.on.ca

Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)
www.oapce.on.ca

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The Distinctiveness of Our Catholic Schools



Providing a Moral Compass in a Changing World



Introduction

For more than 150 years Catholic schools have enriched communities through the education of students rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, based on the solid foundation of the triad of home, school and parish. Catholic schools are enjoying significant success in terms of the academic achievement and the spiritual life of our students. At the same time, Catholic school communities are addressing a number of financial, societal and political pressures that are affecting all school systems in Ontario.

The London District Catholic School Board was one of the many boards that participated in a province-wide discussion on Catholic Education. It helped us to determine what is different about Catholic schools and what is so vitally important about them. There were common threads and common feelings among Catholics from Windsor to Ottawa, from London to Thunder Bay.

The purpose of this brochure is to help you reflect on who we are, what we are and where we are going. At the same time, the hope is that it will help you appreciate the wonderful gift that is Catholic education – a gift forged in nearly 175 years of often difficult challenges. And it may help you to realize that such a gift is well worth preserving and defending.

London District Catholic School Board Mission
To serve the Catholic student in a community that nurtures a living faith and provides a quality Catholic education that enables the individual to become a contributing member of the Church and Society.

“What do I desire? What do I want? Why do I speak? Why do I live if not for this reason: that together we might live with Christ.” ... St. Augustine

The Distinctiveness of Catholic Schools

- a place where we can exercise our freedom to practise the Catholic faith tradition through celebration of the Eucharist and prayer
- that reinforces the teaching of our Catholic values
- where students learn about social justice and service to the community
- that promotes respect for and the dignity of all
- that promotes a strong home-school-parish relationship

The Value of Catholic Schools

- educating our students about our Catholic faith traditions
- teaching values, moral decision-making and discipline
- promoting the connection between home, school and parish
- promoting social justice activities and the belief that we are responding to a “call to service”
- fostering a strong sense of community and belonging

The Community’s Hopes for Catholic Schools

- stronger home, school and parish relationship
- Catholic schools continue to exist
- continued promotion of virtues and values in an increasingly secular society
- staff continue to model and live their faith
- social justice issues are addressed through prophetic teachings

Major Issues Facing Catholic Schools Today

- the continued existence of Catholic schools in Ontario
- the need for faith formation at home and parish involvement with schools
- commitment of staff and community to the Catholic faith
- community apathy and indifference
- impact of added Ministry requirements on Religious Education credits

Strategies for Promoting and Protecting Catholic Education

- communication and promotion of our Mission
- greater home, school and parish partnership
- dialogue among Catholic partners
- faith development for staff and parents
- staying true to our Catholic identity
- political involvement

What Strategies Should Catholic Communities Follow?

- communicate and promote Catholic education through leadership and practice
- strengthen the home, school and parish partnership
- provide adult faith development and faith formation
- remain faith-based

How Can You Support Catholic Education?

There are ongoing efforts to convince the government to eliminate all public support for Catholic schools.

You Can: Learn more about Ontario law as it pertains to the funding of Catholic schools, share your knowledge and SPEAK OUT.

You Can: Be informed, get to know the issues and platforms in each election, ask questions, support candidates who support Catholic Education and above all, VOTE!

You Can: Make sure you are registered with your municipality as a Roman Catholic school supporter.

You Can: Help to build cooperation between your school and your parish.

For more information, contact your local Catholic school
www.ldcsb.on.ca