

## Edmonton Catholic School Division: Catholic Identity Plan

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Catholic identity is at the heart of who we are as individuals, in community, and in faith. Looking at oneself from the inside can be a somewhat revealing experience. At the very heart of our being, we are children of God created in His image and likeness; worthy of dignity and respect, unconditionally. Although this is the gold standard for expressing our Catholic identity it is easier said than done. Doubt, questions, and uncertainty chip away at our understanding of self. As we absorb diverse worldviews, distinct value systems, and varied life experiences the strands of our identity are weaved. As Catholics, these strands of identity influence how we understand faith as an integral part of our life.

Our Catholic schools are places where Catholic identity is learned, practiced, and lived. Precisely as stated in Edmonton Catholic School Division's vision statement, "Our students will learn together, work together, and pray together in answering the call to a faith-filled life of service." This life of service rooted in faith, requires constant nurturing and attention. If left unattended, we risk living by default rather than with intention. Catholic schools are called to plant the seeds of faith in each child with gentleness, respect, and love with Jesus Christ as cornerstone.

Ensuring our Catholic schools remain distinct in their mission, it is essential to deeply invest in the nurturing of Catholic identity within our school communities. As a framework for understanding, articulating, and living our Catholic identity Edmonton Catholic School Division has implemented a three-year rolling plan, specifically focused on nurturing our Catholic identity.

[https://www.ecsd.net/AboutUs/annual\\_reports/Pages/Division-Plan-for-Continuous-Growth.aspx](https://www.ecsd.net/AboutUs/annual_reports/Pages/Division-Plan-for-Continuous-Growth.aspx)

The plan outlines three broad foundational goals:

1. My Catholic school belongs to God's family,
2. My Catholic school has a charism where our gifts are shared,
3. My Catholic school is the place where we learn to live our faith in our contemporary world.

The Catholic school should be filled with a spirit of trust, a willingness to collaborate and cooperate, and a sincerity of living a life of faithful witness founded on the teachings of Christ. As each of these strands elicit, each child is placed at the center of the Catholic identity plan. In our Catholic schools, we want students to feel a deep sense of belonging that erases any feelings of isolation. It is a place where each individual student discovers the gifts of the spirit that lie deep within and are encouraged to share them for the common good. Catholic schools need also be able to help students discern their life in the midst of a contemporary and ever changing world by developing a faith filled mission and purpose.

At ECSD, we remain committed to quality Catholic education that is distinct from other publicly funded school divisions. Pope Francis, at the Gravissimum Educationis Foundation's conference entitled, *To Educate is to Transform* urges Catholic educators to remain hopeful and inspire this sense of hope in students. This is achieved by helping students understand that they belong to one human family with a clear and consistent Catholic identity that is faithful to the pursuit of harmony and service to the common good. The vision of Pope Francis and ECSD are clearly aligned both placing the student at the center of the Catholic educational experience, by nurturing their sense of belonging, worth, and dignity.