



# Three Catholic Curriculum Cooperatives

By Gerry Blake, Gerry Bibby and Suzanne Wishak

*Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Catholic school. Catholic Education is rooted in our creed - in our belief in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His life is a model for living. His teaching is a guide for growing to the fullness of Human potential. Catholic education embraces three interlocking dimensions: the message revealed by God that the church proclaims; fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit; and service to the Christian community and to the entire human community.*

*James T. Mulligan, csc, Ensuring a Future, 2005*

There are three Catholic Curriculum Cooperatives in existence in Ontario: the Catholic Curriculum Cooperative (CCC) based in Mississauga; the Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative (EOCCC) based in Napanee; and the Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative (NOCCC) based in North Bay. The cooperatives were founded to promote and encourage the purpose of Catholic education through the vehicle of Catholic curricula. They exist as a mechanism to provide direct support to English Catholic schools by creating resources and offering professional development that embodies and proclaims the distinctiveness of our Catholic faith. Education imbued with Gospel values is the foundation of Catholic schools. The cooperatives maintain that all subjects taught in our schools should be taught within the context of a Catholic culture, which is supported by the relationship between school, home and parish. The common goal of the cooperatives is to help the Ontario English Catholic District school boards and school authorities to develop and share Catholic curriculum resources, which meet the Ministry of Education requirements, yet reflect the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith community. The cooperatives build and sustain the Catholic capacity of educators through the development and provision of high quality Catholic curricula, resources, support and professional development.

The cooperatives' programs are established with regional representation from participating school boards and Catholic partners. All of our publications contain details of our faith and are reviewed by theological readers. Their recommendations are implemented before any resources are made available. The cooperatives are based on the following premise:

*Efforts in developing curriculum specifically for Catholic schools should continue. Religious education should not be reduced to one course in our schools. Rather, our whole educational process should become a religious activity. FAITH should infuse every subject and aspect of our curriculum.*

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops 1989

The three cooperatives maintain a very strong, active, provincial connectivity. They are present at the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) curriculum meetings; they are the official delegates for ICE at Ministry Curriculum Review Feedback Consultation sessions; they maintain a working relationship with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat; and they were involved with the Ministry of Education's eLearning position paper. The three cooperatives have developed a professional working relationship with OECTA and CPCO. To ensure the Catholicity of our documents, the three cooperatives developed a Catholic Curriculum Writing Course and Catholic writers are encouraged to join provincial writing teams once they have completed this course. Catholic conferences, such as When Faith Meets Pedagogy (CCC) and Celebrating Catholic Education (EOCCC) are provided with representation from all three cooperatives, OECTA, CPCO, OCSOA, CARFLEO and Western Canada. Provincial elementary and secondary conference calls and on-line forums are ongoing throughout the year. The three cooperatives are also involved in the development of Catholic learning teams, adult faith initiatives, Catholic leadership initiatives, Family Life resources and program initiatives, as well as a Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association (CCSTA) on-line forum project.

The CCC, EOCCC and NOCCC have multiple resources available to educators. Each cooperative maintains a website that provides listings of available resources. Mutual initiatives are highlighted through newsletters and web-based Internet presentations. Each website has a link to the other two cooperatives as well as other partner organizations. All three cooperatives share all resources and curricula produced.

The concept of a cooperative was designed for people to come together as a Catholic community to share their resources and their faith. "For it is in the core of the soul that we come to know ourselves and more deeply love our God." (James T. Mulligan, csc, *Catholic Education Ensuring a Future*, 2005) Each cooperative

fully respects local autonomy. Each school board maintains full control of its curricula by using only those resources that it feels it needs. Each participating school board annually defines its own in-service needs and organizes these separately or through interaction with the cooperatives.

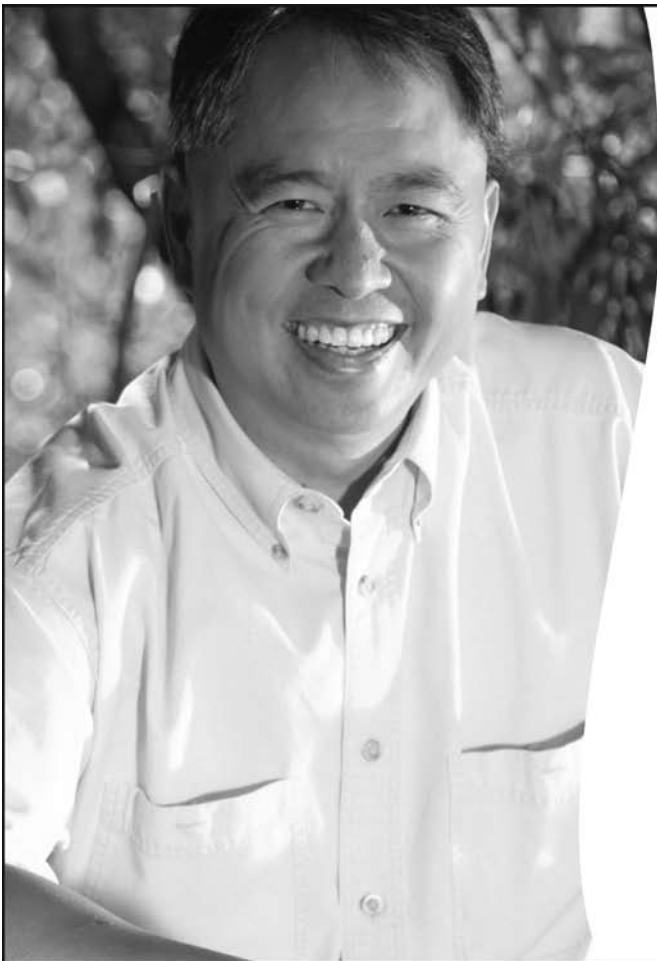
The in-service model is based on an innovative concept of human resource development. The cooperatives have some core professional staff members, as well as educators drawn from the participating school boards. Over the years, the cooperatives have developed a pool of Catholic curriculum and in-service education leaders across Ontario. These leaders contribute their expertise to other school systems and return to their home base with much more to offer them. In a truly Catholic fashion, they develop themselves by helping others.

The major partners with voting representatives from the participating boards control the management of each cooperative. The board of directors can include some of the following participants: Ontario Bishops, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (Provincial), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (Provincial), Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees' Association (Provincial), representatives from the Ministry of Education and First Nations (NOCCC). Each Board of Directors is responsible for managing the cooperative through a Catholic Executive Director. Although each cooperative follows their own distinct Mission Statement, the three cooperatives strive to fulfill

the most important task of developing and educating our Catholic children to live their lives in the spirit of the Gospels. The three Catholic cooperatives exist to facilitate the authentic integration of the fundamental Catholic values into all aspects of the curricula whether in the classroom or not, and to promote Catholic educational partnerships.

Our three cooperatives are made up of wonderful, devoted people, with tremendous leadership qualities, accomplishing outstanding things for our Catholic community. We feel very blessed to experience the kind of creative, faith-filled energy that characterizes the CCC, EOCCC and NOCCC. We particularly value the support and encouragement from our Catholic school boards, the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) and the Ontario Catholic Council of Bishops (OCCB). We would be remiss if we did not extend a heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) for their support and participation in our many endeavors. Join with us as we pray for the continued success of the cooperatives.

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