Blessings to all... happy summer!

2019-2020 is year for the record books! As we break for summer, we continue to live in a time of uncertainty and caution. We ache for physical contact and time with those who we have been separated from. We long for sunshine and relaxation. We hope for a return to life as it “was” when fall arrives.

As people of faith we know that God is with us and that His plans for our future are filled with prosperity and hope (Jeremiah 29:11). The Bible tell us 365 times, Do not be afraid; Fear not. And so, we move forward with the conviction that all will be well. God holds us in the palm of His hand. We are called to witness courage and confidence in our Lord and His providence.

As this school year comes to a close may God bless each one of us with peace of mind and strength of spirit and may He always protect Catholic Education.

Dr. Bonnie Annicchiarico

2019-2020 GrACE Resources

GrACE has been able to develop and support a number of resources for grateful advocates this year. All have been shared in past newsletters and are now available by contacting gracedirector7@gmail.com. Please use them, modify them and make them your own.

- GrACE updated presentation with history, statistics, issues and explanation of the distinct nature of Catholic education has been shared and distributed to all GrACE participants
- 5 Marks of Catholic Education Presentation has been developed in cooperation with Catholic School districts
- Discussion questions and engagement template have been created to facilitate conversation using the two Catholic Education videos created by Holy Spirit Catholic Schools and Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools
- Advocacy Tool Kit has been developed, shared and distributed
- Advocacy Planning Template has been developed and distributed
The mission of GrACE is to inspire, invigorate and embolden the spirit of Catholic education in order to unite, engage, educate and communicate with one voice on its behalf.

Welcome GrACE Board 2020-2021
Chair- Trustee Pat Bremner       Vice-Chair- Associate Superintendent Paul Corrigan
Trustee Lory Lovinelli, Superintendent Bryan Szumlas, Archbishop Smith, Bishop Terrio
Director Bonnie Annicchiarico

GrACE Top Toolkit Tips for Summer: Read, read, read!

1. Begin with Catholic Dimensions here Summer Edition. Check out the recommended titles.

2. Subscribe to Faithfully here. Read the June edition with two stories on Catholic Education by Mark Hickie and Bonnie Annicchiarico

To outgoing GrACE Board members, Michael Ouellette and Scott Morrison, your dedication to establishing the roots for GrACE have built a foundation for the future for GrACE. Thank you!

To the continuing 2019-2020 GrACE Board: Archbishop Smith, Bishop Terrio, Trustee Pat Bremner and Associate Superintendent Paul Corrigan thank you for your commitment and efforts.

We look forward to your leadership in the year to come.

GrACE would like to thank the many supporting individuals who have gone above and beyond to ensure that the work of GrACE continues: Michelle Collett (treasurer), Cindy Nickerson & Lindsay Fagan (GrACE Facebook administrators) and Rita Strauss and Suzanne Brohier (admin support from the Archdiocese of Edmonton).

It take a village to support and advocate for Catholic Education. The Executive Directors of our partner boards: ACSTA and CCSSA are both retiring. Their leadership has been exemplary and they will be greatly missed. Wishing all the best to Dean Sarnecki and Jamie McNamara.

A special note of appreciation to the Diocese of Calgary, especially Nadia Hinds and Father Wilbert for inviting the stories of Catholic Education to be published in the monthly Faithfully blog and newsletter.

To the Bishops of Alberta, to the Alberta Catholic School Trustees and the Council of Catholic School Superintendents THANK YOU! Your vigilant support and guidance have grounded GrACE and allowed advocacy for Catholic Education to flourish.

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Lakeland Catholic Schools

On Tuesday, June 3, 2020 Lakeland Catholic hosted its first ever Virtual Retreat for students in grades 5-12. The event was called Fear Not - Courageous Quarantine Disciples. The event was live streamed to YouTube and Facebook.

Two of our teachers Ms. Siobhan Penner and Ms. Cassaundra Noyes took the lead on planning the event. We had over 60 students registered. Each registrant received a T-shirt with the event title on it and a swag bag. An anonymous donor covered the cost of the T-shirts for us which we are very grateful for. We had speakers from within the division and some from across Canada join in.

