

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A ROADMAP FOR LEARNING

Obtaining value from the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations

By Anthony Carabache

Teachers around the world have been looking to find a roadmap for the 21st century.

Students of the Catholic school system in Ontario have been exposed to the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations for almost two decades, and the effect of these expectations have been measured in a study conducted by the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Commissioned by the Institute for Catholic Education, the study provides data that supports the need to continue promoting OCGEs.

The expectations have been beautifully crafted. Rooted in Christ's teachings, they are so easily interpreted and overarching that people of all Christian denominations can reflect on their application with ease.

What comprises a perfect skill set for 21st century learners? Take a look at the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations (www.iceont.ca) and you will come to realize that we've been sitting on the perfect roadmap for close to 20 years. This is reflected in the descriptions and graphic below:

1. The Discerning Believer

Catholics are encouraged to reflect, to question and to reform our beliefs and our faith. But in doing so, we are called into action, which is the key element of discernment. Only when we take action for a just cause can we call ourselves "Discerning Believers." Reflection without action is not discernment; it is simply reflection. One could compare it to a popular social media campaign that gains no real-world traction. Until there are tangible, measurable results that come from a course of action, there can be no real change.

2. The Effective Communicator

Communication skills are vital for future graduates. Looking at the graphic (#2 below), you will notice that the ears are quite exaggerated to show how important a role listening plays in communication. Now more than ever, we need people who are honest and clear about their ideas, and who integrate their faith in the use of arts, media and technology.

3. The Creative and Holistic Thinker

Creativity always tops the list of skills needed for 2030 and beyond. It's when we add the beauty of holistic thinking that we solve problems in an innovative and responsible way. This thinker cannot be trapped within one subject area; it is important to integrate all parts of the whole.

4. A Self-Directed, Responsible, Life-Long Learner

Our future depends on the above more for the sake of balance and a higher standard of living for us all. This is every educator's dream.

5. The Collaborative Contributor

It has become the mantra for educators to call on our schools to provide increasing opportunities for collaboration. Yet, time and time again they fail to provide the "how-to" of collaboration — especially for the youngest members of our society. What does it mean to be interdependent, to think critically and to not only work to your own potential but to help those around you reach theirs? Contributions made to the growth of the team are just as important to the growth of the project.

6. A Caring Family Member

Words like compassion and love are only effective when they are bound by respect. Intimacy and love are bound to value and honour within the family context. Unity, strength and honour bind the family together and that strength feeds the community in the light of our God-given gifts. What a beautiful and critically important principle.

7. A Responsible Citizen

When we look at some of the horrible things that appear online, it's hard not to panic. But cyber-bullying, harassment, defamation and degradation can all be lessened if we embrace the basic principles of accountability, equality, democracy, peace and justice.

I realize that it may not be trendy to use faith as a "Top 10" article, but this one is so beautiful and positive that it is hard to overlook.

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