



*Growing Forward
2014 Catholic Education
Symposium*

Final Report

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Message from the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories	3
Message from the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association	4
Message from the Report Author	5

PART ONE: THE SYMPOSIUM

Purpose of the Symposium	8
Purpose of this Guide and Suggestions for Use	9
The Presentations	10
Dr. Reginald Bibby	10
Most Rev. Michael Miller	11
Initial Delegate Responses	13

PART TWO: THE FIVE MARKS OF A SCHOOL'S CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Some Notes About the Data	16
Mark One: Christian Anthropology	18
Exemplars	
Challenges and Strategies	
Christian Anthropology Reflection Questions	20
Mark Two: Catholic Worldview	21
Exemplars	
Challenges and Strategies	
Catholic Worldview Reflection Questions	24
Mark Three: Faith-Infused Curriculum	25
Exemplars	
Challenges and Strategies	
Faith-Infused Curriculum Reflection Questions	28
Mark Four: Gospel Witnesses	29
Exemplars	
Challenges and Strategies	
Gospel Witnesses Reflection Questions	32
Mark Five: Spirituality of Communion	33
Exemplars	
Challenges and Strategies	
Spirituality of Communion Reflection Questions	36

PART THREE: A PROPOSED CATHOLIC SCHOOL IDENTITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Introduction	38
Catholic School Identity Assessment Tool	39

Message from the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories



The Catholic Bishops
of Alberta and the
Northwest Territories

Les évêques catholiques
de l'Alberta et des
Territoires du Nord-Ouest

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ!

It was a great pleasure to participate in the province-wide Catholic Education Symposium: Growing Forward held by the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association and supported by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. I sincerely hope that some of the enthusiasm of participating in this experience can be shared with all of you through this text. This is indeed a Catholic moment!

With the information provided by Symposium guest speakers, the Most Rev. Michael Miller, Archbishop of Vancouver and Dr. Reginald Bibby, participants entered in meaningful reflection and dialogue on the present state of Catholic schools, the challenges, and the strategies to address the challenges. This document flows from these discussions, reviews the messages and themes of the day, and offers a workbook that can be used by a variety of stakeholders including schools, parishes, board offices, and school councils throughout Western Canada to enhance Catholic education. Catholic education involves and is the sacred trust of the entire community; every baptized Christian is called to be an evangelizer and share the faith and values of the community with each generation.

Pope Francis reminds us that evangelization is a call to lead people to know Jesus Christ; the principal work of our schools is to evangelize, leading our children to a personal encounter with Jesus:

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unflinchingly each day.” (Evangelii Gaudium 3)

In the Spirit of the Father and the blessings of the Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories, may the work of this Symposium be a call of the good news for all our children, staff and parents in Catholic schools and may the Holy Spirit lead us all to a renewal of faith and joy in Catholic education!

Most Rev. Frederick Henry, Bishop of Calgary

Feast of the Assumption

August 15, 2014

*Message from the Alberta Catholic
School Trustees' Association*



On behalf of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, I am pleased to present to you the Catholic Education Symposium: Growing Forward Final Report and Workbook. We are grateful to Mr. Michael Marien and the staff at ACSTA for all the work they have put into the writing of this document. We are excited about the possibilities that this report may have in enhancing the conversation about Catholic education in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

Archbishop Michael Miller and Dr. Reginald Bibby have challenged us to be authentic witnesses and communities of evangelization. If we are authentic, spirit filled communities living the Gospel, students' lives can be changed. I would like to thank His Grace and Dr. Bibby for both the knowledge they have passed on to us and their passion for Catholic education. A special thanks also goes to Sandra Prather for facilitating and guiding the table discussions in a thoughtful and gentle manner. I would like also to acknowledge the organizing committee composed of Gemma Christie, Dr. Troy Davis, Louis Kloster, Sandra Talarico and Jennifer Woo for all their hard work and dedication to this project.

I hope everyone present at the symposium had many opportunities to explore new ideas, connect with old friends and new, and be inspired to renew your desire for authentic Catholic education. For those who were not present, we hope this report and workbook enable you to get a sense of the discussion and how we may continue the dialogue to make Catholic education a work of prayer and transformation.

Blessings!

Tony Sykora, President

Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association

Message from the Report Author



I would like to thank the ACSTA for the privilege of being part of Symposium 2014. It has been very rewarding to create this document.

From the outset, the organizing committee wanted the symposium to have a lasting effect, not just on the delegates, but for all those committed to Catholic education in the province. It is my hope that this summary, with its reflection questions and the Catholic School Identity Assessment Tool (CSIAT), will be the starting point for discussion that leads to strategic, long term planning.

The ACSTA Symposium 2014 generated renewed energy and commitment to Catholic education in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. This guide offers the same opportunity.

May you continue to grow in the faith and love of the Blessed Trinity, to be inspired by the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to live as bold disciples of Jesus Christ and his Church.

Michael Marien

Part One

The Symposium

“Catholic education is one of the most important challenges for the Church, currently committed to new evangelisation in an historical and cultural context that is undergoing constant transformation”

Pope Francis
February 13, 2014



Purpose of the Symposium

It has been eleven years since the ACSTA last hosted a symposium on Catholic education and since that time, much has changed in the Catholic education landscape. While Western Canada's population has continued to grow, our Catholic schools in Alberta and Northwest Territories have been thriving; yet challenges remain. With this growth, how do we keep true to the mandate given to us by the Church? What is our vision and mission as we continue to journey in the third millennium?

How do we keep true to the mandate given to us by the Church?

What is our vision and mission as we continue to journey in the third millennium?

Over two hundred delegates, including trustees, teachers, administrators, parents, student and parishioners from across Alberta and Northwest Territories, attended the *Growing Forward: 2014 Catholic Education Symposium*. It was a time of reflection and dialogue on our identity as Catholic education communities. The delegates heard the statistical analysis of Catholicism in Alberta from Dr. Reginald Bibby from the University of Lethbridge and were able to ponder the essence of what it means to be a Catholic school throughout Archbishop Miller's presentations on "The Five Marks of the Catholic School" and "Benchmarks for Assessing A Catholic School's Identity."

With these presentations in mind, the delegates:

- Provided exemplars showing how Alberta Catholic schools demonstrate the five marks or characteristics of Catholic school identity
- Identified the challenges inherent in the five marks
- Suggested strategies to address the challenges



Purpose of this Guide and Suggestions for Use

From the outset it was felt that in order for the Symposium to have the greatest impact and reach the optimum number of stakeholders in Catholic education in Alberta, a follow-up publication would be created. This guide provides summaries of the presentations as well as a synopsis of the rich dialogue that was recorded by the delegates. Most importantly, there are guided reflection questions for continued discussion and planning as we grow forward. You will note that there are specific questions for:

- Catholic educational leaders
- Catholic school staff
- Parishes; especially parish priests and parish pastoral councils

Also included is a suggested assessment tool to assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a school in regards to its Catholic identity.

It is hoped that this guide, with its reflection questions and assessment tool, will provide a number of practical applications:

- As a resource for board, administrator or school staff retreats
- For professional development days that focus on mission, vision, and Catholic school identity
- For shorter discussions at staff and administrator meetings
- For presentations and discussions at parent advisory, student council, and parish pastoral council meetings
- To assist in strategic planning and budgeting at the local and district level
- As the basis for ongoing discussion and planning at the provincial level
- As a springboard for committed networking between parishes and schools
- For personal prayer and reflection

However this guide might be used, it is hoped that as many stakeholders as possible will benefit from a process of examining the Catholicity of their schools as we continue to grow forward in Catholic education in Alberta.



The Presentations

Below is a synopsis of the presentations by Dr. Reginald Bibby and Archbishop Miller. Links to their entire presentations can be found in the appendices on the ACSTA website (acsta.ab.ca).



Dr. Reginald Bibby

Dr. Bibby presented key findings from his most recent book, *A New Day: The Resilience and Restructuring of Religion in Canada*. After forty years of research on religious views and beliefs in Canada, Dr. Bibby has concluded that while there is currently religious polarity in our country, the phenomena of religion and religious affiliation still persists. We do not, he claims, live in a secularized Canada, but a polarized one:

"A solid core of people continue to value faith, but a growing core do not. A

significant portion remain in the middle – something like 'the politically undecided' – dropping in and not dropping out." (*A New Day*, pg 10)

The data on the Catholic Church most strongly supports his thesis that there is a new day for religion and faith: "As the Roman Catholic Church goes, so goes organized religion" (32). With a national population of over 14 million and a median age of 38, the outlook for the Roman Catholic Church in Canada is not as dismal as some might have thought. It is important to remember that the survey data indicates religious identity, and not participation. In terms of identity, the proportion of Canadians who have identified themselves as Roman Catholic has remained steady at 40% for the past 70 years.

While there is still a large gap between those who identify themselves as Catholic and those who are active participants in the life of the Church, Bibby cites other evidence for being optimistic. Most notably, he explores immigration trends. Between 2005-2010, 30% of the immigrant population identified themselves as Catholic. In Alberta, 45% of the "monthly-plus" attenders to Mass were born outside of Canada with immigrants from the Philippines being the largest source of new members in our parishes.

