

# BOARD MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS STRATEGY 2018-2021



1/18/2017

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

*"And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way." Mark 10:52*

# Board Mental Health and Wellness Strategy 2018-2021

## RENFREW COUNTY CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### RCCDSB VISION STATEMENT

**INSPIRED BY OUR RICH HERITAGE AND CHALLENGED BY THE STRUGGLES OF OUR PAST, WE ARE AN INCLUSIVE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY CALLED TO EXPRESS OUR MISSION AS CHURCH TO PASS ON THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST, TO MAKE IT RELEVANT IN THE WORLD TODAY, AND TO BE THE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.**

IN A SPIRIT OF FREEDOM, AFFIRMATION AND CELEBRATION TODAY WE STRIVE TO...	OPEN TO MYSTERY AND ENDLESS DISCOVERY IN THE LORD, WE ARE CALLED TO...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate an active faith journey rooted in prayer and the sacraments.</li> <li>• Enhance relationships among members of the home, school parish and extended community.</li> <li>• Foster a world view shaped by the Catholic conversation about life's meaning and purpose.</li> <li>• Reverence the dignity of the whole person.</li> <li>• Integrate the Catholic faith tradition in a critical analysis of the arts, media and technology.</li> <li>• Sustain safe school environments characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a distinctive Catholic curriculum based on the Ontario Catholic curriculum based on the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.</li> <li>• Make a difference as faith-filled community builders. Challenge the consumer culture with lives dedicated to the principles of social justice in the spirit of gospel values.</li> <li>• Model a servant leadership style following the examples of Jesus.</li> <li>• Claim our role as global stewards cherishing the environment and all life in it.</li> <li>• Engage in the pursuit of life-long learning.</li> <li>• Love unconditionally.</li> </ul>

*This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8

## OVERVIEW STATEMENT

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board's **Vision Statement** highlights the board's role in the Church's mission to spread the Good News of Jesus in a way that is *relevant in the world today* and brings *hope for the future*. Within this role, it strives to uphold the dignity of the whole person as image and likeness of God. This is especially true in its commitment to promoting student and staff mental health and well-being. Both will flourish when all members of the school community understand potential challenges to mental health and are able to respond to these challenges through open lines of communication. Promoting mental health and well-being is foundational to reverencing the dignity of students entrusted to our care. For those suffering with mental health issues, this focus is good news that will bring hope and greater reverence to their dignity as image and likeness of God.

The **Renfrew County Catholic District School System Strategic Plan for 2018-2021** resolves that the foundational pillar of 'Wholeness and Wellness' will "facilitate an active faith journey rooted in prayer and the sacraments, through which we come to discover the goodness of who we are." The plan demonstrates the board's commitment to all its students. In order to be most effective at helping students, the plan emphasizes 'Dignity and Belonging' as another foundational pillar, one that will allow the board to "reverence the dignity of the whole person as we grow safe environments characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy." Furthermore, the **Renfrew County Catholic District School Board 2017 System Implementation and Learning Board Improvement Plan for Student Wellbeing, Engagement and Achievement** highlights 'Community and Wellbeing' as a key priority. These statements reflect the board's commitment to mental health and wellness and its resolve to encourage all students and staff to be engaged in maintaining a culture of well-being.

The **Ontario Catholic Schools Graduate Expectations** provide a holistic vision of the learner in which mental health and well-being are expressed in healthy relationship with God and neighbour. These foundational expectations provide concrete ways for students to understand the holistic nature of mental health and well-being in the light of the Catholic faith. Please see appendix.

Our commitment to student mental health and wellness is an important way we strive to implement the board's **Vision Statement**, which seeks to help our students find abundant life in Jesus through our Catholic schools:

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10)

## MISSION

Our Catholic Schools are committed to fostering an environment characterized by the call to *love unconditionally*; we strive to reverence the dignity of each person and sustain school environments characterized by warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy. In light of this commitment, the board mental health strategy seeks to establish attainable, impactful goals for enhancing student mental health and wellbeing, and set out a path for the three-year journey to achieving those goals. The overall mission of the strategy is to affect real, measurable change in the health of students and the climate of our schools, in a state of continuous growth and improvement.

