



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

Response to
Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education

Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association

December 2016

Response to Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association jointly submit this review of the Ontario Well-Being Document on behalf of trustees, Directors of Education and Superintendents of Ontario's Catholic School Boards. We applaud the Ministry of Education's interest in this area, an area that Catholic Education has addressed for many years both in a curriculum fashion and in support of our students and staff. As representatives in the Catholic community we have some strong concerns with the current Well-Being Strategy and anticipate that our commentary will be incorporated into the final documents.

Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education acknowledges that there are four publicly funded school systems in the province. As well, the document recognizes the public and Francophone school districts along with references to Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. It also states the importance of the engagement process recognizing the unique needs and realities of these groups (page 2). However, the *Well-Being Strategy* document fails to reference the unique mission and vision of the Catholic school system.

Reference is made to "spirit" as part of well-being but is not identified in the *Four Domains of Well-Being*. The concept of spirituality is one of the important concepts of well-being for people of faith. This is true not only in the Catholic community, but also for those who view their life through a spiritual lens, guided by their religious beliefs, many of whom are in Catholic schools but many also are in the other publicly funded systems of education in Ontario.

We also would ask that the document specifically include the Well-Being of all students and staff who work within our school system.

Based on the above rationale, we have reviewed the document and respectfully submit the following recommendations on behalf of our two associations:

Recommendation #1

- The term "Spirituality" should be added to the *Four Domains of Well-Being*. Specifically, when "cognitive, emotional, social, and physical needs" are referenced, e.g. pages 1, 6, 7 and 10.
- Importantly, under the *Four Domains of Well-Being* which is found on page 3, "Spirituality" must be included in the graphic.
- *The Handbook of Catholic Theology* defines Spirituality as "the personal relationship of a human being with God or the transcendent along with all the attitudes and values this relationship includes." It is from this fundamental relationship that all other relationships within the community are affected.

Recommendation #2

- In defining community partners "churches, parishes, and religious groups" should be explicitly referenced, e.g. pages 1 and 3.

Recommendation #3

- Catholic education addresses the search for meaning, this desire of the person to understand human life as an integration of body, mind, and spirit. Rooted in this vision, Catholic education fosters the search for meaning as a lifelong spiritual and academic quest. The expectations guiding the journey of learning for all students in Catholic schools, therefore, are described not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but necessarily in terms of values, attitudes and actions informed by reason and faith (*Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations*). Therefore, “values” should be added to the phrase “knowledge and skills,” e.g. pages 1 and 2.

Recommendation #4

- The education system strives to ensure that students become confident, capable, and caring citizens (page 2). A specific goal of the Catholic school system is to ensure a just and inclusive society. Therefore, specific references should be made to the *Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations*.

Recommendation #5

- While the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum* does provide opportunities for students to learn about well-being, in Catholic schools this is best taught through the *Religious Education and Family Life Education* programs.

Recommendation #6

- Because Chaplains/Chaplaincy Leaders, Pastoral Workers, and Faith Animators play a significant role in supporting student well-being they should be acknowledged along with the School Mental Health Lead. (School Mental Health ASSIST, page 5)

Recommendation #7

Whenever mention is made of education partners (parents, educators, staff, leaders, and students), add religious leaders, clergy, and pastoral workers, e.g. pages 2 and 8.

Recommendation #8

The Catholic Church has always embraced a holistic view of the human person. Therefore, add “Catholic” to the following phrase on page 2, “First Nation, Métis, Inuit cultures and Catholic perspectives which adopt a holistic view of well-being are also a critical element that will shape the conversation.”

Recommendation #9

Other aspects of the “Well-Being Strategy” should address supports for anxiety disorders, suicide awareness and suicide prevention as well as eating disorders.

While reviewing the document we noted some possible editorial changes.

They include:

1. Under the section *What is Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education*, we suggest that the boxed reference to the Early Years Strategy should be removed and the section should begin with the four key components on page 5 and the chart which would include "Spiritual".
2. Following the above point there seems to be a need for consistency throughout the document in acknowledging the intended audience. Early Years? K-12? Staff? Whenever "staff" is mentioned, we suggest using "all staff."
3. The graphic on page 3 should be revised to be more inclusive.
4. There should be specific examples from all four publicly funded school systems and explicit reference should be made to the *Four Domains of Well-Being*. The Notre Dame High School example fits these criteria and might be referenced at the beginning of the document.
5. If research is mentioned, then there is a need for citations and/or a bibliography (page 6).
6. On page 6 – rather than "*starting in the fall of 2016*" begin with "*As we go forward...*"
7. On page 7, paragraph 4 - does "*them*" refer to the "key factors"?
8. The two page questionnaire which concludes the document needs clarification. It is from the Institute of Education Leadership which has not been referenced in the document. Who would be the recipient of the response to this two-page document? The first question refers to the working definition without defining it. There needs to be clarity around who might be completing the questionnaire and to whom to address the response.
9. The questionnaire should be a Word document.
10. Questions could be numbered.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Daly, President OCSTA



Deb Crawford, President OCSOA