



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Note: The following quotations focus on the topic of *Curriculum* as it is contained in the documents of the Church which consider education. The following conditions and recommendations apply:

- ❖ The purpose of this selection is to give a sample of the topic. It is not intended to replace the reading of the entire document(s) cited.
- ❖ In-text citations are not included in this document. The document can be accessed in its entirety for this purpose. The paragraph numbers give the exact location of the quotation within the pertinent document.
- ❖ In a few instances spelling has been changed to reflect common usage and for the purpose of clarity. (“program” instead of “programme,” for example).
- ❖ The sections included are only examples and are not necessarily the only references on this topic contained in the document(s).

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), #1
Vatican Council II, 1965.

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education (5) that is in keeping with their ultimate goal,(6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis), #8
Vatican Council II, 1965.

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith.(25) So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

The Catholic School, #26-30
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

The general purpose of a school

26. A close examination of the various definitions of school and of new educational trends at every level, leads one to formulate the concept of school as a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs.

27. This vital approach takes place in the school in the form of personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-framework. Indeed, culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the personal development of its pupils.

School and attitudes of life

28. From this it is clear that the school has to review its entire program of formation, both its content and the methods used, in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration and on which it depends.

29. Either implicit or explicit reference to a determined attitude to life (Weltanschauung) is unavoidable in education because it comes into every decision that is made. It is, therefore, essential, if for no other reason than for a unity in teaching, that each member of the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of values in which he believes. This is what gives teachers and adults authority to educate. It must never be forgotten that the purpose of instruction at school is education, that is, the development of man from within, freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a, fully integrated human being. The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

30. It is one of the formal tasks of a school, as an institution for education, to draw out the ethical dimension for the precise purpose of arousing the individual's inner spiritual dynamism and to aid his achieving that moral freedom which complements the psychological. Behind this moral freedom, however, stand those absolute values which alone give meaning and value to human life. This has to be said because the tendency to adopt present-day values as a yardstick is not absent even in the educational world. The danger is always to react to passing, superficial ideas and to lose sight of the much deeper needs of the contemporary world.

The Catholic School, #33-52

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977.

Specific character of the Catholic school

33. Having stated the characteristics of the Catholic school from the point of view of "school" we can now examine its Catholic quality, namely its reference to a Christian concept of life centered on Jesus Christ.

34. Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life. The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision makes the school "Catholic"; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal.

35. The Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their fulfillment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school. Its duty to cultivate human values in their own legitimate right in accordance with its particular mission to serve all men has its origin in the figure of Christ. He is the One Who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils.

36. If, like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual, it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality "through which our cultural heritage acquires its special place in the total vocational life of man"(13). Mindful of the fact that man has been redeemed by Christ, the Catholic school aims at forming in the Christian those particular virtues which will enable him to live a new life in Christ and help him to play faithfully his part in building up the Kingdom of God(14).

37. These premises indicate the duties and the content of the Catholic school. Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.

Integration of faith and culture

38. In helping pupils to achieve through the medium of its teaching an integration of faith and culture, the Catholic school sets out with a deep awareness of the value of knowledge as such. Under no circumstances does it wish to divert the imparting of knowledge from its rightful objective.

39. Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching apologetics. They enable the pupil to assimilate skills, knowledge, intellectual methods and moral and social attitudes, all of which help to develop his personality and lead him to take his place as an active member of the community of man. Their aim is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth.

40. Since the educative mission of the Catholic school is so wide, the teacher is in an excellent position to guide the pupil to a deepening of his faith and to enrich and enlighten his human knowledge with the data of the faith. While there are many occasions in teaching when pupils can be stimulated by insights of faith, a Christian education acknowledges the valid contribution which can be made by academic subjects towards the development of a mature Christian. The teacher can form the mind and heart of his pupils and guide them to develop a total commitment to Christ, with their whole personality enriched by human culture.

41. The school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself. A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subject, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils. Over and above what he says, he guides his pupils beyond his mere words to the heart of total Truth.

42. The cultural heritage of mankind includes other values apart from the specific ambient of truth. When the Christian teacher helps a pupil to grasp, appreciate and assimilate these values, he is guiding him towards eternal realities. This movement towards the Uncreated Source of all knowledge highlights the importance of teaching for the growth of faith.

43. The achievement of this specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other.

Integration of faith and life

44. The fundamental aim of teaching is the assimilation of objective values, and, when this is undertaken for an apostolic purpose, it does not stop at an integration of faith and culture but leads the pupil on to a personal integration of faith and life.

45. The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its pupils, and this task is of special significance today because of the inadequacy of the family and society. It knows that this integration of faith and life is part of a life-long process of conversion until the pupil becomes what God wishes him to be. Young people have to be taught to share their personal lives with God. They are to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community with others. The very pattern of the Christian life draws them to commit themselves to serve God in their brethren and to make the world a better place for man to live in.