It is our hope that this strategy will provide a faith-filled framework which ultimately helps us to glorify God in the formation of students and staff who are *fully alive* in Christ. *“The glory of God is the human person fully alive.”* -St. Irenaeus

## VISION

The RCCDSB 3-year vision for mental health promotion aligns with the Board Strategic Plan calling for a central component in the work being done in the school board to focus on Wholeness and Wellness with Faith at the heart of all initiatives.

Our mental health and wellness vision is for a deeper and stronger knowledge of mental health that is fully centered on and rooted in faith. To realize this vision, we will transition from our previous 3 Year Mental Health and Wellness Strategic Plan into our new one, while maintaining the same spirit that led to its creation and our commitment to it, calling all our staff (educators, administration and support alike) to share warmth, hospitality, good humour and joy through RCCDSB outwards into the broader community.

## GOALS

In the **System Implementation and Learning Board Improvement Plan for Student Well-being, Engagement and Achievement 2017(SILC)**, mental health and wellness are integrated into the Journey of ‘Building Community – Spiritual, Mental and Physical Well-being’ through the priorities seeking to:

Grow student achievement and engagement by pursuing an inclusive, inquisitive, and innovative Catholic learning culture for all students and staff.

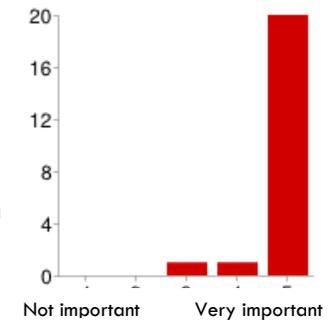
Close the gap in pupil achievement by nurturing the giftedness, self-worth and potential of each individual to succeed given the right opportunities, resources and intervention.

## FINDINGS FROM Our Board wide Scan

### AREAS OF STRENGTH

RCCDSB has a strong commitment to the well-being of students. Board leaders support mental health initiatives. In the Mental Health board survey the majority of principals continued to rate the question: **‘How important is student emotional well-being to academic achievement in our board?’** as very important (5 out of 5). The system has also embraced the creation of a multilayered School Mental Health Team. A clear and focused vision of well-being has been laid out in the Board Strategic Plan as well as in the Board SILC plan. Moreover, RCCDSB continues to provide professional development for staff on mental health literacy to encourage a culture of shared language around mental health.

Principal response to the question “How important is student emotional well-being to academic achievement in our board?”

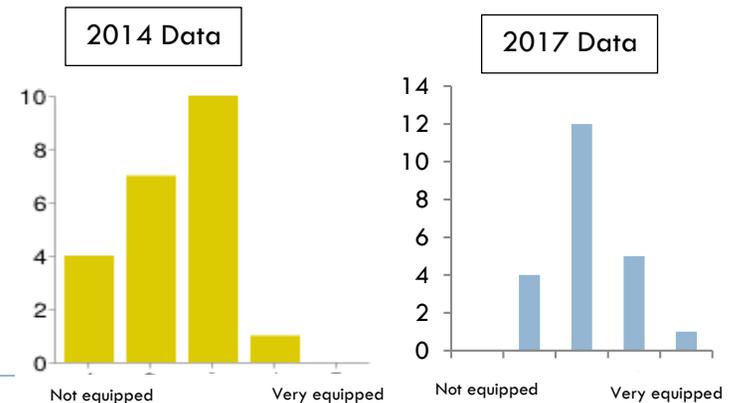


The main goals of the last 3 year strategy were completed. In terms of the priority for a safety net, this includes the creation of a suicide prevention and intervention strategy, training of key staff members in ASIST, and ensuring that all staff members were trained in the suicide prevention protocol. Additionally, the Early Student Intervention goals of rolling out Supporting Minds, disseminating the EOCCC Mental Health and Wellness Curriculum for grades 2, 5 and 7 and ensuring that the School Support workers and School Counsellors attended yearly professional development sessions were completed. Finally, the priority to include parents in the work being done at RCCDSB was met through the creation of a Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter, the creation of a website alongside multiple information sessions. Meeting these goals allows the system to go deeper into understanding mental health and supporting students with Christ at the center.

