

## *Creative Catholic Curriculum: A 'How-To Guide' for Classroom and School Community*

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

*Creative Catholic Curriculum: A 'How to Guide' for Classroom and School Community* is a teacher-created handbook that was made for Catholic elementary teachers to promote the creation of safe and inclusive classrooms that are infused with a culture of Virtues education. This project was based on the request from a cooperative working group on Catholic education for a guide for teachers on school culture. Teachers, principals and community groups were consulted about their ideas for infusing the Virtues throughout the curriculum and school environment. The booklet features classroom and community photographs and descriptors that give educators a place to begin. The goal was to provide a clear guide to creating a safe and inclusive community, with K-6 as the focus.

The handbook promotes character education by using strategies such as the development of teacher/student co-constructed charts for behaviour expectations with specific connections to Catholic character formation. The handbook also reflects current student success strategies such as the creation of robust tasks with rich texts linking to Catholic character themes such as 'Dignity of the Human Person.'

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

- Two key priorities throughout the creation and introduction of the handbook have been consistent use of character formation language and alignment with key messages of other initiatives such as safe schools. These priorities have supported teachers in connecting the personal development of their students to character development.
- The consistency in language used by teachers and students has also led to deeper understanding of actions regarding charity and justice.
- Students are developing critical literacy skills as they explore character themes through rich mentor texts and non-fiction writing.

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

- As requested by the working group, the visuals used to demonstrate key ideas have provided educators with explicit examples of what character education looks and sounds like.
- Character development is important for student success and permeates all aspects of school board culture – professional conduct and relationships between colleagues, within families and in the greater community.
- There is a need for all students to see themselves and their possibilities explored through the Catholic Virtues and values. The Catholic School Graduate Expectations and the language and strategies used to develop character are directly related to the student as a future leader.