Overall feedback on the event was tremendously positive and the Holy Spirit was definitely at work with us that day. We plan to host a similar event again soon.

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools

What a year it has been! It sounds like a bit of a cliché, and one might think, “Sure it’s all about the pandemic and the crisis around the world.” However, I just want to push the pause button on that aspect of our lives for a moment, and focus on the fantastic year that GrACE CTR had promoting Catholic Education.

A few highlights to celebrate this past year were: The Provincial GrACE Summit in Leduc this past October and our regional spring meeting with some of our sister boards and Bishop McGratten. Both times were of reconnecting with other GrACE groups across Alberta, and revitalizing our missions to promote Catholic Education. GrACE CTR revealed a new banner with emphasis on the Five Marks of Catholic Education. Our video, “Call to Love”, was beautifully done, and presented to parents across our division at all the Christmas celebrations.

In the upcoming year, we plan to move forward and keep promoting the importance of Catholic Education. We will always strive to keep the connection with our parents in our district. In addition, our focus will be to connect with all teachers during their CLC’s and collaborate more intentionally with our parish priests, parishioners and even our sister school boards. We’re excited about a possible panel presentation with guest speakers who value Catholic Education, and we will continue with our positive social media presence.

GrACE CTR is blessed and fortunate to have a wonderful, dynamic and diverse representation from our community. The collaboration with our “team” has been fantastic! We continue to have a vision, strive to move forward and set new goals. Our action has been proactive, not reactive, and it has been a joy to help others within our ever-growing GrACE family.

Elk Island Catholic Schools

From Elk Island Catholic Schools we extend our prayers and blessings to everyone as we close out this school year. May God continue to bless all of our students, staff and communities as we head off into the summer. While the future remains unclear in this time, our call to love our God and each other remains.
“Grace” is that gift that God gives us. Often defined as “unmerited favor”, grace can be viewed as a wonderful gift bestowed by God. We are blessed at St. Clare to be a GrACE school. We are proud to be among several schools in the province and in CSSD to have our very own GrACE Team. It has been spiritually rewarding to be a part of this wonderful initiative! We held a number of events to celebrate the permeation and advocacy of our Catholic faith in our school and parish community.

The year began visually with members of the GrACE group and additional staff members assembling bulletin board and displays in prominent locations in the school. In November, schools in the Ascension Parish community assembled to celebrate and discuss the importance of Catholic Education. Aside from enlightening sessions, an important component was the table-talk discussion involving colleagues from other schools about the different ways to promote Catholic Education in their respective school communities. Big “take-aways” from this GrACE gathering was the inspiration to establish a Student GrACE Team and a Student Faith Formation group comprised of Gr. 6 students.

The students involved in the Faith Formation and Student GrACE Teams explored ways to intentionally support Catholic education at St. Clare. The team played an active role with contributions in weekly Hymn Sing assemblies and our “Faith Day”.

We were blessed to have Bishop McGrattan and Fr. Avinash visit our school for a Pastoral Visit. Part of the visit included a school tour, viewing the visual displays in prominent areas of the school, meeting several staff and students including members of our CCC and GrACE teams.

In January we hosted our third annual Faith Day Event in conjunction with our Feast Day of St. Clare. Months of planning by our GrACE Groups and the CCC Committee went into staging this high-profile occasion which was held to honor our Patron Saint and commemorate the District Faith Theme. It was an amazing faith-filled celebration in our school community.