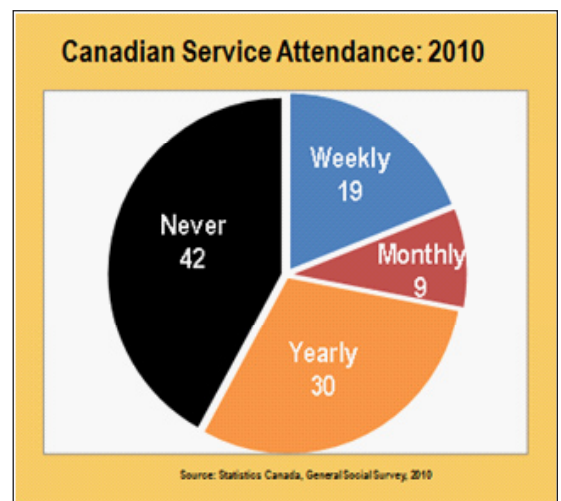
"A solid core of people continue to value faith, but a growing core do not. A significant portion remain in the middle - something like 'the politically undecided' - dropping in and not dropping out."

-Bibby (*A New Day*, pg 10)

After sharing his analysis of the data, Dr. Bibby cited four key implications, which have particular relevance for Catholic education in Alberta:

1. It is time for a mindset change.

The evidence is clear: we are less secular than we think we are, especially in the province of Alberta. This comes as no surprise to us who are involved in Catholic schools. There is also a significant population which Bibby refers to as the



The "dropping in and not dropping out" trend is evident in recent survey data which shows that there are more people attending church services than not.

“ambivalent middle” who “has not slammed the door on possible religious involvement” (19).

2. It is time to explore affinities

Dr. Bibby is convinced that we need to work together with other groups that value faith. He stresses the importance of ecumenical dialogue, where we make “far better use of collective resources for the purpose of enhancing collective ministry in Canada.” (39) Considering how many of our Catholic school districts attract families from other Christian denominations, we are called to this important work.

3. It is time to be part of the restructuring of religion

What Dr. Bibby is referring to here is not a change in the organizational structure, but rather a re-visioning of who the dominant players are in Canada’s religious make-up. The evidence points to Roman Catholicism: “The extent to which Canadians opt for religion on the religion-no religion continuum will be largely determined by the performance of the Catholic Church” (42). How we “perform” seems to be determined by two factors – immigration and the revitalization of Canadian-born Catholics through “initiatives such as ‘the New Evangelization’” (42).

4. It is time for better ministry

Recent survey data indicates that those who are disenfranchised from their tradition are not necessarily seeking spiritual fulfillment elsewhere. They are staying away because their needs are not being met. They are looking for inclusivity, relevance and spiritual uplift (56). A critical examination of the effectiveness in ministry is necessary for the Church today. As Catholic schools, our ministerial role is vital to the life of our Church.



Most Rev. Michael Miller

While Dr. Bibby’s presentations provided a broad view of Catholicism in Canada and Alberta, Archbishop Michael Miller focused on the specific aspects of Catholic education that will help us grow forward.

A Catholic school must first be a place to encounter Jesus Christ.

–Archbishop Miller

What is an Authentic Catholic School Today?

Archbishop Michael Miller’s first presentation began with the fundamental principles that identify a Catholic school. First, it must be a place to encounter Jesus Christ. Evangelization is the central mission of the Church, and is thus the central mission of our schools. Through our work in education and proclaiming the Gospel our schools become, as Pope Francis said, “a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture.” The whole purpose then of Catholic schools is to “assist families so that their children will be educated in light of the Gospel and prepared for effective service in the Church and the world” (Miller, presentation one, 4). We must be public witnesses to the world and continue to be conscious of our mission and vision. It is truly a time to grow forward with renewed vigor and creativity. Archbishop Miller again quoted Pope Francis from an address to Jesuit educators in Italy: the Holy Father urged them to “go a step further” and to “seek new, unconventional forms of education so as to comply with the needs of places, times and people” (7).

In order for us to fulfill our mission and mandate, we must continue to re-evaluate the identity of our Catholic

schools. To do this, Archbishop Miller presented five marks which are central to the Catholic school's ethos and essence, each of which will be described in detail in Part Two of this guide.

1. The Catholic school is grounded in a Christian anthropology, a particular way of seeing the human person
2. They are imbued with a Catholic Worldview
3. They are animated by a Faith Infused curriculum
4. They are sustained by Gospel Witness
5. They are shaped by a Spirituality of Communion

While Archbishop Miller admits there may be more marks to consider, it is these that come to the fore when examining all the Church documents on Catholic education. All five marks point to the fundamental principle: the foundation of an authentic Catholic school must be Jesus Christ. Without Christ, there is no Catholic school (8-9).

Assessing the Catholic Identity of Our Schools

Having established what (and who) is at the heart of Catholic schools, Archbishop Miller then addressed how to develop ways of assessing Catholic identity. Archbishop Miller stated the key factors of assessment:

- There must be readily recognized outcomes
- It requires written documentation
- It demands the cooperation of all stakeholders
- It expresses areas of commendation and recommended improvements

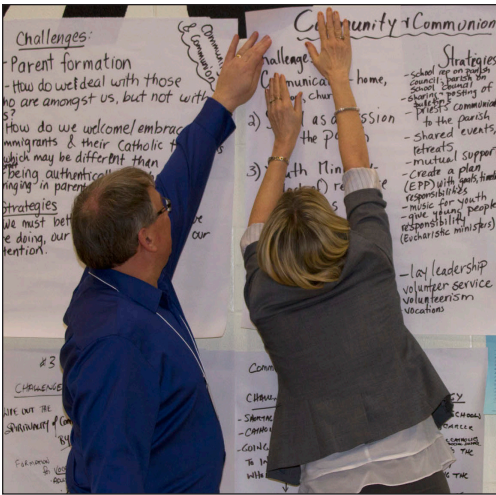
With these critical pieces of the process in place, Archbishop Miller identified six standards which are also reflective of the five marks.:

1. A public commitment to Catholicity
2. Integration of the vision of faith in the curriculum
3. Religious education at the core of the curriculum
4. Faith formation outside the curriculum
5. Educators committed to the Gospel
6. Co-responsibility in governance

Each of the standards can be assessed by a series of benchmarks, descriptions of which can be found in Part Three of this guide.

Archbishop Miller noted that the standards and benchmarks he offered are only a starting point. Whatever standards we choose, they must reflect the true nature of the Catholic school, which springs from the heart of the Church (*ex corde Ecclesiae*) and is for the mission of the Church (*pro Ecclesia*). Assessment, he concludes, will help us to grow forward as authentic Catholic schools.





Initial Delegate Responses

At the end of the Friday evening session, the delegates were invited to respond to the presentations by answering the question: What is one idea that stood out for you this evening?

The ideas were then collected at each of the tables and a total of 187 responses were submitted. The delegate responses were evenly split between Dr. Bibby and Archbishop Miller’s presentations, and although there was a great deal of variation, certain themes did emerge.

First and foremost, many of the delegates considered maintaining or increasing Catholic school’s identity to be of the utmost importance. Others focused on specific marks, such as a faith-infused curriculum or the spirituality of communion. The most significant mark of Catholic school identity recognized by delegates was Gospel witness, which calls for the necessity of teacher faith formation.

“Evangelization of our families adds a whole new dimension to our schools.”
-Symposium delegate

Many of the responses expressed hope for the Catholic Church and Catholic schools in Alberta, based on the data presented by Dr. Bibby. There was concern of the number of “latent” Catholics, and the need for the church and schools to work together to bring them back. This naturally elicited a passionate resolve on the part of the delegates to rededicate themselves to evangelization, with a particular emphasis on nurturing faith in the family. How we minister to families will require a strong connection between the parish and the school. As one delegate remarked, “evangelization of our families adds a whole new dimension to our schools.”

Summary Thoughts and Commitments

As the Symposium drew to a close, the delegates were invited to fill out “Exit Cards” asking two questions:

1. What was most meaningful for me?

While 141 exit cards were submitted there were a total of 196 responses, as many of the cards contained more than one “meaningful idea”. The responses were either about the process and structure of the Symposium or a specific aspect of its content. Again, Dr. Bibby and Archbishop Miller’s presentations had significant impact on the delegates, providing both hope and challenge. Equally important for many were the table group discussions. As one delegate remarked it was a great opportunity to “work through important issues in religious education with a good cross-section of educators from around the province.” In terms of those who found the content most meaningful, there were echoes of responses from the beginning of the Symposium, as well as the work that was done on the five marks (see Part Two). The importance of growing forward through strengthening our Catholic school identity, evangelization and increase opportunities for faith formation of our families as well as the challenges ahead inspired the delegates to deepen their commitment.

2. What is one action I will commit to?

The enthusiasm to go forth and share new knowledge and experience was quite evident in the delegates who responded to this question. The major commitments to action were:

- To improve their schools' Catholic identity
- To be effective witnesses of their relationship with Jesus Christ
- To be active participants in the New Evangelization
- To share the ideas and the process of Symposium 2014
- To participate in creating better connections among home, school, and parish

A further survey was sent out to the delegates two weeks after the Symposium. The survey indicated an overwhelmingly positive response to the event, and a desire to see the work accomplished at *Growing Forward* continue to bear fruit in dialogue and action throughout the province.

