

# Who are Catholic Educators?

## **We are the educators who are continually juggling:**

- the philosophical ideals and the practical aspects of our situation;
- the public perception of our profession and our understanding of our work;
- our dual roles as both transmitters of our culture and change agents within it; and
- the challenge to be fully alive in our ministry to our students.

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In addition to the stresses inherent in our profession, we must also struggle with the political reality that we are continually threatened with the potential loss of our Catholic school system and challenged to counteract that threat by being exemplary in our practice.

We strive to develop students who are sacramentally responsive, intellectually competent, motivated, healthy, responsible, caring and ethical, enroute to a lifetime of meaningful work and both committed to and capable of, lifelong learning.

We attempt to live and love as Christ did, as sacrament to others. We empower students as learners by giving them ownership of their learning at a young age. We help students seek out information, and guide them to develop the thinking skills necessary to evaluate that information and use it wisely and effectively. We encourage collaborative as well as independent learning. We use a variety of approaches and aids to learning that accommodate differing needs and styles. We build on the knowledge base of each student and use a wide variety of assessment strategies to provide feedback to inform our practice.

Catholic educators know that, in order to live successfully in today and tomorrow's world, our students need to understand and respond constructively to the rapid and pervasive changes taking place.

- Christianity is gradually declining as a social force with a subsequent rise in secularism.
- Our population is ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse and the trend toward diversity will continue.
- The traditional roles of men and women continue to evolve out of choice and necessity.
- The inherent rights of First Nations peoples are becoming more widely recognized and valued.
- The proportions of people in different age groups are changing radically as older citizens make up an increasing percentage of the population.
- The manufacturing sector continues to shrink and many of the workers are now in the service sector.
- The exploitation of natural resources can no longer be counted on as a primary source of employment.
- The workplace depends on information and information is increasing exponentially.
- As a result of new technology, jobs disappear and new ones are created requiring retraining of workers in order that they may take advantage of the new opportunities.
- During their lifetime, workers can expect to have several jobs, many of which do not currently exist.
- The security and healing of the traditional religious community are being displaced by other activities and *busy-ness*.
- The concept of family is being redefined. Living arrangements

as well as the caregivers that constitute a family vary greatly.

- Family structures and home environments are being greatly affected by worker displacement, increased mobility, unemployment and family breakdown.
- Violence in the home is a reality for many of our students, as is violence in society and in the media.
- Sexual abuse and the more subtle violence toward children, neglect and social/emotional maltreatment, are prevalent.
- Economic circumstances have changed, resulting in an increase in the number of children growing up in poverty.

Catholic educators are responding to and dealing with these changes. It requires a broad knowledge base and the ability to apply that which we know to these new situations. In addition, by the very nature of our profession, we are duty bound to develop that breadth of knowledge and flexibility in our students.

### Who are Catholic educators?

We are the educators who are taking full advantage of the *Leading Student Achievement (LSA)* project and using the concept of *big ideas* paired with Catholic values to move our students forward. Basing our work on a big idea gives us the opportunity to develop the mega skills our young people need to thrive, now and in the

future and we are learning along with them. Flexibility, initiative, teamwork, communication, risk-taking, conscientious decision-making reflecting sacramentality and social justice are both vital to our work as Catholic educators and critical to our students' academic, social, emotional, physical and spiritual development.

These broad-based skills are not so much taught directly as nurtured within the context of meaningful teaching and learning. The key to this work is that the teaching and learning must be relevant to the students in our school communities. Our work, therefore, must be to implement curriculum, which will engage and empower our students by:

- being age appropriate and meaningful in the eyes of the learner;
- having possibilities for first-hand experiences;
- being worthy of time and effort;
- allowing for connections; and
- having a real-life application reflecting our Catholic philosophy.

True curriculum integration is transformational. When teaching and learning takes place in a real-life context, students, teachers and the whole school community are changed by the experience.

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