When I think of Catholic Education in Alberta, I think of a blessed opportunity to educate our children in a manner permeated by the Catholic faith. Being an educator in a Catholic School is not just a job, it is a calling, a position that embodies a mission to impart and share our faith in the walls of the classroom, school and beyond. We are involved in witnessing to our students and each other.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, has referred to children as our “unconventional prophets and evangelizers”. It is time well spent to reflect on how God is nourishing us through the students and staff we meet in our Catholic Schools. What a gift to meet the Lord each day in schools where God is actively welcomed.
Staff at Calgary Catholic’s 14 high schools have worked hard to make graduation an unforgettable experience for their students. Events range from drive-and-walk-through celebrations, where students can collect their diploma, walk a stage or red carpet and have their photo taken, to student awards on social media. All schools have a unique online grad program featuring well wishes, student speeches and tributes to the graduating class. Dr. Bryan Szumlas, chief superintendent, addressed all graduating students in an online speech and Bishop William McGrattan celebrated a special online graduation mass. You can also follow the graduation events unfold on the district’s social media.

Régulièrement, les élèves du Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord ont la chance de prier, de participer à des célébrations liturgiques et de s’engager dans des projets de justice sociale. Que faire quand les élèves ne peuvent plus fréquenter leur école comme au cours des derniers mois? Le conseil a développé un bulletin mensuel avec l'intention de renseigner et d'engager davantage les parents dans l’éducation catholique de leurs enfants. Ce bulletin a permis de promouvoir, auprès des familles, une variété d’idées et de ressources possibles provenant des paroisses et du Conseil de l’éducation de la foi catholique chez les francophones de l’Alberta (CÉFFA)

Habitually, students of “Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord” have had the opportunity to pray, to participate in liturgical celebrations and to engage in social justice projects. How can these students be accommodated given the context of homeschooling of these past months? The School Board has developed a monthly newsletter with the intention of educating and engaging parents in the Catholic education of their children. This newsletter has further promoted a variety of ideas and possible resources from parishes and the Council for the Education of the Catholic Faith among Francophones in Alberta (CÉFFA) to families.
Sharing the Faith through Signs of Gratitude

STAR Catholic Schools celebrated Catholic Education Week with a social media campaign called “Signs of Gratitude”. Throughout the week, students, staff, and families were invited to create and share handmade signs listing a reason (or multiple reasons!) why they are thankful for their Catholic school.

The campaign was a great success! The support and participation from many individuals and families across our Division was touching and inspirational. It was wonderfully overwhelming to see so many people take the time to creatively share their love and faith with us all week long.

Not only did the campaign fall in line with this year’s Catholic Education theme of “United in Prayer and Grateful for our Catholic Schools”, it also served the important purpose of connecting the STAR Catholic Family during what has been a challenging time for many. The Signs of Gratitude campaign was a wonderful visual reminder that, even when we must remain physically apart, we are always united through faith, friendship, our love for one another, and the love God has for us.
STAR Catholic GrACE is excited to share that we did manage to have a local GrACE training session in all but one of our communities by the end of the school year. Earlier in the spring, two of our communities held their own in-person GrACE training. Then later in May, three of our communities came together for one Zoom meeting which included 3 trustees and about 7 volunteers. It was a bit of challenge but with our geography, the Zoom meeting was an excellent option. We are grateful for the hearts that feel this calling to lift up Catholic Education in their local communities.

Here is some feedback from volunteers committed to their local GrACE group:

- I am pleased to be an advocate for Catholic education. I want to help promote Catholic education because I believe in all it has to offer.
- My perception of Catholic education has been re-enforced by the workshop.
- I think it’s important to reach more parents with the GrACE message.
- My next step is to get involved with my local GrACE group. We’ll need prayer.
- We all have a role to play in advancing Catholic education.
- Perhaps we need to brainstorm some creative ideas.
- I will put some into sharing a story from my experience as a teacher in a Catholic school.

Each year Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools holds an art contest and invites students and staff to offer their best depiction of the new division theme. Here are some of the entries that illustrate the theme “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.”

This theme is so appropriate for our time, especially as it was chosen during our current climate of COVID-19. The Grade 5 artist whose illustration was chosen as the overall winner shared this thought about the theme: “To ‘trust in the Lord with all your heart’ is possible because the Lord himself has provided all the resources we need. If we are trusting him with all our heart, there’s no room for anything else to be in control. Our God is real – He is certainly all-powerful, and He is absolutely loving. That’s how great our God is!”