Part Two is an opportunity for you to share in this work, to reflect on the Catholic identity of your schools, and to commit to growing forward for the sake of Catholic education and the mission of the Church.



Part Two

The Five Marks of a School's Catholic Identity

“(Catholic teachers) contribute on the one hand to giving school a soul and, on the other, to assuring to the Christian faith full citizenship in the places of education and culture in general. Thanks to the teaching of the Catholic religion, school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future.”

Pope Benedict

April 25, 2009



Five Marks of a School's Catholic Identity

Archbishop Miller presented five characteristics or marks that identify a school as authentically Catholic. The symposium delegates explored each of these marks, noting where they exist in Alberta Catholic schools, and where we need to grow forward.



Some Notes About the Data

Once all the work from the delegates was collected, certain patterns became evident, which are worth noting here:

1. Delegates needed more time to internalize the five marks.

For example, when collating the exemplars for each mark, it became clear that many of the statements were not specific examples or evidence found in the schools at all, but were comments, concerns or questions about the mark itself.

Percentage of "Exemplars" that were comments, questions etc.

- a. Christian Anthropology: 10%
- b. Catholic World View: 12%
- c. Faith Infused Curriculum: 8%
- d. Gospel Witnesses: 11%
- e. Spirituality of Communion: 7%

2. Types of exemplars were found in more than one mark

The table below shows common themes that were found in the delegates' exemplars of the five marks. The numbers indicate the percentage frequency the theme occurred within the specific mark:

Theme	Christian Anthropology	Catholic Worldview	Faith Infused Curriculum	Gospel Witness	Spirituality of Communion
Liturgy And Sacrament	13	9	7	16	21
Social Justice and Service	3	30	3	5	12
Faith Formation	7	4	4	22	4
Mission Statements	0	2	5	0	0
School Policies	12	3	0	0	0
District Policies	1	3	0	8	3
Physical Environment	7	7	13	0	0
Prayer	5	9	7	5	8
Home-School-Parish	0	2	0	15	13
Role of Parents	0	0	0	0	6
Role of Teachers	2	0	2	23	3
School events	10	6	5	2	5
Curriculum	0	6	38	0	0
Building Relationships	0	0	0	6	10

In the eyes of the delegates, then, what we do in Catholic schools, especially in the areas of liturgical celebration, service activities, and the physical environment, express all of the five marks of Catholic identity.

3. Some of the marks were more readily seen in our schools than others.

When we remove the “Comments and Questions” out of the data, the number of exemplars for each of the marks shows a “hierarchy of frequency”:

1. Faith Infused Curriculum: 385 exemplars
2. Spirituality of Communion: 377
3. Gospel Witness: 312
4. Christian Anthropology: 268
5. Catholic World View: 232

As we shall see, the fact that the delegates found it easier to generate exemplars for Faith-infused Curriculum and Spirituality of Communion does not imply that there are not challenges in these areas. What it does indicate is that marks such as Christian Anthropology and a Catholic World View may not be as readily seen and require more attention in our Alberta Catholic schools.

4. Challenges and strategies also clustered around particular themes

Each table group was assigned one of the five marks to outline the challenges that are posed, and suggest strategies to meet them. As with the exemplars, the challenges repeated from table group to table group, and the strategies also touched on major themes. Many strategies suggested by some groups can be found among the exemplars of others, indicating that some schools and districts should continue what they have begun, while others will need to look at initiatives to improve on a particular mark. Whatever the case, as Archbishop Miller commented, we *all* can move from “good” Catholic schools, to “great” (and more authentic) ones.

5. Overall, the challenges and strategies generated at the Symposium are broad and inclusive.

The groups made every effort to include the input from all its members. As a result, many of the challenges were broad in scope, resulting in strategies that are recommendations to “grow forward” rather than specific action plans. With this in mind, users of this guide can use the delegates’ work, along with the follow-up reflection questions, as a springboard for reflection and strategic planning.

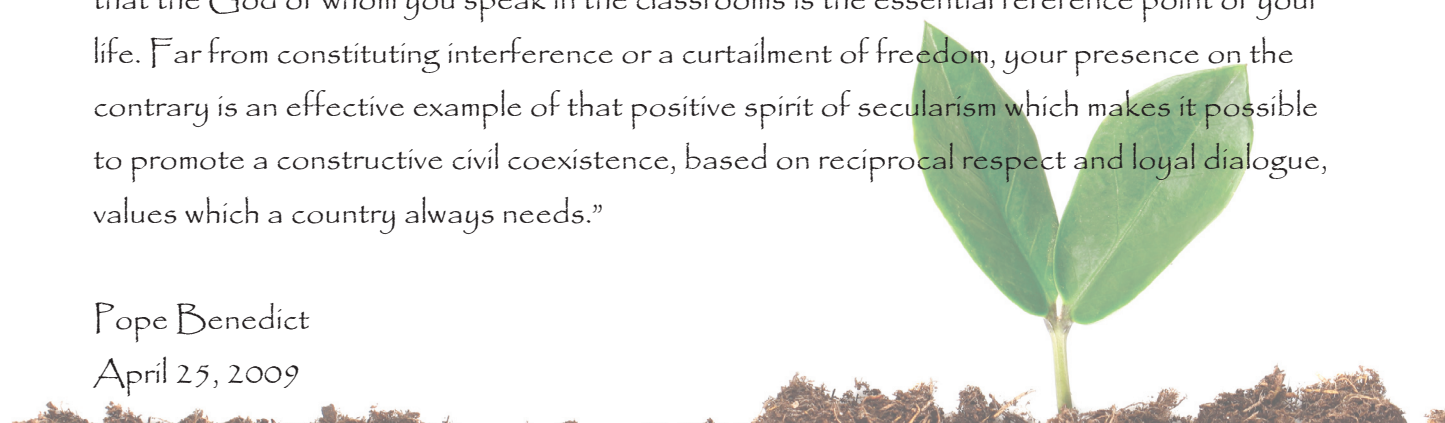
6. Exemplars, Challenges and Strategies in this section are highlights.

The entire lists in detail can be found in the appendices on the ACSTA website.

Let us now look at each of the marks in detail...

“To the very person of the Catholic religion teacher...belongs the vocation to make it clear that the God of whom you speak in the classrooms is the essential reference point of your life. Far from constituting interference or a curtailment of freedom, your presence on the contrary is an effective example of that positive spirit of secularism which makes it possible to promote a constructive civil coexistence, based on reciprocal respect and loyal dialogue, values which a country always needs.”

Pope Benedict
April 25, 2009



Mark One: Christian Anthropology

At their core, Catholic schools view the human person as having inherent dignity as a child of God. Since the foundation of our lives is in Jesus Christ, the Catholic school looks to Him as the model and inspiration. As Archbishop Miller asserts, "If we get it wrong about who students really are, that is persons created in God's image and likeness

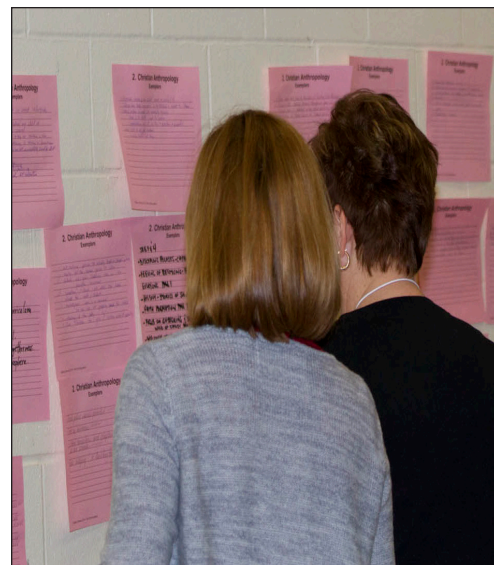
Through faith permeation in curriculum and a commitment to inclusive education, the dignity of every person as a child of God is enhanced.

and given life in Christ through the Holy Spirit, then, from the outset, our Catholic schools go off track."

A belief that we are destined for

the Kingdom is a central aspect of Christian anthropology and has enormous consequences for Catholic schools in that it sets them

apart from an "educational utilitarianism" in which the sole purpose of formal education is economic. Yes, we prepare our students to contribute to society, but they have a greater, eternal destiny. At their best, Catholic schools prepare their students, in the words of Benedict XVI, "to be saints".



Exemplars

What does a Christian anthropology look like in Alberta's Catholic schools?

The delegates of the Symposium cited the policies and procedures found in our schools and school districts to express the dignity of each child: the way in which discipline is handled, implementation of Safe and Caring School Initiatives, and anti-bullying programs that reflect Gospel values. We celebrate that we are grounded in the life of the Trinity through school liturgies, especially the Eucharist. It is faith permeation throughout the curriculum and a commitment to inclusive education that the dignity of every person as a child of God is enhanced.

Challenges and Strategies

The delegates cited three major challenges for Catholic schools to live out the mark of Christian Anthropology:

Challenge #1: Trends in modern culture

Trends in modern culture override a sense of the ultimate dignity of the human person as a son or daughter of God. Many aspects were mentioned: the influence of social media, a lack of caring for others, egocentrism, and issues of sexuality. One of the groups saw inclusion as a challenge arising from culture, especially when we consider the diversity of family structures.