46. The Catholic school should teach its pupils to discern in the voice of the universe the Creator Whom it reveals and, in the conquests of science, to know God and man better. In the daily life of the school, the pupil should learn that he is called to be a living witness to God's love for men by the way he acts, and that he is part of that salvation history which has Christ, the Savior of the world, as its goal.

47. Being aware that Baptism by itself does not make a Christian - living and acting in conformity with the Gospel is necessary - the Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate(15) in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism. It will give pride of place in the education it provides through Christian Doctrine to the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues - above all the theological virtues, and charity in particular, which is, so to speak, the life-giving spirit which transforms a man of virtue into a man of Christ. Christ, therefore, is the teaching-centre, the Model on Whom the Christian shapes his life. In Him the Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men. Its task is to form Christian men, and, by its teaching and witness, show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ Who surpasses all human understanding (16).

48. The Catholic school will work closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and Christian community, youth associations, etc.). But one must not overlook many other spheres of activity in society which are sources of information and in their various ways have an educational influence. Alongside this so-called " parallel school ", the school proper is an active force through the systematic formation of the pupils' critical faculties to bring them to a measure of self control(17) and the ability to choose freely and conscientiously in the face of what is offered by the organs of social communication. They must be taught to subject these things to a critical and personal analysis(18), take what is good, and integrate it into their Christian human culture.

Religious teaching

49. The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living.

Consequently, the Catholic school is aware of the importance of the Gospel-teaching as transmitted through the Catholic Church. It is, indeed, the fundamental element in the educative process as it helps the pupil towards his conscious choice of living a responsible and coherent way of life.

50. Without entering into the whole problem of teaching religion in schools, it must be emphasized that, while such teaching is not merely confined to "religious classes" within the school curriculum, it must, nevertheless, also be imparted explicitly and in a systematic manner to prevent a distortion in the child's mind between general and religious culture. The fundamental difference between religious and other forms of education is that its aim is not simply intellectual assent to religious truths but also a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ.

51. It is recognized that the proper place for catechesis is the family helped by other Christian communities, especially the local parish. But the importance and need for catechetical instruction in Catholic schools cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Here young people are helped to grow towards maturity in faith.

52. The Catholic school must be alert at all times to developments in the fields of child psychology, pedagogy and particularly catechetics, and should especially keep abreast of directives from competent ecclesiastical authorities. The school must do everything in its power to aid the Church to fulfill its catechetical mission and so must have the best possible qualified teachers of religion.

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, #29-32
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982.

Synthesis of Faith, Culture and Life

29. For the accomplishment of this vast undertaking, many different educational elements must converge; in each of them, the lay Catholic must appear as a witness to faith. An organic, critical, and value-oriented communication of culture (27) clearly includes the communication of truth and knowledge; while doing this, a Catholic teacher should always be alert for opportunities to initiate the appropriate dialogue between culture and faith - two things which are intimately related - in order to bring the interior synthesis of the student to this deeper level. It is, of course, a synthesis which should already exist in the teacher.

30. Critical transmission also involves the presentation of a set of values and counter-values. These must be judged within the context of an appropriate concept of life and of the - human person. The Catholic teacher, therefore, cannot be content simply to present Christian values as a set of abstract objectives to be admired, even if this be done positively and with imagination; they must be presented as values which generate human attitudes, and these attitudes must be encouraged in the students. Examples of such attitudes would be these: a freedom which includes respect for others; conscientious responsibility; a sincere and constant search for truth; a calm and peaceful critical spirit; a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons; a sensitivity for justice; a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation.

Since Catholic teachers frequently have to exercise their mission within a general atmosphere of secularization and unbelief, it is important that they not be limited to a mentality that is merely experimental and critical; thus, they will be able to bring the students to an awareness of the transcendental, and dispose them to welcome revealed truth.

31. In the process of developing attitudes such as these, the teacher can more easily show the positive nature of the behavior that flows from such attitudes. Ideally, attitudes and behavior will gradually be motivated by, and flow out of, the interior faith of the individual student. In this way, the fullness of faith will be achieved; it will then extend to such things as filial prayer, sacramental life, love for one another, and a following of Jesus Christ - all of the elements that form a part of the specific heritage of the faithful. Knowledge, values, attitudes, and behavior fully integrated, with faith will result in the student's personal synthesis of life and faith. Very few Catholics, then, have the opportunity that the educator has to accomplish the very purpose of evangelization: the incarnation of the Christian message in the lives of men and women.