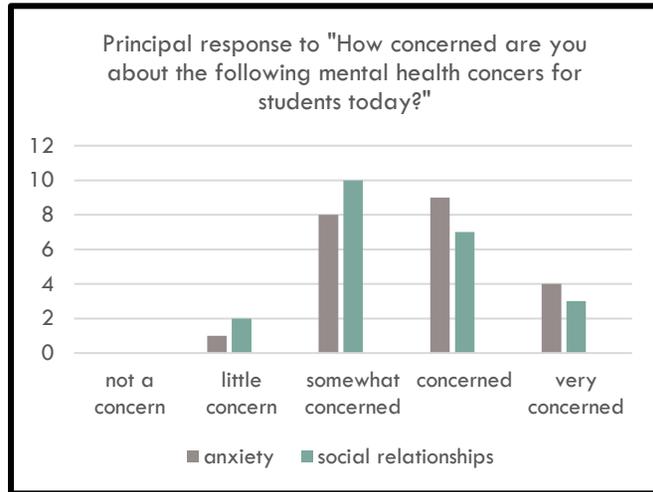
### AREAS TO BUILD ON

A 2014 Leadership Team survey indicated that principals responded to the question: **“How equipped are educators in our board to support student mental health and well-being?”** as being low to moderate (scale for the graph 1=not equipped and 5=well equipped). This perception by system leaders has changed over time. As shown by the graphs below, there has been a distinct change in principal perception of educator ability to support student mental health and well-being. Specifically, in the 2017 Leadership Team survey, the majority of principals feel educators are moderately equipped to well

Principal response to the question “How equipped are educators in our board to support student mental health and well-being?”



equipped to support student mental health and well-being. These graphs represent ongoing progress for the Mental Health Steering Committee in disseminating information on mental health. The goal is to have continued growth in educator capacity to support mental health needs.



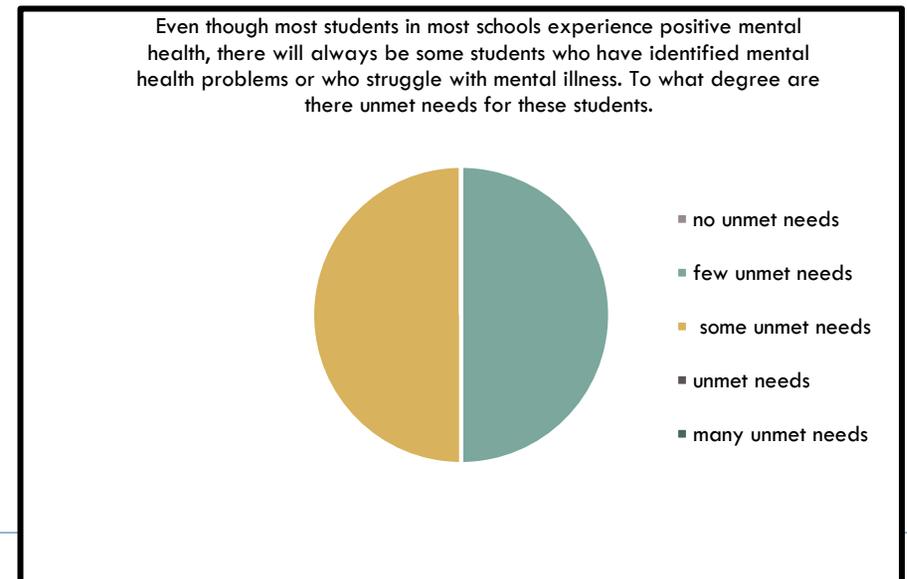
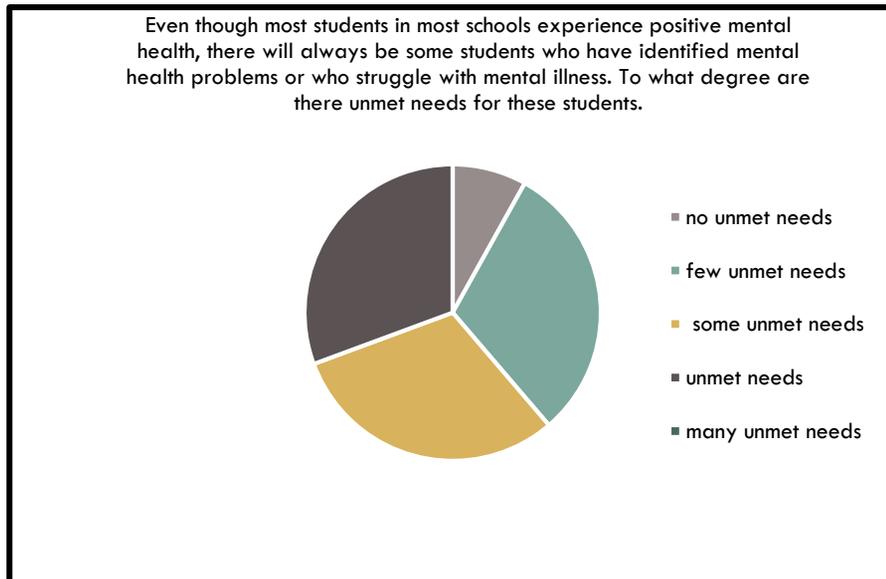
The 2017 Leadership team survey also revealed that the two top mental health concerns in the board were anxiety and problems with social relationships in both the elementary and secondary system. This result is the same as it was in the 2014 survey. These results are consistent with other school boards that have rated their top mental health concerns (Ferguson, 2009).