Strategy: Create a school culture that emphasizes our Christian dignity

The first challenge generated by the table groups was broad, so it is no surprise that the strategies are equally expansive. Key strategies include:

- Teach children that they are loved by God and that they have value
- Teach and model empathy; "Love your neighbor as yourself."

- Cultivate a culture of life and tolerance
- Teach respect

Challenge #2: Education as a commodity

When the ultimate purpose of education is to become successful in the marketplace we lose sight of our destiny. The delegates noted that viewing education as commodity is unduly emphasized in the curriculum and that secular academic success far outweighs the striving for the Kingdom of God.

Strategy: Create a curriculum that emphasizes the Catholic view of the human person

This is directly tied to the first strategy and comes from a basic premise about Catholic schools: if what and how we teach is no different than what is done in secular schools, then why do Catholic schools exist? To frame the question around the first mark: if our schools do not teach from a specific view of the human person as a child of God destined for eternal life, then how can we, the school, be identified as Catholic? The tables that focused on curriculum suggest that we:

- Develop a religious education curriculum that works in concert with the secular curriculum. Facilitate the connection between the two.
- Provide updated current curricula which is relevant to students
- Seek out or develop new resources in character education and Christian ethics
- Teach responsible citizenship and how to contribute to a better world

It seems that the suggestion of updating current curricula refers specifically to the religious studies programs at the elementary and junior high levels. This is currently being developed at the national level. Additionally, the central aim of our current Social Studies curriculum is to teach responsible citizenship, but the depth to which we teach responsibility for the marginalized demands a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

Challenge #3: Lack of faith formation

Without adequate faith formation, particularly the formation of our teachers, we will not be able to let our students become who they are intended to be: fully alive as sons and daughters of God, destined for fullness of life, now and for eternity. As one group stated, "having good educators who are dedicated to instructing the whole student" requires more than just a professional development day.

Strategy: Provide adult faith formation

Although this appears to be self-evident as a strategy for this challenge, it is important to reflect on why so many groups suggested adult faith formation for Christian anthropology and, in fact, for all five marks. While each Catholic school district provides a variety of faith formation experiences for their staff, it is clear that more needs to be done in this regard. One group expressed that adult faith formation goes beyond information, it must be about knowing Christ. Other suggested strategies:

- Hiring practicing Catholic teachers who are willing to be witnesses of their faith
- Finding means of including those who do know Christ but are not willing to grow or move in their personal faith journey
- Attaining greater knowledge of our own faith and the Word of God

Providing adult faith formation to increase the flow of Christian anthropology in our schools demonstrates the overlap with the mark of Gospel witness. Without witnesses to our life in Christ, our words will be empty of life and love.

Christian Anthropology Reflection Questions

Challenge #1: Trends in modern culture

1. How does modern culture see the human person? Does modern culture reflect the values of a Christian anthropology?
2. Does your school/division, in its procedures, goals and standards reflect an understanding of Christian anthropology?

Challenge #2: Education as a commodity

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. How can we reconcile Christian Anthropology and the views of modern culture to your understanding of the purpose of education described above?
3. How does your school/division, in its procedures, goals and standards, demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of education that reflects a Christian anthropology? In what ways does it not?

Challenge #3: Faith/theological formation of staff

1. What could be done to help staff understand the Catholic belief of the person?
2. Does your school mission statement define your understanding of the Christian person?

Further Reflection Questions:

- What are the specific expectations for Catholic high school graduates in the development of a Christian anthropology? Do they reflect the mark of Christian anthropology?
- What supports exist to assist schools in forming students as children of God? What about staff supports?
- Identify and list specific curricula where students are introduced and taught about their dignity as children of God.
- Does Catholic education exist to get children a job? Or is it for something greater?
- How does the parish assist parents and schools in teaching children about their dignity as sons and daughters of God – in forming a Christian anthropology?

Mark Two: Catholic Worldview

Every school culture conveys to its community a particular ethos, or view of the world. An authentic Catholic school will live and breathe a vision that is shaped by reflection, action, official teaching and prayer and is grounded in the teachings of Jesus and his Church. A Catholic worldview that is visible and tangible is essential for the Catholic school. It is evident in the physical space where one can recognize the devotional, artistic and liturgical tradition as soon as one walks through the door: chapels, statues, prayer corners, icons, and crucifixes are prominently displayed and well-maintained. Liturgical celebrations and prayer give life to the Catholic school, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, as well as other aspects of our sacramental life.

Everything that happens in a Catholic school should be reflective of the Catholic worldview. It impacts the priorities that are given to:

- Allocation of time and resources
- Relationships of staff, students, parents and the community
- Quality of teaching and learning



As Archbishop Miller expressed it, “When a Catholic worldview permeates a school’s life, then it is the driving force behind every activity, so that the Church’s mission may be served effectively.”

Exemplars

The Symposium delegates provided fifteen different examples demonstrating that a Catholic worldview is evident in our schools and highlighting the fact that how we see and encounter the world is indeed a driving force in Catholic education. The most common exemplars involved actions of service and charity, both local and international projects, from water well projects in Africa to the CRIB project supporting teen mothers. One group noted that in one instance a school division has established criteria to determine which charities would receive individual school support based on whether or not it supported a Catholic worldview. Other exemplars that delegates had in common were also ones expressed by Archbishop Miller: school prayer and liturgy; visible signs of faith in the school; and a faith-

“When a Catholic worldview permeates a school’s life, then it is the driving force behind every activity, so that the Church’s mission may be served effectively.”

-Archbishop Miller

infused curriculum. Some participants also noted the importance of policies and administrative procedures to maintain and support a Catholic worldview: dress codes, discipline policies, student awards, and other aspects of school and district life that would be “captured in governance.”

Challenges and Strategies

The delegates cited three major challenges for Catholic schools to live out the mark of a Christian worldview:

Challenge #1: Lack of adult catechesis in Catholic theology

Nearly all participants expressed a need for a deeper understanding of what it means to have a Catholic

worldview. Often this was expressed as a matter of providing teachers with the theological literacy and context in order that the correct content of a Catholic worldview could be shared with students. With this theological background it was felt that teachers would also become better witnesses and help to overcome the “disinterest in living the Catholic faith,” as one group commented.

Strategy a: Increase faith formation for staff

The challenge of providing consistent and appropriate adult theology generated fifteen specific strategies, demonstrating the delegates’ desire to see more opportunities for faith formation in our Catholic school districts. Many of the strategies focused on new teachers and those entering the profession:

- provide connections with Catholic universities
- better recruitment process so that Catholic graduates make their way to Catholic schools
- faith must be part of the mentorship programs

Other strategies recognized the importance of ongoing faith formation:

- Teachers-mentored in permeation-in love with being loved by Jesus
- Found Apostolates of Christian Teachers or other similar movements of communion

As with Christian anthropology, the Symposium identifies teacher faith formation as critical if Catholic schools wish to increase their capacity to engage students in a Catholic worldview.

“There needs to be a balance between the dogma and doctrine of the Church, as well as the pastoral.”

-Symposium delegate

Strategy b: Faith education for students

Connected to an increase in adult theological formation for teachers, the delegates wished to see a more concerted effort in the ecclesial education of the students. Some strategies included the continued promotion of vocations, and sharing Church teachings on a variety of topics, thus broadening the scope beyond the religious studies classroom. One group felt that online religious education should be eliminated, as a more relational delivery is better suited to this pursuit of faith education. Teaching spiritual traditions, such as silence and meditation, would bring students to a deeper appreciation of the Catholic ethos.

Challenge #2: The polarization between church and secular culture

As Dr. Bibby suggests, the best way to describe our current Canadian society is not to call it secular, but rather polarized. Some of the table groups recognized that fact, noting that a religious worldview is not appreciated by society in general. The Church itself can also be seen as an agent of this polarization. As one group noted, there needs to be a “balance between the dogma and doctrine of the Church, as well as the pastoral.” Connected to this is the specific example of our inclusive approach to LGBTQ Youth.

Strategy: Responsiveness to communities

As Catholics, our worldview demands inclusivity and must be welcoming. All of us are called to witness our faith through our relationships, and therefore our first response must be love. A deeper responsiveness to our communities must include a spirit of hospitality and invitation. This has always been our mandate, and we must continue to respond to all, especially the marginalized. A specific strategy that was suggested was to reinvigorate the ACSTA document *Towards Inclusive Communities* as we continue to minister to LGBTQ Youth.

Challenge #3: The need for strong leadership in creating Catholic environments in schools

Developing Catholic educational leaders continues to be a challenge. Many of our educational leaders are adept at being what Timothy Cook calls “architects of Catholic culture”, leaders who are cognizant of the role they play in forming the Catholic identity of their school. This requires commitment and diligence. Cook explains:

Catholic educational leaders must continually ask themselves and other members of the community – especially the students – if the school’s culture is any different from that of the local public school. If the culture is not different, perhaps the institutionalization has resulted in aspects of religious culture being taken for granted. (Cook, 8.)

Strategy: Initiatives in Catholic educational leadership

Groups also discussed the importance of conducting a regular analysis of Catholic identity, which would also allow for promoting the strengths of what we are already doing. Administrators in particular need to be relational leaders in faith and not “checklist Catholics”, a term which seems to suggest that some go through the outward appearances of faith but do not live out the Catholic worldview.



