SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP AND FAITH FORMATION LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS

“Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity”
Colossians 3:14

INFORMATION REPORT

Vision:
At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:
The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community rooted in the love of Christ. We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge and to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Teachers receive on-going Catholic spiritual mentorship and faith formation through professional learning experiences within job-embedded and after-school opportunities either run by TCDSB Central Religious Education Staff or with our Catholic Partners in Education (Office of the Archdiocese of Toronto approved Catholic Agencies) in order to support the delivery of the Religion and Family Life programmes in Catholic Elementary and Secondary schools. After receiving the report on “Spiritual Mentorship and Faith Formation of New Teachers”, Trustees requested a further informational report regarding on-going professional learning opportunities for all teachers on catechesis and apologetics on Faith PA days and optional Continuing Education programs.

B. PURPOSE

1. Request from February 6, 2014 Student Achievement for staff to report further information regarding the Spiritual mentorship and Faith formation of all teachers. Motion reads “that staff report on the ongoing professional learning opportunities for all teachers on Catechesis and Apologetics on Faith PA days and optional Continuing Education programs” to support educating the students in terms of base Catholic Doctrine and Faith Formation Development.

C. BACKGROUND

1. The New Religious Education Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8, published by the Institute for Catholic Education for the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, outlines the roles and responsibilities in Religious Education for teachers indicating that “Teachers have a place of privilege and a great responsibility to participate in this new evangelization” of students within the community of the Catholic School. The new Religious Education program that will be purchased by the board, “Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ”, is very rich in catechesis and religion education understanding that some children have their first exposure to the Catholic faith when they enter school. The teachers are supported in the faith development of their
students through a comprehensive catechetical resource support (digital and print) package beginning at Grade 1 and moving up to Grade 8 with age appropriate Teacher curricular Religious Education Resources as part of their preparation for educating the students in terms of base Catholic Doctrine and faith formation development. The primary role for teachers with regard to religious education is the transmission of knowledge about the faith as reflected in the Religion and Family Life programs. The Secondary role is to support the catechetical efforts of the parish and home. Central staff, in partnership with the larger Catholic community, supports this parish/home/school role through a variety of professional development activities: i.e. Respect for Life Week, Catholic Education Week, Liturgical services in Heritage months (African, Asian, Celtic, Filipino ….), Archdiocesan Ordinandi Dinner and Youth Vocation Seminar, and When Faith Meets Pedagogy Conference and Youth Forum.

2. Teachers receive on-going spiritual mentorship and faith formation supports in various forms: New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP); Centrally organized Staff In-services on Religion and Family Life programmes; Yearly Pastoral Plan In services; Liturgical Seasonal In services; Small group partnership workshops on Christian Meditation and Salt and Light Pilot religion education programmes (approved by Canadian Council of Bishops CCB); Online monthly updates on Virtues, Social Justice, Catholic Graduate expectations from Central Religion Education staff.

3. Teachers receive on-going spiritual mentorship and faith formation through professional learning experience within job-embedded and after-school opportunities either run by Central staff or in partnership with our Catholic partners like: ICE, Curriculum Cooperative Corporation, Archdiocese of Toronto, Scarboro Mission, St. Augustine’s Seminary, Regis College U of T, St. Michael’s University, and the Catholic Association of Religious and Family Life Educators of Ontario (CARFLEO).

4. Within TCDSB, there has been a balance of Spiritual Faith formation learning opportunities supporting our MYSP ‘Living our Catholic Values’ as well as professional religious education learning opportunities supporting our MYSP Student Achievement and Well-being. Faith Formation learning opportunities include: participating in ongoing faith
development through local school and / or family of schools liturgical celebrations; Spiritual Religious retreats within the school, Parish and in partnership with Catholic Agencies in our year of Charity like “St. Vincent De Paul Society, Covenant House, & Rosalie Hall”. Catholic Elementary and Secondary Adult Religious Education professional opportunities run through University Religious Education courses, OECTA Religious AQ courses, Catholic Leadership Foundations Series, Catholic Principal Courses (CPCO) etc... are part of the Professional Religious Education learning opportunities available on the TCDSB Website. The Religion Education and Family Life Central Resource team familiarize teachers, through teacher to teacher conversations, staff meetings, and in services, with the available curricular Catholic resources (including Religion and Family Life programs) as well as teaching and learning strategies (i.e. sacramental preparation) that are best practices in evidence throughout TCDSB and surrounding Catholic Boards of Education. At TCDSB, spirituality and faith formation is an integral part of all elements of Pastoral plan of “Faith, Hope & Charity” for the ES and SS teachers and through our roll out faith curricular materials that foster “Living our Catholic Values” in applying Catholic Social Teachings to all that we do and to support our students in meeting the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