The Board Scan highlighted that there were still unmet needs in schools according to elementary principals. Alternately, high school principals reported very few unmet needs. All mental health newsletters have the mental health walk-in hours for the community to access mental health services quickly. The fact that there is a perception of unmet needs in

elementary schools suggest that a community approach and supporting parents to access community support may be essential in ensuring that all students receive mental health supports.

Elementary

Secondary



## GOALS and AREAS OF PRIORITY FOR THE STRATEGY

In alignment with the previous strategy, the 3 priority areas identified continue to include a Safety Net for our most vulnerable students, Early Intervention and prevention initiatives and Parent Involvement. Within each of the 3 priority areas the Faith-Based connection is established and highlighted to ensure a faith-based approach to wellness in all strategy components. One significant change in direction is the recognition that there are several intersecting priorities for student wellness and many of the interventions for mental health also touch on one or more of the multiple areas of wellness. An additional focus of the strategy will be to outline the intersection Safe and Caring Schools, Equity and Inclusion, and Healthy Schools. Below are the priority strategy areas in addition to important goals for each of the priority areas.



<p><b>Safety Net</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That relevant materials are produced for the system that respond to risk</li> <li>• That there are clear pathways to care and they are articulated to all Principals and educators</li> <li>• That educators can say with certainty that they are using only helpful evidence-informed practices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Intervention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That mental health classroom resources are linked to curriculum assessment expectations for educator ease</li> <li>• To enhance and revisit the wellness material from the EOCCC</li> <li>• Teachers can clearly articulate the ability they have to support students with mental health concerns in the classroom</li> <li>• That educators are able to use the connections between Positive Mental Health, Safe and Accepting Schools, Equity and Inclusive Education and Healthy Schools to think about and encourage well-being for all students</li> </ul>
<p><b>Parent Involvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the stigma of seeking out mental health services is reduced so we see more parents and families engaging with student mental health services</li> <li>• That parents are aware of and understand the connection between Positive Mental Health, Safe and Accepting Schools, Equity and Inclusive Education and Healthy Schools</li> <li>• That parents have access to relevant and helpful mental health material</li> </ul>

## CORE ELEMENTS OF THE 3 YEAR STRATEGY

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### ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS

There are 3 main organizational conditions that the mental health strategy will focus on. Professional development, broad collaboration and ongoing quality improvement are all areas that continued and focused effort would enhance the robust work already accomplished. Professional development will be approached from a system perspective with the leadership team receiving information first before disseminating it to the teachers and early child educators. Broad collaboration is important, particularly in the context of larger, community-wide projects. RCCDSB will strive to encourage and support community agencies' initiatives. Ongoing quality improvement will be required once the initiatives are established. Measurable outcomes include students currently being supported in the school system as well as measuring how many students have been referred to community agencies. As a general awareness for mental health grows, it is hoped that families will engage with community agencies and will be given the information to find local relevant services. Another measurable outcome will be obtained from the school climate survey. The climate survey includes several questions specifically designed to engage with the student and parent populations on the important topic of mental health and wellness. As a greater awareness of mental health is created in the school culture, the school climate surveys should record even greater positive school climate scores.