Catholic Worldview Reflection Questions

Challenge #1: Creating and sharing a Catholic worldview with staff and students

1. Do you have staff in place that can articulate a Catholic worldview?
2. What would it take to form staff to clearly disseminate a Catholic worldview? What resources would the division need? Are they available?
3. How can you ensure that your teachers are presenting the Catholic worldview daily to your students? Is there evidence that can be found in the planning and outcomes of lessons and subjects?

Challenge #2: Polarization of secular and Church culture

1. Is a Catholic worldview overtly available on your website and in newsletters? On your stationary, school signs and in messaging to the community? How might this happen?
2. The Catholic worldview is one of full inclusivity, a spirit of hospitality and invitation – would your LGBTQ youth encounter this in your schools?

Challenge #3: The need for a strong leadership in creating Catholic environments in schools

1. Describe concretely how your school is physically different than the public school across the street.
2. Articulate how the ethos of your school is different. Can you see it in your policies, daily school routines, fundraising, extracurricular activities, etc.?
3. Without looking it up, recite your school's (division/parish) mission statement.

Further Reflection Questions:

- Suggest strategies that exist or are needed to increase the number of teachers/administrators/parents learning more about their faith through adult education or theology courses.
- Who should do this? Schools? Parishes? Catholic colleges?

Mark Three: Faith Infused Curriculum

The third mark is that of a faith infused curriculum. In Alberta's Catholic schools, there has been a concerted effort in this area. Historically, the implementation of new Alberta curriculum has provided an opportunity for Catholic districts to work together, as in the case of the support documents for Health and Personal Life Skills, and for CALM, to create resources and outcomes that incorporate the Catholic worldview and a Christian anthropology. Through the Religious Education Network, initiatives in infusing Catholic social teaching into the new Social Studies curriculum became an opportunity for Catholic districts to provide teacher faith formation and professional development. The sharing of materials created by Districts such as Edmonton Catholic's permeation binder and Holy Spirit Catholic's website have also been invaluable.



Archbishop Miller reminded the Symposium that faith-permeated content, while important, is not the goal of a faith-infused curriculum. We live in a knowledge-based society, but our Catholic schools must promote a wisdom based society. 21st century learners must be critical thinkers, but students in Catholic schools should be critical thinkers who evaluate facts in light of their faith and values. They must explore the issues of the day guided by the Church's social doctrine. They must explore the world of science and technology with an integration of the ethical and religious dimensions of life. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "never allow yourselves to become narrow." For Catholic educators, faith-infused curriculum will only be successful when all subject areas are taught and learned from a Catholic perspective from witnesses.

Exemplars

As noted previously, the mark of a faith infused curriculum elicited the most exemplars. Thirty percent of exemplars were seen beyond the religion classroom, and in nearly all subject areas. Some of the delegates referred to team planning of lessons injected with faith:

- Social justice projects that are developed in the Religious Studies, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics
- Biology teachers creating intentional permeation plans
- Teams of Religious Studies, Social, English and Biology teachers planning and teaching lessons on one topic (e.g. abortion, eugenics)
- Saskatchewan's Permeation Project: teachers across the province go through curriculum and create clear and visible Faith-based ways of approaching outcomes.

For many of delegates, the faith infused curricula went beyond the classrooms to the physical signs and symbols found throughout the school, as well as whole school activities; faith infused curriculum has been supported in many cases by professional development and resources. The overlap of the five marks is also evident here, as the common themes of prayer, liturgy, faith formation, and religious instruction emerged.

Challenges and Strategies

The delegates cited two major challenges for Catholic schools to live out the mark of a faith infused curriculum:

Challenge #1: Teachers require the skill, knowledge or personal faith to implement a faith infused curriculum

As in the previous marks, much depends on the faith formation and theological background of the teacher for a faith infused curriculum to be properly implemented. This challenge is very much a “chicken or egg” conundrum. Do we provide the teachers with a curriculum with all the necessary faith infused outcomes and strategies or do we provide a strong adult catechesis so that the teacher will inherently become a “faith infuser”? Like all things in our Catholic tradition, it is not an “either-or” but a “both-and” response that is required from us as Catholic educational leaders.

For Catholic educators, faith-infused curriculum will only be successful when all subject areas are taught and learned from a Catholic perspective.

Half of the challenges expressed by the table groups assigned to this mark expressed the reality of the need for adult catechesis and professional development:

- Some teachers lack the background and confidence
- Personal faith journeys of teachers: they have different understandings and degrees of commitment
- Teachers need to know how to integrate faith into their subject areas

While it is clear from the exemplars that many of our teachers have excellent skills in permeating faith into their curriculum, this first challenge indicates that we have a long way to go.

Strategy: Provide continuous and purposeful professional development for teachers

Over half of the strategies for this mark were centered on some form of staff faith formation, adult catechesis, and professional development. What is most informative is that there appears to be a real demand for continuous and embedded forms of formation:

- Each professional development day is dedicated in some way to faith formation
- Include the use of mentors, master teachers, coaching
- Grade level meetings to discuss integration of faith into each subject area
- Provide ongoing faith development for people at different points of their faith journey

Research has shown that embedded professional development, retreat experiences (Blueprints and SPICE), and peer mentorship is far more effective than single professional development experiences or even intensive theology courses. From a faith perspective, the Church has given us the model of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as the norm for adult catechesis. This must be seriously considered when reflecting on this strategy.

Challenge #2: The need for a clear implementation plan

This second challenge cannot, of course, be separated from the first. Participants insisted that while Catholic schools consider faith permeation in curriculum important, there seems to be a lack of planning as to how

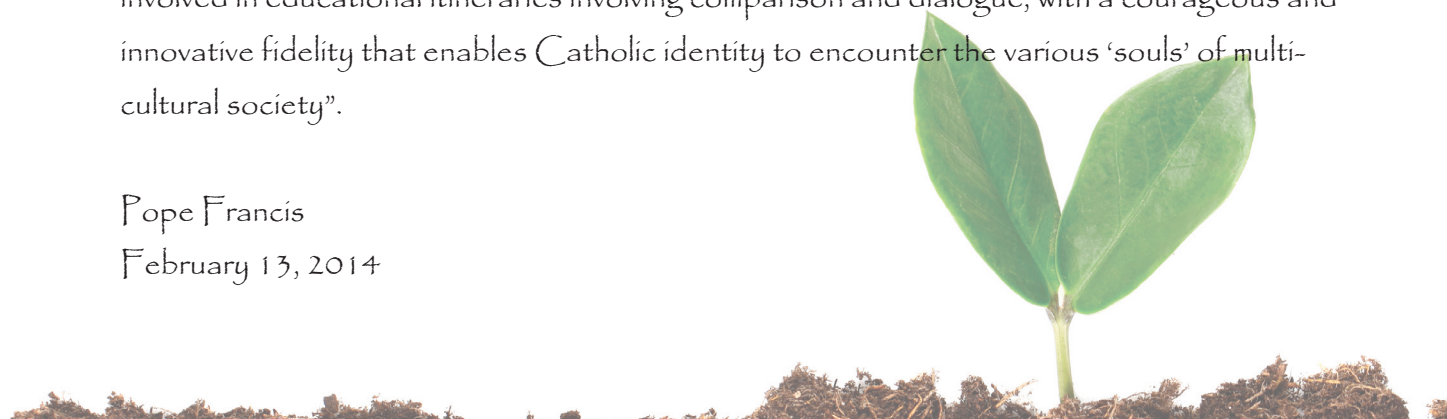
to accomplish this. Some suggested that other priorities of curriculum and instruction take precedence and when faced with the secular Alberta curriculum, it becomes a daunting task for a single teacher to make the necessary steps to infuse it with Catholic teaching or Gospel values. Time becomes a major factor for the individual teacher: time to prepare, collaborate, study, and be formed in the faith.

Strategy: Create a district and/or provincial strategic plan for implementation of a faith infused curriculum

In order to address this challenge, delegates suggest that a specific plan needs to be in place. A measure of accountability is critical; one group provided the example of Elk Island Catholic's "Catholic School Improvement Process" in this regard. The time barrier for professional development and formation could be lifted through modifying calendars and schedules to allow for opportunities to collaborate. A lofty suggestion, but one that we must reflect upon, is taking the Alberta curriculum and working to permeate it with Catholic values and teachings. While we cannot change the outcomes and goals of the Provincial curriculum, it can be infused with a Catholic value set. Such an endeavour may well be beyond our grasp. An example might be a Catholic curriculum cooperative like those in Ontario. Whatever the answer, if we wish to identify our schools as authentically Catholic, we must ensure that our curriculum is infused with the life and teaching of Christ as expressed through his Church.

"Catholic educational institutions offer to all an approach to education that has as its aim the full development of the person, which responds to the right of every person to access to knowledge. However, they are also called upon to offer, with full respect for the freedom of each person and using the methods appropriate to the scholastic environment, the Christian belief, that is, to present Jesus Christ as the meaning of life, the cosmos and history. Jesus began to proclaim the good news of the 'Galilee of the people', a crossroads of people, diverse in terms of race, culture and religion. This context resembles today's world, in certain respects. The profound changes that have led to the ever wider diffusion of multicultural societies require those who work in the school or university sector to be involved in educational itineraries involving comparison and dialogue, with a courageous and innovative fidelity that enables Catholic identity to encounter the various 'souls' of multicultural society".

