

## *Creating a Culture of Virtue Through 'Growing in Virtue'*

### **About the project ...**

The purpose of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board project was to create and implement a foundational document to infuse the Virtues and character development into all aspects of board life. Administrators, teachers and support staff from both panels worked together to create *Growing In Virtue*, which is based on the Ministry document, *Finding Common Ground*, and the Ontario Catholic Bishops' document, *Character Development and the Virtuous Life*. The document was vetted at various board levels to add input from parents, parish priests, secondary students and trustees, as well as other administrators and teaching and support staff. Two teachers from each secondary school participated in in-service about the document and it was introduced to elementary students at a Student Virtues Symposium attended by two students and a teacher from each school. Following the symposium, a group called *Youth Ambassadors for Christ* was formed with the mandate of creating school-based plans to educate all members of the school community about the Virtues and create opportunities to put them into action. Virtues pages were created for student planners which were given to all student and parents and a monthly calendar was created to connect the Virtues to the church calendar. In addition, the document was posted on the board website.

### **Impact on student learning and school culture ...**

- The *Growing In Virtue* document has provided administrators and staff with reference points for making decision in areas such as assessment and evaluation, classroom management and student support strategies.
- Both elementary and secondary students are deeply involved in the *Growing in Virtues* activities and, from their actions, it is evident that they are eager to *do the right thing*.
- Students have gained a clearer understanding of expectations and the reasons for them along with a deeper understanding of the impact and implications of their decisions and actions.

### **Lessons learned for moving forward ...**

- Giving staff advisers and students time to talk and plan in an environment away from the school was a very positive experience and should be repeated – the Grade 6 students were very responsive to the leadership opportunities this project provided.
- The elementary student symposium will be repeated next year since delivering the message once is not enough – engaging through large group gatherings and speaking with other peers was very empowering for students.
- The *Growing in Virtue* document will serve as a foundation for all policies created by the board, such as those related to safe schools.