Personal Life Witness. Direct and Personal Contact with Students

32. Conduct is always much more important than speech; this fact becomes especially important in the formation period of students. The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to the students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated. For it will then be seen as something reasonable and worthy of being lived, something concrete and realizable. It is in this context that the faith witness of the lay teacher becomes especially important. Students should see in their teachers the Christian attitude and behavior that is often so conspicuously absent from the secular atmosphere in which they live. Without this witness, living in such an atmosphere, they may begin to regard Christian behavior as an impossible ideal. It must never be forgotten that, in the crises " which have their greatest effect on the younger generations ", the most important element in the educational endeavor is " always the individual person: the person, and the moral dignity of that person which is the result of his or her principles, and the conformity of actions with those principles".

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #51-65
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

The religious dimension of the school culture

51 Intellectual development and growth as a Christian go forward hand in hand. As students move up from one class into the next it becomes increasingly imperative that a Catholic school help them become aware that a relationship exists between faith and human culture. Human culture remains human, and must be taught with scientific objectivity. But the lessons of the teacher and the reception of those students who are believers will not divorce faith from this culture; this would be a major spiritual loss. The world of human culture and the world of religion are not like two parallel lines that never meet; points of contact are established within the human person. For a believer is both human and a person of faith, the protagonist of culture and the subject of religion. Anyone who searches for the contact points will be able to find them. Helping in the search is not solely the task of religion teachers; their time is quite limited, while other teachers have many hours at their disposal every day. Everyone should work together, each one developing his or her own subject area with professional competence, but sensitive to those opportunities in which they can help students to see beyond the limited horizon of human reality. In a Catholic school, and analogously in every school, God cannot be the Great Absent One or the unwelcome intruder. The Creator does not put obstacles in the path of someone trying to learn more about the universe he created, a universe which is given new significance when seen with the eyes of faith.

52 A Catholic secondary school will give special attention to the "challenges" that human culture poses for faith. Students will be helped to attain that synthesis of faith and culture which is necessary for faith to be mature. But a mature faith is also able to recognize and reject cultural counter-values which threaten human dignity and are therefore contrary to the Gospel. No one should think that all of the problems of religion and of faith will be completely solved by academic studies; nevertheless, we are convinced that a school is a privileged place for finding adequate ways to deal with these problems. The declaration *Gravissimum educationis*, echoing *Gaudium et spes*, indicates that one of the characteristics of a Catholic school is that it interpret and give order to human culture in the light of faith.

53 As the Council points out, giving order to human culture in the light of the message of salvation cannot mean a lack of respect for the autonomy of the different academic disciplines and the methodology proper to them; nor can it mean that these disciplines are to be seen merely as subservient to faith. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that a proper autonomy of culture has to be distinguished from a vision of the human person or of the world as totally autonomous, implying that one can negate spiritual values or prescind from them. We must always remember that, while faith is not to be identified with any one culture and is independent of all cultures, it must inspire every

culture: "Faith which does not become culture is faith which is not received fully, not assimilated entirely, not lived faithfully".

54 In a number of countries, renewal in school programming has given increased attention to science and technology. Those teaching these subject areas must not ignore the religious dimension. They should help their students to understand that positive science, and the technology allied to it, is a part of the universe created by God. Understanding this can help encourage an interest in research: the whole of creation, from the distant celestial bodies and the immeasurable cosmic forces down to the infinitesimal particles and waves of matter and energy, all bear the imprint of the Creator's wisdom and power. The wonder that past ages felt when contemplating this universe, recorded by the Biblical authors, is still valid for the students of today; the only difference is that we have a knowledge that is much more vast and profound. There can be no conflict between faith and true scientific knowledge; both find their source in God.

The student who is able to discover the harmony between faith and science will, in future professional life, be better able to put science and technology to the service of men and women, and to the service of God. It is a way of giving back to God what he has first given to us.

55 A Catholic school must be committed to the development of a program which will overcome the problems of a fragmented and insufficient curriculum. Teachers dealing with areas such as anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology and philosophy all have the opportunity to present a complete picture of the human person, including the religious dimension. Students should be helped to see the human person as a living creature having both a physical and a spiritual nature; each of us has an immortal soul, and we are in need of redemption. The older students can gradually come to a more mature understanding of all that is implied in the concept of "person": intelligence and will, freedom and feelings, the capacity to be an active and creative agent; a being endowed with both rights and duties, capable of interpersonal relationships, called to a specific mission in the world.

56 The religious dimension makes a true understanding of the human person possible. A human being has a dignity and a greatness exceeding that of all other creatures: a work of God that has been elevated to the supernatural order as a child of God, and therefore having both a divine origin and an eternal destiny which transcend this physical universe. Religion teachers will find the way already prepared for an organic presentation of Christian anthropology.