Pope Francis
February 13, 2014



Faith Infused Curriculum Reflection Questions

Challenge #1: Forming teachers to implement a faith infused curriculum

1. How does teaching “look/sound/feel different” in your school than the public school across the street? (please – not better or worse – different)
2. If someone observed a social studies class in a Catholic School and the same lesson in a Public School, not knowing which school was which, how might they, by the lesson, identify which school they were in?
3. What help might teachers need to take the Alberta curriculum and infuse it with faith?

Challenge #2: An implementation plan for the division/school for a faith infused curriculum

1. Describe a staff professional development program which would enable and support staff in implementing a faith infused curriculum (example: grade level, subject area, whole school).
2. Who could be used as resources (not necessarily names of people but where could resources be found)? What structure would this formation have? When might this take place? How might CLS assist in this? What role, if any, could the parish play?

Further Reflection Questions:

- How much of the school and/or division’s budget is devoted to professional development which specifically targets the permeation or inclusion of faith in the curriculum?
- How can Catholic school divisions work together to provide a strategic plan for implementing a faith infused curriculum that would be shared among divisions?
- List the barriers you see to a faith infused curriculum in your school. How could these barriers be removed or overcome?
- Other than a religion class, what other subject or context could a parish priest or pastoral associate be engaged in the school or classroom in a curricular context?

Mark Four: Gospel Witnesses

In a recent address to teachers and students of Jesuit schools in Italy, Pope Francis spoke of the importance of the fourth mark of authentic Catholic schools: Gospel witnesses. He says that a teacher's instruction will have "an incisive effect on children and young people if they are accompanied by their witness, their consistent way of life." This echoes the words of Pope Paul VI some forty years ago: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

For the Catholic educator, to be a Gospel witness involves more than the ability to proclaim the Good News or have an in-depth theological knowledge of Christ and his Church. The fundamental condition for being an effective Catholic educator is being in a relationship with Jesus Christ. If a teacher cannot witness to his or her relationship to Jesus in word and action, they simply cannot introduce others to Christ, which is the core mission of the Church. As Catholic teachers, being in relationship with Christ means being a full and active participant in the life of the Church, nourished by the sacraments and in fellowship with the local parish community.



Our world hungers for truth. Truth can be found most genuinely in authentic witnesses, witnesses who in their love for Christ and his Church are open, welcoming and servant disciples. As Dr. Bibby suggests in his recent survey data, "Canadians on the outside of religious groups are looking for ministry – with spiritual, personal and relational components front and centre" (*A New Day*, 56). People want to meet witnesses of faith that challenge and accept them, and act as models to emulate and follow.

Exemplars

The focus of the exemplars of this fourth mark clearly note that the central Gospel witnesses in our Catholic schools are the teachers. Seventy percent of the exemplars dealt with the role of the teacher as they witness:

- In parish life, especially in participation in Sunday Eucharist
- Through their relationships with parents, students, and each other
- Through their active involvement in the spiritual life of the school, especially in liturgy, prayer, and justice activities

Supporting the teacher as a Gospel witness through staff faith formation was the most common exemplar theme of this mark. Specific exemplars include:

- Staff retreats and Faith Days
- Blueprints and SPICE Retreats
- Faith formation embedded into new teacher mentorship
- EXCEL academy (EICS, STAR and Evergreen Catholic Leadership Program)

Another set of exemplars shared by the delegates was the efforts made at the district level through faith formation, communication and in hiring practice. The witness of clergy, especially the involvement of parish priests in school life, was also identified as a key expression of the fourth mark.

Challenges and Strategies

Challenge #1 : Inadequate faith formation of Catholic teachers and administrators

The Catholic school subsists within the church and yet many of our staff have little involvement in the parish community. The delegates of the Symposium recognized this gap between pilgrims on a journey and those who have stopped growing! The formation of Christian witnesses in our schools is seen as one of our greatest challenges and a fertile ground for the New Evangelization. The challenge of inadequate faith formation touches on the issues of:

- Non-practicing staff
- Hiring practices
- Non-Catholics teaching in Catholic schools
- Accessibility of appropriate faith resources

Stating the challenge is easy; the difficulty is that the diversity of situations and experiences creates the need for a variety of solutions. Such diversity requires a myriad of strategies.

As Catholic teachers, being in relationship with Christ means being a full and active participant in the life of the Church, nourished by sacrament and in fellowship with the local parish community.

Strategy a: Provide a wide variety of faith formation opportunities for staff.

The Symposium delegates called for continued improvement in the area of adult faith formation. In this mark, the twenty strategies suggested by the table groups indicate that a wide variety of opportunities be made available to our staff. Some of the suggestions include:

- Incorporate ½ hour faith formation to monthly staff meetings
- Mandatory studies in religious education
- All inclusive teacher training in morality, scripture, religious education, etc.

Strategy b: District initiatives to address Gospel witness

To raise the level of Gospel witness in our Catholic schools, an effective and consistent district faith formation plan is critical. Every group that worked on this fourth mark called for additional funding for faith development of administrators and teachers. The delegates also pointed to the faith development of Catholic educational leaders and suggested that the leadership should set the tone from the top. Superintendents and principals must be witnesses and models for one another.



Challenge #2: Lack of a Gospel witness vision

Other challenges expressed by participants varied greatly. Lack of parent engagement, parish-school relationships dependent on the priest and the principal in many cases, and lack of direct ministry to teachers were some examples. Recent scandals in the Church have caused great pain among some and have made Gospel witness difficult. This array of concerns among members of the community demonstrates the need for Catholic schools to have a vision and plan to address the need for Gospel witnesses.

Strategy: Plan for evangelization and ministry

Strategies described the need for all stakeholders to be involved in an evangelization plan. This personal, school, and division plan:

- Will demand honesty and openness. As one group stated, "We cannot ignore the issues in the Church. We must confront them and discuss them."
- Will require a ministry of outreach to parents, staff, and all those who have been distanced from the Church
- Will involve collaboration of stakeholders, especially a parish-school team, working with parents



Gospel Witnesses Reflection Questions

Challenge #1: The difficulty in hiring practicing Catholics and the inadequate on-going faith formation of Catholic teachers and administrators.

1. Reflect personally: Has your faith grown as you have been part of the teaching profession? If yes, what has been the most effective program, practice, event that has impacted you? If no, what would it take? What would you like to see? Where could your division improve to meet your needs?
2. You have just hired a new teacher with incredible potential but no faith background (baptised but never converted). What are you as superintendent/consultant/school administrator going to do to grow this teacher's faith and create a "witness"?

Challenge #2: Plan for evangelization and ministry

1. We are not in this alone. We belong to many communities. We, as Christian communities, are all part of the task of evangelization; not only our teachers but students, families, and the community. How can the school actively evangelize families? How might the school/parish work together to evangelize teachers and families?
2. What would a school faith formation plan look like? As an administrative team/school/department create a plan – include prayer, staff meetings, PGP discussions, liturgy, and any other opportunities a school may have to strengthen the Gospel witness of staff – both experienced and new.
3. How you spend money tells me a great deal about what you value – where does faith formation fit? Critically evaluate your school/division budget. Do you spend more on sports equipment? School/division promotional material? Is faith formation a priority?

Further Reflection Questions:

- If a division leader was evaluating a staff member on their commitment to Gospel witness, what might it look like? Would there be enough evidence to evaluate you?
- Who are the "faith mentors" in your school? How can these people help the staff to be stronger Gospel witnesses?
- How often does your staff pray together? What can be done to increase the prayer life of your staff/school
- How might a committee of parish and school staff work together to create a model of outreach and evangelization?

Mark Five: Spirituality of Communion

In his encyclical *Novo Millennio Inuente*, St. John Paul II asked that we promote a “spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education.” The spirituality of communion then is the desired relationship between persons and groups. It is at the very heart of the Holy Trinity; while being distinct, Father, Son and Spirit live as one in complete and perfect unity. Above all, the spiritual unity found in the Trinity is to be witnessed in all those who profess and live the Christian life. It is a life lived in perfect harmony and relationship. It is our ultimate goal and call. As Jesus proclaimed in John’s Gospel, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them” (John 14. 20-21).



An authentic Catholic school and Catholic school district strives for the unity found in the Trinity and this authenticity will be evident in the relationships between Bishops, trustees, administrators, staff, students and families. Characteristics of the spirituality of communion in the Catholic school are:

- Trust and openness in accordance with the dignity and responsibility of its members
- Constructive dialogue which harmonizes differences
- Transition from “school as institution” to “school as community”
- Promotion of parents as co-responsible for their children’s education, and support for their formation
- Creation of a school climate that reproduces the warm atmosphere of family life

While these characteristics could be considered to be at the core of all community schools, it is a spirituality of life in the Trinity that will distinguish an authentic Catholic school from its non-Catholic counterparts.

Exemplars

What does a spirituality of communion look like in a Catholic school?

