



*Dreams
and a Vision*

our
Future in Edmonton Catholic Schools
Learning Through
Wonder, Love and Praise



EDMONTON
CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS

by Joan Carr, Superintendent

We recognize that we are called to serve - in ways that are unique to our own time and place in life. Collectively and individually we have a mission in Catholic education - one that is significant and a guiding force behind all our efforts.

Our Mission

Our mission of Edmonton Catholic Schools is to provide a Catholic education which inspires and prepares students to learn, to work, to live fully and to serve God in one another.

This is not a complicated statement, but one that has profound meaning. It defines who we are and what we are about. Our purpose and identity are clearly established.

As staff and principals within the Edmonton Catholic School District, it is our responsibility to make this statement come alive in the areas in which we work. We need to express it in our own terms in a manner appropriate to the roles we have. My mission statement which aligns with the district mission...to empower students, staff and parents to experience the joy and fulfillment of a truly Catholic education, striving for excellence in all areas while sharing in the vision of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. I have also chosen two quotations by Mother Teresa that speak to me and the work that we do. "The talents God has given us are not ours...they have been given to us for our use, for the glory of God. Be great and use everything you can for the good Master." "Give of your hands to serve and hearts to love."

Superintendent's Goals and Priorities

My goals and priorities for this year will be realized through the effort, commitment, support and hard work by all of you and your staffs. They emerge from and align themselves with the Characters of Catholic Education and the Board of Trustees goals for the year. In the coming year, I am committed to three goals:

Goal One: Celebration of our Catholicity

It is our goal to ensure that all programs and services in our district adhere to the mission and beliefs of Edmonton Catholic Schools and the Characters of Catholic Education. We will ensure that our staff, students and parents - as well as the greater community of Edmonton - are aware of the uniqueness of Catholic education as reflected in the permeation of faith and core values throughout the curriculum and life of the District.

Goal Two: High Levels of Student Learning

We will strive to ensure that our schools are committed to achieving academic excellence within the context of faith based learning communities. To this end, our specific objectives align themselves with our district goals. First and foremost, we will be great schools and furthermore, we will be great Catholic schools.

Goal Three: Celebration of Community

We shall seek to foster and promote our awareness and experience of Christian community within the school district. To accomplish this goal, we shall recognize that people are our greatest resource and avail ourselves of opportunities to recognize, enhance and celebrate the gifts and contributions of all our staff and students.

Dreams and a Vision

Dreams and a Vision for Edmonton Catholic Schools

Reach high, for stars lie hidden in your soul. Dream deep, for every dream precedes a goal.
(P. Starr)

To accomplish great things we must first dream, then visualize, then plan...then act.
(A. Montapert)

I have shared with you my mission statement and goals which will be addressed in our planning and initiatives throughout the year. I would now like to take another step or in God's words...take off my shoes...and tell you about my dreams and vision for Edmonton Catholic Schools.

It is said that all great achievements begin in the imagination. Someone had a dream or a vision of what might come to be. Sometimes we find it difficult to talk about a vision because we are inclined to want to capture it...nail it down so to speak. This isn't the nature of a dream. There is something ethereal about it; it cannot be captured and etched in stone. It beckons with a call that can't be fully defined. It presents the image of a desired future and in this respect; it is more like a compass than a road map. Remember Martin Luther King's famous words ... he didn't say "I have a strategic plan"; he said, "I have a dream."

The expectation is not that a vision will be realized at some defined date in the future. It is an evolving reality that continues to unfold as we pursue it. It provides us with inspiration and a sense of direction. I hope that we are all courageous enough to dream in our lives and in the work that we do with Edmonton Catholic Schools.

With this context, here is what I envision for our school district for the future. I plan to keep these dreams before me and review them each day, so that they will become affirmations of what is to be. Our future is learning through wonder, love and praise. I envision a district in which our Catholic schools are truly unique:

- A district where the students are eager and love going to school
- One where the staff are happy to be at work
- One where parents note with pride "that these are our schools and they are the best"
- A district that the broader community recognizes with admiration commenting that "they are the best schools".

Perhaps this sounds very idealistic...that's ok...remember it's my dream; but dreams can come true. A vision reaches beyond what is into the conception of what can be.

We are blessed to live in challenging and exciting times. In our district, we celebrate our rich heritage of 118 years, built on the spirit, work and accomplishments of the people who have served before us. In a sense, part of them remains in what we are today.

