

Considerations for Incorporating Catholic Themes

The following guidelines are useful to consider when incorporating Catholic Themes into both the academic and wider school curricula.

First: with regard to the academic curricula, be respectful of the integrity of the subject discipline.

Authentic Catholic curriculum should not compromise the methodology or the knowledge base of the subject area. Creationism, for example, is an example of a misguided attempt to apply the theological truth of Genesis to the scientific truth of the evolution theory.

Secondly: the Catholic dimensions of curriculum need to be explicit, teachable and, where appropriate, assessable.

The relationships between school, parish and home have changed. Reflecting this change in relationship, Catholic schools need to be more intentional in creating environments where people can experience both a distinctive and authentic Catholic culture. In this regard, then, the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations have to be explicitly integrated into the life of the school. This makes it a requirement to consider the faith dimension at the beginning of the curriculum development process. The faith dimension needs to be spelled out clearly in the rationale, expectations, strategies and evaluation process of the classroom ready materials. It is not acceptable to add on the faith dimension at the end of the process as a kind of afterthought or veneer.

Thirdly: there needs to be an intentional dimension to Catholic education that is attentive to the person of the Catholic educator.

In practical terms, this means that a key priority for Catholic schools is to provide resources for the ongoing faith formation of educators. We endorse the reflection of Rev. James Mulligan:

We have reached the critical junction in Catholic education. The choice is clear. The future is now. We can work harder to become the authentically alternative education system described in our vision, or we can simply drift, satisfied with the "Catholic" cosmetics, but ultimately merely mimicking public education. If we choose the former, we must get serious about faith formation for all the partners in Catholic education. If we choose the latter, we should close down our system

***Catholic Education: The Future is Now* (Novalis, 1999), p. 131**