Liturgy, celebrations, and sacraments were the most common exemplars, particularly celebration of the Eucharist. To assume this was triggered by the word “communion” may be an unfair conjecture, but it is interesting that “celebration” in the fifth mark is more predominant than “witnessing” this spirituality in action. It is in social justice and service projects that the delegates could see the spirituality of communion present: contributions to local and international charities, students involved in mission work, and the outpouring of aid in crisis, such as the recent disasters in the Philippines and High River. It was pointed out that the purpose or reason we serve others as Christians needs to be highlighted. What drives charity in Catholic schools is similar yet different from public schools; students need to be taught these motivations, issues and the importance of service as children of God and participating in the global community.

The second major theme running through the exemplars of Spirituality of Communion is the building of

relationships, particularly through the relationships between home, school and parish. Delegates have witnessed positive relationships between teachers and students in their schools, and there can be found a warm, inviting and hospitable atmosphere. The mark is also evident in activities where there is parish involvement in school life. The participation of the parish priest is of utmost importance, but it is significant that many at the Symposium looked to lay participation in school life, such as the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Women's League.

An authentic Catholic school and Catholic school district strives for the unity found in the Trinity and will be evident in the authentic relationships among Bishops, trustees, administrators, staff, students, and families.

A final core theme found in the exemplars of this fifth mark is parent involvement in school life. Here, Symposium delegates provided evidence of the school staff who welcome parents at the door when they arrive and leave at the end of the day and participation in school councils where parents are involved in voicing their opinions. One school has their School Advisory Council meetings when students are in the school. It is also clear that there are a variety of successful approaches to building up a spirituality of communion through school community events and activities. Examples include:

- Mixers for priest, parish, students, teachers and community
- Back to school blessings that welcome new families
- Multicultural days with food, costumes, and activities
- Plays and events that bring the whole community together

As the delegates demonstrated, living a spirituality of communion is very much alive in celebration, action, and relationship in our Alberta Catholic schools, yet challenges remain.

Challenges and Strategies

Symposium 2014's title *Growing Forward* is an apt title. What the delegates expressed as evidence of spirituality of communion in our Catholic schools are also the areas where further improvement is required. Here are three challenges for us to consider for this fifth mark, along with some recommendations for growth.

Challenge #1: Re-establishing strong home school parish relationships

From the delegates' responses, there is a sense that our Catholic schools are missing the ecclesial dimension that Archbishop Miller introduced at the outset of the Symposium. Part of the problem is a lack of understanding of roles, often precipitated by miscommunication. In many cases families see the school as the key faith community, not the parish. The school must always point to the parish as the lifelong faith community.

Strategy: Specific planning for parish/school relationships

In order to support one another, parishes and schools must develop a plan with goals, timelines, and responsibilities. The mission is clear, evangelization, and Strategy #2 of Gospel Witness is very much aligned with this one. Part of the plan could include:

- Representatives of school on parish council and vice versa;
- Shared events and retreats
- Sharing and distribution of communication

Challenge #2: Reaching groups disconnected to the church

A significant challenge to a Spirituality of Communion is our lack of response to those whom Bibby calls the “disaffiliated.” The problem, as he sees it, is relational: “We used to see people as either ‘in’ or ‘out.’ That has not been helpful. We need to see them as having varying levels of involvement” (*A New Day*, 52). More and more of our families whose children attend our schools are distanced from the local parish; yet still connected with the Catholic world through our schools. As noted before, the diversity of family structures, and those members of the LGBTQ community challenge the inclusivity of our Church, and by extension our Catholic schools.

Strategy: Outreach to the “disaffiliated”, especially parents

While the challenge was easy to recognize, the delegates could provide no specific actions to address it. Increased instruction in vocation awareness and having students involved in volunteer work appear to be possible connecting points to Church life. Perhaps the first steps will always be hospitality and invitation, as indicated by one of the groups

Challenge #3: Addressing the understanding of a spirituality of communion

As was the case with the first two marks, delegates perceived a lack of depth in living out a Spirituality of Communion. Understanding our vocation as adult disciples; and creating communities of discipleship were seen as prerequisites for such a communion. Two strategic approaches become necessary:

Strategy a: Faith formation in spirituality of communion

Two table groups suggested that the best way to form our Catholic community would be to bring the discussions of this symposium back to our communities with all our stakeholders (parish/home/school/) in order to bridge home and church.

Strategy b: Creating intentional spiritual communions

Once again, strategies were varied but lack specificity, with the exception of one group. Looking at a provincial perspective, this group suggested a Catholic Education Council of Alberta which would:

- Share concerns and issues
- Represent provincial stakeholders (ACSTA, bishops, CCSA, ATA)
- Offer a united political voice
- Dialogue with Alberta Education

There is merit in considering better provincial connections, as was noted in the second Strategy of the third mark, “Faith infused Curriculum”, to increase the voice of Catholic educators in Alberta/Northwest Territories.



Spirituality of Communion Reflection Questions

Challenge #1: Weak home school parish relationships

1. It often seems that the parish only comes to the school/division when invited; the schools think they own the parish, and the parents just ignore everyone! The notion of a triad of parish – school – home sounds and looks good but does it work? Is there a weak link? What role should the parish have in Catholic education?
2. How can the parents be more involved? How might schools and parishes evangelize and minister to families? Provide concrete examples of what a school could do to engage parents in the school and parish.

Challenge #2: Groups disconnected to the church and spiritual life of the school

1. Bibby calls those disconnected from their parishes the “disaffiliated.” People used to be “in” or “out”, today there are those that are neither. There is a disconnection between Catholics from their parishes but they are still sending their kids to Catholic schools. How might the school work with the parishes to provide a “link” or invitation to the parish?

Challenge #3: Creating intentional spiritual communities

1. A significant increase in Catholic school enrollment in Alberta is coming from immigrant families. How might the school and the parish work together to satisfy the spiritual, educational and physical needs of these new arrivals?
2. What specific plans are in place in your school/division to increase involvement of parents in the spiritual life of the school?
3. Spiritual communion is not limited to the local parish but includes communion with all. How might a school’s social justice programs partner with families and the parish to work in bringing about the Kingdom of God?

Further Reflection Questions:

- What specific plans do you and your school have to increase involvement of parents in school life? How would you measure success in this area?
- What role do parents have in the liturgical/spiritual life of your school? List ways that parents could make a meaningful contribution to the prayer/faith life of the school. Share these ideas in a newsletter or on the school/division website.