5. All teachers are also able to access professional faith opportunities that are advertised through the TCDSB bulletin, TCDSB NCC website and Communications Department email blasts. During the local school staff meetings and Superintendency Area principal meetings, many religious curricular links are explored and presented to staff to facilitate Teacher Faith Formation including Catholic Faith Events (like the Student Trustee Education Week student Mass or Launch of a TCDSB System Pastoral Plan) within TCDSB and in the larger Catholic community (i.e. ShareLife presentation each year). Many teachers attend lectures provided by University of St. Michael’s College, Regis College, and St. Augustine’s Seminary on Catholic Faith and Spiritual formation that are advertised through our communications department, Catholic Teacher Centre, Religious Education and Student Leadership departments, TCDSB leadership and mentoring programs, NTIP, and Central professional learning discussions with the central staff.

6. Currently, we have an existing religious education course in place for TCDSB teachers which we host in conjunction with OECTA the Religion
Education Additional Qualifications (AQ) courses within our schools during the year and in the summer. Religion Education AQ Part I is sponsored by TCDSB as it is a requirement for completion within the first two years for all new teachers (NTIP) as it supports the ongoing faith formation commitment to religious literacy and building of the faith community with our Catholic schools. The Religion AQ course lays a solid faith foundation through in-depth scripture study coupled with faith development, liturgical celebration and ethical studies through a Catholic lens enables teachers to make faith connections within themselves and within their classroom curriculum. Fostering Student achievement and Well-being, the integration of an informed faith with teaching practice enables teachers to support the Ontario Catholic Graduate School Expectation in a professional and powerful witnessing way. Catholic doctrine and faith formation curriculum is supported in the four components of study: Scripture, Sacraments, Faith and Ethics. Many teachers go on to further studies in Part II and Part III that expands catechetical supports in the four components of adult faith formation and obtain a Religion AQ Specialist.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. Within the faith formation of Living our Catholic Values, all elementary teachers experience a half day Faith Day for their Elementary Schools as the faith component of the professional activity day that allows their schools to engage in a Day of Reflection that supports initiatives related to TCDSB Pastoral plan – 2015 “Year of the Charity”. All Secondary teachers have a full day for Faith Development and together with their Liturgical/Chaplaincy Teams decide on the format of the Faith Day in alignment with “Year of Charity” Pastoral Plan. Both education panels are supported through the Catholic Teacher Centre with an adult faith format for the Day of Reflection.

2. The Catholic Teacher Centre (CTC) pastoral team and Religion Department Resource teachers work together to post curricular links that support the Religion and Family Life curriculum on the TCDSB website. This central Religion team run liturgical events for ES/SS teachers as part of their systematic support for Religion and Family Life programs.
looking to highlight curricular links that match the liturgical church calendar and support a common understanding Catholic Values. They also send out electronic email blasts to support faith formation resources on the TCDSB website to all teachers:

- A guide to Planning the Staff Day of Reflection/Retreat
- Suggested Outline for Eucharistic Liturgy
- Eucharist Liturgy Worksheet
- Sacramental preparation activities
- Curriculum connections to the Pastoral Plan of Faith, Hope, and Charity
- Curriculum connections for the Church’s Liturgical Calendar Year (Christmas, Easter…), Virtue of the Month, Catholic Graduate Expectations and Social Justice Teachings
- Suggestions for Catholic Faith Formation Readings to supplement Religion and Family Life program
- Suggestions for daily prayer as well as for specific liturgical seasons to supplement Religion and Family Life program
- Suggestions for Music to support Parish/School liturgies
- Liturgy of the Word Worksheet
- Theological Reflection for students and staff fostering Catholic Social teachings
- Prayers and spiritual readings for Nurturing our Catholic Community
- Advent/Christmas or Lent/Easter Resources

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The Senior Staff work with members of the TCDSB Religious Education team (Catholic Teacher Centre, Religion Resource Teachers, & Student Leadership Teachers) and the Religion and Family Life Co-ordinator to monitor the spiritual and faith formation needs of all teachers so that there are ongoing Catholic Professional Faith learning opportunities to nurture the faith lives of our Catholic Learning community of schools. The focus on Catholic Spirituality and Gospel values forms the basis of all professional development that is offered so as to support the essential mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News and to empower young people to live out their baptismal commitment in a mature way.

2. Participation in the various program and activities is monitored through Senior Staff: Superintendent of Faith Development and Area 8 schools; Superintendent of Curriculum and Accountability; and Superintendent of
Student Success. In partnership with the larger Catholic Community, Senior staff facilitates opportunities to work with Agencies like: Development and Peace, ShareLife Agencies, Salt and Light, L’Arche, Archdiocese Office of Catholic Youth.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board and.