

Implementing 'Our Language, Our Story'

About the project ...

The Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative developed an electronic resource with strategies to connect Ontario's elementary curriculum documents to learning about character development through the Catholic Virtues document, *Our Language, Our Story*. The purpose of this project was to support teachers in implementing this resource and connecting it to other character initiatives such as the board's Virtues Posters. In partnership with teams of educators from the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, teams of ALCDSB educators designed implementation strategies and provided in-service for administrators and lead teachers from each elementary school. As follow-up, school teams met to identify school-based strategies for introducing and implementing the resources such as through professional learning community (PLC) meetings. As part of PLC processes, teachers integrated student learning about character development throughout the curriculum areas, particularly with regard to *big ideas*, and participated in a poster contest and the recording of a board song, *Living With Virtue*. Pamphlets explaining the board's character development initiative were produced and shared with all school councils while school newsletters regularly reflected key aspects of each school's engagement in character development learning activities.

Impact on student learning and school culture ...

- Character development messages from *Our Language, Our Story* were incorporated into literacy initiatives through a focus on *big ideas* and in the Arts through a poster contest and the board Virtues song.
- Student contributions to the life of their schools were affirmed when the board introduced a *Beacons of Hope* breakfast which parents attended with their children as they were recognized for their special contributions to their schools.

Lessons learned for moving forward ...

- The *Our Language, Our Story* resource has proven to be a practical resource which was well received by teachers. Due to its successful launch, the board will continue to promote its use and implementation.
- Parents have appreciated how the use of Virtues language connects their Catholic schools with broader faith traditions and provides an authentic practice for illustrating some of the ways in which Catholic schools are distinct.