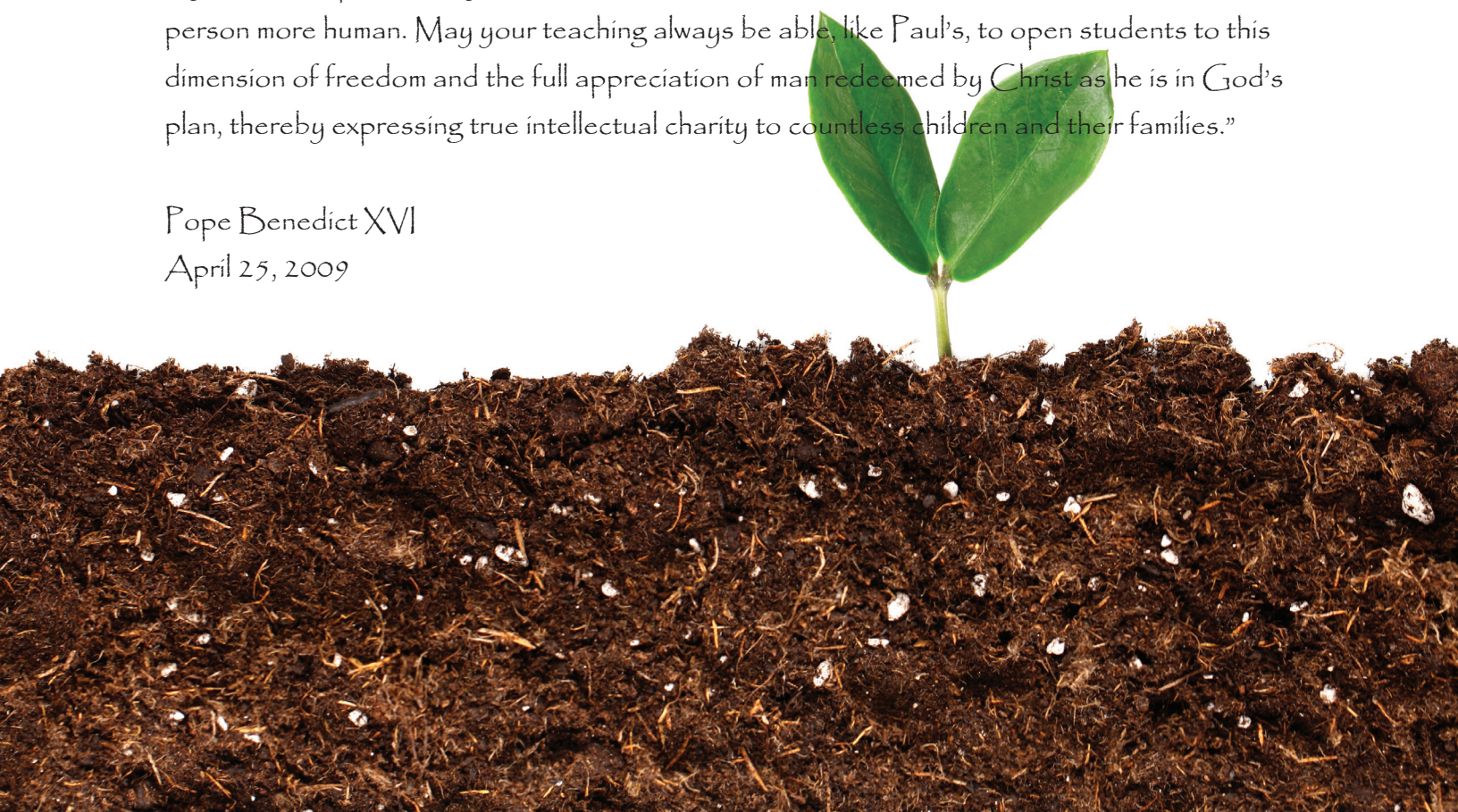
Part Three

A Proposed Catholic School Identity Assessment Tool

“The last Letters of (St. Paul’s) correspondence, the so-called “pastoral” Letters, are full of significant references to the social and civil life that Christ’s disciples must keep clearly in mind. St. Paul is a true “teacher” who has at heart both the salvation of the person in whom has been inculcated a mentality of faith, and the person’s human and civil formation, so that the disciple of Christ may express to the full a free personality, a human life that is “complete and well prepared”, which is also shown by attention for culture, professionalism and competence in the various fields of knowledge for the benefit of all. Consequently the religious dimension is not a superstructure, it is an integral part of the person from the very earliest infancy; it is fundamental openness to otherness and to the mystery that presides over every relationship and every encounter with human beings. The religious dimension makes the person more human. May your teaching always be able, like Paul’s, to open students to this dimension of freedom and the full appreciation of man redeemed by Christ as he is in God’s plan, thereby expressing true intellectual charity to countless children and their families.”

Pope Benedict XVI

April 25, 2009



Introduction

Archbishop Michael Miller’s second talk at the ACSTA Symposium was entitled, “Assessing the Catholic Identity of Our Schools”, invited and encouraged the delegates to consider an instrument for measuring the authenticity of our Alberta/NWT schools’ Catholic identity. With a set of specific standards and performance benchmarks the community could reflect on those standards and how they are being met and stakeholders could continue to “plan strategically and implement prudently” the further formation and fidelity of Catholic schools in the mission of the Church. Recognizing the work done by Loyola University and the National Catholic Education Association in their Catholic Schools Standards Project ¹ and the final product, *Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools*, Archbishop Miller presented a “Catholic Enhancement Initiative”, which he hopes will help Catholic schools move from “good” to “great”. He identified six standards that would assist in Catholic identity improvement:

1. A public commitment to Catholicity
2. Integration of the Vision of Faith in the curriculum
3. Religious instruction at the core of the curriculum
4. Faith formation outside the curriculum
5. Educators committed to the Gospel
6. Co-responsibility in governance

With these standards, Archbishop Miller posed benchmark questions and encouraged the delegates to create, edit, and modify the standards to best assist their own Catholic school culture.

With this in mind, the author has created a proposed Catholic Identity Assessment Tool (CSIAT) with the five marks of the Authentic Catholic School found in Part A as the foundations for the standards. Having already reflected on the five marks, stakeholders can begin the discussion on the creation of an Alberta/Northwest Territories developed tool and can use the proposed CSIAT for strategic planning and improvement in their own divisions. It must be acknowledged here that Archbishop Miller’s presentation, the NCEA Standards document, and Timothy J. Cook’s *Architects of Catholic Culture* were fundamental resources for the development of the CSIAT.



¹ www.catholicsschoolstandards.org

Catholic School Identity Assessment Tool

Mark One: Grounded in a Christian Anthropology

Standard One: An excellent Catholic school is driven by a mission which views all men and women with an inherent dignity as sons and daughters of God.

Benchmarks:

1. The school mission statement includes a clear commitment to its Catholic identity with specific language referencing Jesus Christ and His Church.
2. The school's mission statement recognizes the dignity and worth of all members of the Catholic school community as sons and daughters of God.
3. The mission statement can be recited or paraphrased by all stakeholders of the Catholic school community.
4. Founded in a Catholic Christian anthropology, the school's mission statement is clearly distinguishable from the mission statements of other public, independent, or charter schools.
5. The mission statement is frequently communicated to the community in newsletters, reports and official correspondence.
6. The mission statement is displayed in prominent areas of the school facility and is reviewed and updated regularly.
7. All school policies, and especially the discipline policy, are grounded in the mission statement. It is used as the foundation and reference point for strategic planning and evaluation of the school staff and students.

Mark Two: Imbued with a Catholic Worldview

Standard Two: An excellent Catholic school has a visible and tangible Catholic vision evident in its physical space, liturgical celebrations, and prayer life.

Benchmarks:

1. The school's Catholic worldview is evident in the art and architecture of the school's exterior and signage as well as in hallways, classrooms, offices, library, cafeteria, gymnasium and auditorium.
2. The school has as a chapel or a specific space for community prayer that is used by the school community for the purpose of prayer and worship.
3. Students have opportunities to pray every day in school, and at numerous times during the day such as:
 - a. To begin the school day in the morning
 - b. A blessing before lunch
 - c. A prayer at the end of the day
 - d. A prayer to begin each class
4. Every classroom has a prayer center with the following standard items:
 - a. Cross or Crucifix
 - b. Candle
 - c. Bible
 - d. Cloth with the appropriate liturgical colour
5. The school community gathers for liturgical celebrations at least once a month, two of which are celebrations of the Eucharist.

6. Whenever possible, Eucharist is celebrated in the local parish.
7. The school works with the local parish to support the immediate preparation for the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation.
8. The school and the local parish collaborate in preparing children who have not received the sacraments of Initiation, including Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
9. Service projects reflect and articulate Catholic teaching on social justice and charity.
10. All students and staff have opportunities for age-appropriate faith experiences, such as retreats, at least once during the school year.

Mark Three: Animated by a Faith Infused Curriculum

Standard Three: An excellent Catholic school has an academic curriculum that integrates a vision of faith within the learner outcomes and teaching strategies.

Benchmarks:

1. The curriculum reflects the Church’s understanding of the unity of truth and the harmony between faith and reason.
2. When relevant, the curriculum reflects the social teachings of the Catholic Church.
3. The school offers a Catholic faith-infused curriculum (the lessons of which) that could not be duplicated in a non-Catholic school.
4. The curriculum addresses the spiritual, moral and ethical life of the student, either explicitly or implicitly.
5. Teachers are knowledgeable on Church teaching as it applies to the subject areas in which they teach.
6. Appropriate funding is allocated, and concrete initiatives are in place, to assist schools in the theological training of staff.
7. Gospel values and Church teaching are regularly and consistently incorporated into planning and instruction.
8. Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss methods of infusing faith in their subject areas.
9. Religious education is a core subject area. Teacher assignment, learner outcomes and delivery of instruction are given the same professional requirements and rigor as in all core subjects.



Mark Four: Sustained by Gospel Witness

Standard Four: An excellent Catholic school hires and nurtures teachers that are living witnesses to the Gospel, and intentional disciples of Jesus Christ and his Church.

Benchmarks:

1. Teachers and administrators are active members of the parish to which they belong.
2. Teachers and administrators witness their life in Christ through their relationships with parents, students, and each other.
3. Teachers and administrators demonstrate their faith through their active involvement in the school's Catholic culture, especially in liturgy, prayer, and justice activities.
4. Teachers and administrators form proper and prudent bonds of friendship with students in order for authentic formation to occur.
5. Teachers and administrators are supported in their ongoing faith formation through the allocation of time and resources.
6. The school and district have effective and consistent faith formation plans.
7. As part of their professional development, teachers and administrators create a personal faith formation plan, which is reviewed throughout the year.
8. Hiring practice places the faith life and the willingness to grow in faith of the prospective candidate as a priority.

Mark Five: Shaped by a Spirituality of Communion

Standard Five: An excellent Catholic school recognizes that each and every stakeholder is responsible for the common good.

Benchmarks:

1. Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the Catholic school are articulated in approved documents.
2. The school has an active and vibrant parent advisory council working with a shared purpose.
3. The Catholic school has a plan to increase involvement of parents in the life of the school and parish.
4. The Catholic school and the district have policies in place to resolve conflict in a manner consistent with the Gospel values.
5. The school recognizes the role of the local bishop in ensuring that the education and formation in his jurisdiction are based on principles of Catholic doctrine.
6. The school and the local parish work together to create evangelization teams committed to nurturing the faith life of families who send their children to the Catholic school.
7. The Catholic school frequently invites the local parish priest to school functions and encourages him to be an active member of the school community.



REPORT AUTHOR: MICHAEL MARIEN
PHOTO CREDIT: KEN COLLETT

For more information on the Symposium or Catholic education in Alberta and the Northwest Territories contact the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association.

Copies of this document are available in English and French on the ACSTA website: www.acsta.ab.ca/resources
Sample presentation powerpoints are also available on the resources page.

The Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association celebrates, preserves, promotes and enhances Catholic education.



Suite 205, 9940 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2N2

Phone: (780) 484-6209 Fax: (780) 484-6248
Internet: www.acsta.ab.ca e-mail: admin@acsta.ab.ca