### EDUCATOR MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

Accomplishing the board's mental health goals will require a concerted and coordinated effort by all parties involved. A top priority is the promotion of mental health literacy at all levels of school board staff to deepen and consolidate mental health knowledge. By hosting professional development sessions for educators we can ensure that all staff will be working at the same level of literacy and understanding. This will allow for the creation of a mental health safety net that will in turn help increase preventative mental health care and promote positive mental health, wellbeing and resiliency. Parental mental health literacy will continue to be bolstered by the launching of a special mental health website offering valuable information they can use at home to identify and address any possible mental health issues in their children. Exit surveys will be used during parent and staff mental health information sessions to better understand the impact of the sessions and engage with the most relevant topics for the participants.

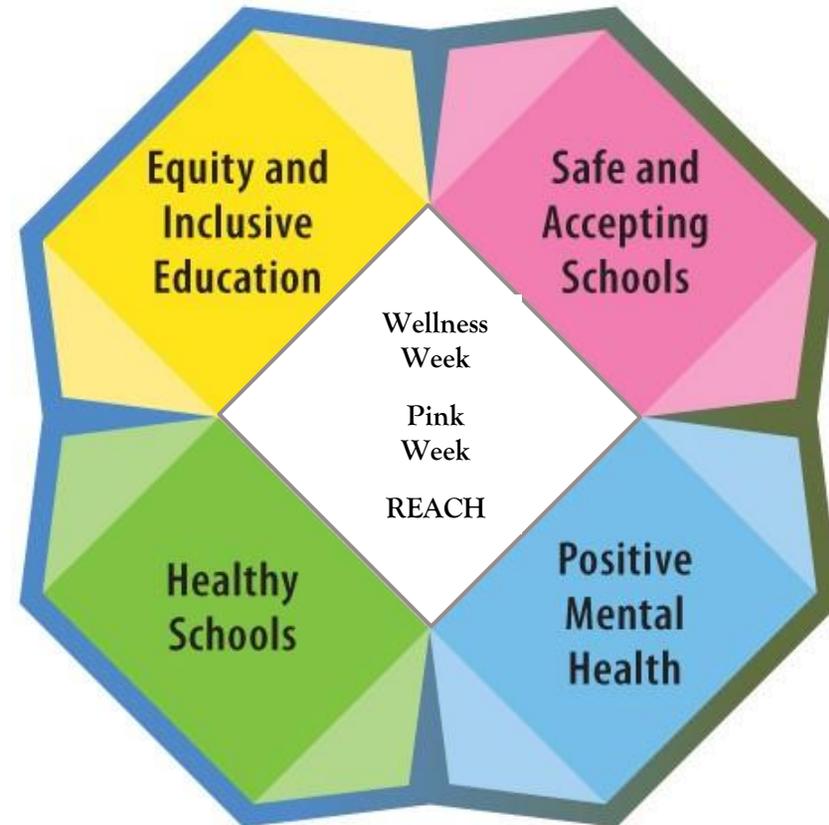
### IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

The implementation of our various mental health strategies will be based on a solid foundation of evidence-based research and best practices regarding the bolstering of mental health awareness. By combining our own mental health curriculum to help bolster resiliency within our student

body, and by drawing on the community resources available as identified by our resource mapping efforts, we can help bring the ideals set out in the board's mental health strategy to life and make its goals our reality.

In general, as RCCDSB continues on the journey towards positive mental health and wellness, it becomes clearer how so many of the initiatives are more than just mental health but are a combination of wellness initiatives as highlighted by the ministry wellbeing initiative. As such, a framework has been created below with the holistic Wellness Board initiatives that overlap the 4 wellness initiatives – Positive Mental Health, Safe and Caring Schools, Equity and Inclusion and Healthy Schools. As the initiatives organically connect with a central wellness theme, there will be an increase in the collaborative efforts of the 4 initiatives.