Now it is our turn. In the larger scheme of things, we will be on this stage for a short time, but our efforts will be a legacy for the future. Let us make the most of our opportunity and rise to the challenge. Just think in a rapidly changing world, where it is hard to even imagine the possibilities of the future, we live in one of the most active and blessed places right here in the province of Alberta. We have just heard in the news the increase in births happening right here in Edmonton that will have an impact on our future. Our province has a booming economy, one that we hope will reinvest in education. There is no doubt that as our society changes, our schools will change. This demands of us a sense of visioning, always anticipating as we look to the future.

This is the context in which Catholic education will evolve. Internal and external factors will impact Edmonton Catholic Schools and we, too, will change. We are called to play a role in building that future - whatever it will be.

The star has often been used as an image guiding people. The three Magi followed a star to Bethlehem; a star guided the Jewish people wandering in the desert; the North star has long assisted travelers. As I think of our vision for the future, I find the image of the star most appropriate. While it presents itself as a whole, at the same time it is made up of five distinctive points. Let's look at it from these perspectives:

These are my dreams and vision for Edmonton Catholic Schools. I believe the following quote captures the essence of our future:

"Keep your feet on the ground and keep reaching for the stars!"
(C. Kasem)

★ ★ ★ Catholic Identity ★ ★ ★

- The uniqueness of our Catholic schools is expressed in all our activities which is evident both within our district and to the larger community.
- We are an example of what a school district should be - recognized for academic excellence and our commitment to Catholic beliefs and values.
- An awareness of social justice permeates all our endeavors.

★ ★ ★ People ★ ★ ★

- Our future calls for an even greater awareness that our primary focus is people. Parents, trustees, administrators, staff,

students, parishes and the broader community have a voice in determining our future.

- Leadership is called forth and encouraged.
- Shared governance involving the trustees, superintendent and administration is a reality.
- All employee groups are valued partners in the educational endeavor.
- The best staff are recruited, hired and retained to provide the best education and support for our students.
- Opportunities for continuing professional development are recognized and encouraged.

★ ★ ★ Learning ★ ★ ★

- Students experience an educational environment that fosters a realistic and positive self image.
- Students achieve to their potential.
- There is a new world economy and our students need to be prepared to understand globalization and their role in this context.
- All our students complete their high school education.
- The district offers the most extensive programs of choice possible including language programs, fine arts, International Baccalaureate Programmes, etc.
- Many opportunities will be available for students outside the mainstream.
- Services are provided to the best of our abilities and resources available.

- The learning and work environments are safe places.
- Students are prepared for an ever changing world of work.
- The district promotes a healthy lifestyle for students and staff.

★ ★ ★ Community ★ ★ ★

- Relationships between people are harmonic and cooperative.
- As we work and study together, we have a true experience of Christian community, one that is the foretaste of the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.
- We are a community where imagination, creativity and innovation is valued and the contributions of each individual recognized and appreciated.
- Excellent communication is characterized by honesty and openness and while we may disagree with one another from time to time, mutual respect is found in all our relationships.
- Partnerships with Alberta Education, educational institutions, Capital Health and many other agencies are instrumental to the programs and services we offer.

★ ★ ★ Resources ★ ★ ★

- We have adequate resources to carry out our mission.
- A public awareness and advocacy demands that the best facilities be made available as well as resources to support our educational programming.
- Our physical infrastructure is renewed and maintained.
- As part of our fiscal responsibility, resources for the students in the classrooms are the number one priority.

Characters of Catholic Education

I think it is wise to revisit these indicators of what constitute Catholic education on a frequent basis.

Community

We seek to create a learning environment that reflects the identity and character of the Catholic Church, and expresses the uniqueness of the Catholic experience.

Hospitality

The Catholic community is inclusive of diverse peoples and perspectives; is free of discrimination and sectarianism; and welcomes strangers.

Justice

Catholic schools aim towards a synthesis of faith, culture and life that characterize mature faith.

Tradition

Catholic education brings a focus to learning to discover, evaluate, and interpret the human experience. It provides insight into how learning can lead to fullness and freedom for all people.

Sacramentality

The idea of a Catholic school is to educate its members into a world that is sacred and holy. Appreciation for God's gifts finds expression in the attitudes and actions of a school community through liturgy and stewardship.

Humanness

Catholic schools, in partnership with the family and the entire community, strive to form strong and responsible persons who are capable of making free and correct choices.

Rationality

The learners are invited to be active agents of their learning, and have an attitude of openness to the truth.

Spirituality

We let God be present in each moment of the day. Prayer and a commitment to the moral and ethical values of the gospel provide the opening to God's presence.

It is also important to realize that we don't have to accomplish everything ourselves. Our roles are part of a larger endeavor.

Archbishop Oscar Romero wrote a poem that reflects on a reading from Micah 6:8 and it goes like this:

“We accomplish in our lifetimes only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete... but is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter..

We are prophets of a future not our own.....”