

Catholic Education both a Gift and a Grace



MISSION STATEMENT

The Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative (NOCCC) exists as a mechanism to provide direct support to Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils as they share human and physical resources in their efforts to respond, at the local level to the mandate of implementing the provincial curriculum in the form of Catholic curriculum, and to providing in-service education about that curriculum as their teachers work toward fulfilling that most important task of developing and educating our Catholic children to live their lives in the spirit of the Gospels.



By **Suzanne Wishak**, Executive Director
Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

RECOGNIZING THAT THE TASKS OF DEVELOPING CURRICULUM ARE MADE UNIQUE for Northern Ontario Catholic schools by long distance, isolation, small numbers, climate and terrain, the cooperative was conceived as a means of responding to that uniqueness. It allows the Northern Ontario Catholic educational community, which already shares a common faith and mission, to develop a common core curriculum through a further sharing process.

The development and implementation of a Catholic curriculum, through the cooperative provides not only improved learning in our classrooms, but a process through which our teachers grow as educators in their knowledge of curriculum, as they participate through the cooperative, in sharing their professional talents. The whole concept of this cooperative is that people come together as a Catholic community to share their resources, to enable the group to achieve more together than they could individually.

NOCCC represents a paradigm move from individual Catholic school boards each trying, with limited resources, to purchase, modify or write local curricula, to a cooperative approach in which three Catholic Curriculum Cooperatives work together for stronger Catholic education. The three cooperatives (the NOCCC, the Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative and the Catholic Curriculum Cooperative) produce Catholic curriculum in support of Catholic teachers, across the province of Ontario. All three cooperatives are connected through a link on their websites (www.noccc.on.ca) and all curriculum produced is free to download. The three cooperatives maintain a close working relationship with the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE).

Over the past few years, the NOCCC has taken a faith-based approach to its curriculum at the request of the teachers that it serves. Some of the Catholic curriculum produced includes the following:

- † *Advent Christmas;*
- † *We Are An Easter People, Lent, Easter, Spring;*
- † *Celebrate Eucharist...Food For The Journey;*
- † *The Beatitudes;*
- † *The Rosary;*
- † *Pope Benedict XVI;*
- † *The Way of the Cross (Intermediate & Primary);*
- † *Peace... A Catholic Approach to Peace;*
- † *Guide to Staff Room Prayers;*
- † *Christianity and Ecology;*
- † *Designing Prayer Centers; and*
- † *Preserving our Heritage - An Aboriginal Science Resource*

The NOCCC recently produced the resource, *Celebrate Eucharist...Food For The Journey*. The resource contains many beautiful readings and reflections on the Eucharist; questions and answers about the Mass for children; the Order of the Mass; photos of the sacred vessels used in the celebration, as well as photos of the vestments worn by the priest for the celebration.

Soon to be released is a resource on Catholic virtues. The resource will offer a brief explanation of each of the virtues and give teachers direction as to where the virtues can be found in the Bible. The resource will augment another resource being produced, *Character/Virtues Education: A Shared Reading Approach*.

The NOCCC is presently involved with a team of writers working on a character development project, *Character Education: A Shared Approach*. The purpose of the project is to develop shared reading text for grades three to six students that will support character development through the focus on Catholic virtues. Each text will focus on one of the 12 virtues that reinforce character development. Each text will include a teaching plan that focuses and outlines instructions in the area of reading, comprehension, oral language development, written language and media literacy.

Goals of the Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

- † To help the Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils to develop Catholic curriculum documents, which meet the Ministry of Education requirements, while reflecting the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith community.
- † To help the Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils, in the development of their local plans for the implementation of these Catholic documents.
- † To help the Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils, to maintain and improve high quality in-service education, internally or externally, in support of the implementation of these Catholic resources.
- † To provide the Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils with the means, through a sharing process, to develop the knowledge and talents of those of their teachers who have special strengths in curriculum development and implementation.
- † To provide the Northern Ontario English Catholic District School Boards, School Authorities and Native Band councils, with a more cost-effective approach to development and implementation of Catholic curriculum.

The management of the development and operation of the curriculum model has moved from one based on individual school board control to one cooperatively controlled by the major partners with voting representatives from the participating boards: Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board; Kenora Catholic District School Board; Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board; Northeastern Catholic District School Board; The Northwest Catholic District School Board; Sudbury Catholic District School Board; Superior North Catholic District School Board and the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. Also included with representation on our board of directors are the bishops of Northern Ontario; the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (Provincial), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (Provincial), the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (Provincial) and non-voting representatives from the Ministry of Education and Training, and the Native First Nations.

The NOCCC works in collaboration with the other Catholic cooperatives on provincial curriculum initiatives and in the spirit of sharing of curriculum materials. 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 Northern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative (NOCCC) is located in North Bay, Ontario. The board of directors is responsible for managing the cooperative through an executive director and two part-time employees, Patricia Sutheran, administrative assistant/Catholic writer and Thomas Sutheran, our technical support worker. Because our most recent productions have been faith-based, the cooperative maintains a close relationship with Noreen Muldoon, CSJ who is responsible for our theological proofreading. Although our staff is small in number, we maintain that "although we are the smallest cooperative, we are the most prolific producers of hands-on Catholic curriculum." NOCCC uses state-of-the-art technology as an effective communication tool to promote the implementation of our initiatives. All our resources are produced in-house.

The NOCCC strongly believes that distinctive expectations for graduates of Catholic schools are determined and shaped by the vision and destiny of the human person emerging from our faith tradition. Catholic education views human life as an integration of body, mind and spirit. Rooted in this vision, Catholic education fosters the search for knowledge as a lifelong spiritual and academic quest. The expectations of Catholic graduates then are not described only in terms of values, attitudes and actions.

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