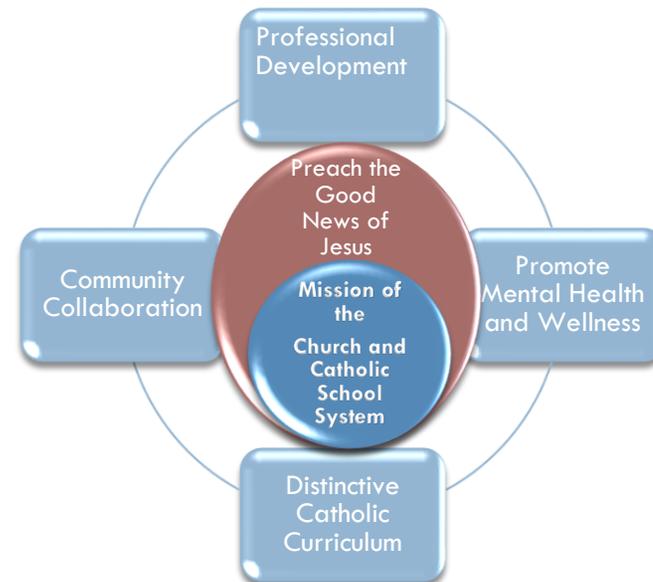
Promoting mental health and well-being is foundational not only to reverencing the dignity of students in the board's care, but also in sustaining the RCCDSB Schools safe environments characterized by *warmth, hospitality, good humor and joy*.



## Mental Health and Addictions Steering Committee

A thank you to the dedicated members of the Mental Health Team.

Mary-Lise Rowat	Superintendent
Julie Huckabone	Principal
Mary Catherine Brisco	Principal
Christina Brown	Principal
Sandy Brannan	Safe Schools Coordinator
Angela Watson	Chaplaincy Leader
Jason Dedo	Chaplaincy Leader
Peter Gleason	School Guidance Counsellor
Sue Hanniman	School and Attendance Counsellor
Rebecca Paulsen	Mental Health and Wellness Lead



A special thank you to Tony Cosentino the Religious Education and Family Life Teacher for his help with editing this plan.

## CATHOLIC GRADUATE EXPECTATIONS

**The graduate is expected to be:**

**1. A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community** who

- CGE1a** -illustrates a basic understanding of the **saving story** of our Christian faith;
- CGE1d** -develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic **social teaching** and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good;
- CGE1e** -speaks the **language of life**... “recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it.” (Witnesses to Faith)
- CGE1f** -seeks intimacy with God and celebrates **communion** with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;
- CGE1g** -understands that one’s purpose or **call in life** comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life’s journey;
- CGE1h** -respects the **faith traditions**, world religions and the life-journeys **of all people of good will**;
- CGE1i** -integrates faith with life;
- CGE1j** -recognizes that “sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey” and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of **redemption**. (Witnesses to Faith)

**2. An Effective Communicator** who

- CGE2a** -listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values;

**3. A Reflective and Creative Thinker** who

- CGE3a** -recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges;
- CGE3b** -creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good;
- CGE3c** -thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems;
- CGE3d** -makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience;
- CGE3e** -adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience;

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

- CGE4a** -demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others;
- CGE4b** -demonstrates flexibility and adaptability;
- CGE4c** -takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership;
- CGE4d** -responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner;
- CGE4e** -sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life;

**5. A Collaborative Contributor who**

- CGE5a** -works effectively as an interdependent team member;
- CGE5c** -develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society;
- CGE5d** -finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good;
- CGE5e** -respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others;

**6. A Caring Family Member who**

- CGE6a** -relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner;
- CGE6d** -values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer;
- CGE6e** -ministers to the family, school, parish, and wider community through service.

**7. A Responsible Citizen who**

- CGE7d** -promotes the sacredness of life;
- CGE7e** -witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society;

**CGE7j** -contributes to the common good.