57 Every society has its own heritage of accumulated wisdom. Many people find inspiration in these philosophical and religious concepts which have endured for millennia. The systematic genius of classical Greek and European thought has, over the centuries, generated countless different doctrinal systems, but it has also given us a set of truths which we can recognize as a part of our permanent philosophical heritage. A Catholic school conforms to the generally accepted school programming of today, but

implements these programs within an overall religious perspective. This perspective includes criteria such as the following:

Respect for those who seek the truth, who raise fundamental questions about human existence. Confidence in our ability to attain truth, at least in a limited way - a confidence based not on feeling but on faith. God created us "in his own image and likeness" and will not deprive us of the truth necessary to orient our lives. The ability to make judgments about what is true and what is false; and to make choices based on these judgments. Making use of a systematic framework, such as that offered by our philosophical heritage, with which to find the best possible human responses to questions regarding the human person, the world, and God. Lively dialogue between culture and the Gospel message. The fullness of truth contained in the Gospel message itself, which embraces and integrates the wisdom of all cultures, and enriches them with the divine mysteries known only to God but which, out of love, he has chosen to reveal to us. With such criteria as a basis, the student's careful and reflective study of philosophy will bring human wisdom into an encounter with divine wisdom.

58 Teachers should guide the students' work in such a way that they will be able to discover a religious dimension in the world of human history. As a preliminary, they should be encouraged to develop a taste for historical truth, and therefore to realize the need to look critically at texts and curricula which, at times, are imposed by a government or distorted by the ideology of the author. The next step is to help students see history as something real: the drama of human grandeur and human misery. The protagonist of history is the human person, who projects onto the world, on a larger scale, the good and the evil that is within each individual. History is, then, a monumental struggle between these two fundamental realities, and is subject to moral judgments. But such judgments must always be made with understanding.

59 To this end, the teacher should help students to see history as a whole. Looking at the grand picture, they will see the development of civilizations, and learn about progress in such things as economic development, human freedom, and international cooperation. Realizing this can help to offset the disgust that comes from learning about the darker side of human history. But even this is not the whole story. When they are ready to appreciate it, students can be invited to reflect on the fact that this human struggle takes place within the divine history universal salvation, At this moment, the religious dimension of history begins to shine forth in all its luminous grandeur.

60 The increased attention given to science and technology must not lead to a neglect of the humanities: philosophy, history, literature and art. Since earliest times, each society has developed and handed on its artistic and literary heritage, and our human patrimony is nothing more than the sum total of this cultural wealth. Thus, while teachers are helping students to develop an aesthetic sense, they can bring them to a deeper awareness of all peoples as one great human family. The simplest way to uncover the religious dimension of the artistic and literary world is to start with its concrete expressions: in every human culture, art and literature have been closely linked to religious beliefs. The

artistic and literary patrimony of Christianity is vast and gives visible testimony to a faith that has been handed down through centuries.

61 Literary and artistic works depict the struggles of societies, of families, and of individuals. They spring from the depths of the human heart, revealing its lights and its shadows, its hope and its despair. The Christian perspective goes beyond the merely human, and offers more penetrating criteria for understanding the human struggle and the mysteries of the human spirit. Furthermore, an adequate religious formation has been the starting point for the vocation of a number of Christian artists and art critics. In the upper grades, a teacher can bring students to: an even more profound appreciation of artistic works: as a reflection of the divine beauty in tangible form. Both the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Christian philosophy teach this in their writings on aesthetics - St. Augustine invites us to go beyond the intention of the artists in order to find the eternal order of God in the work of art; St. Thomas sees the presence of the Divine Word in art.

62 A Catholic school is often attentive to issues having to do with educational methods, and this can be of great service both to civil society and to the Church. Government requirements for teacher preparation usually require historical and systematic courses in pedagogy, psychology and teaching methods. In more recent times, educational science has been subdivided into a number of areas of specialization and has been subjected to a variety of different philosophies and political ideologies; those preparing to become teachers may feel that the whole field is confused and fragmented. Teachers of pedagogical science can help these students in their bewilderment, and guide them in the formulation of a carefully thought out synthesis, whose elaboration begins with the premise that every pedagogical current of thought contains things which are true and useful. But then one must begin to reflect, judge, and choose.

63 Future teachers should be helped to realize that any genuine educational philosophy has to be based on the nature of the human person, and therefore must take into account all of the physical and spiritual powers of each individual, along with the call of each one to be an active and creative agent in service to society. And this philosophy must be open to a religious dimension. Human beings are fundamentally free; they are not the property of the state or of any human organization. The entire process of education, therefore, is a service to the individual students, helping each one to achieve the most complete formation possible.

The Christian model, based on the person of Christ, is then linked to this human concept of the person - that is, the model begins with an educational framework based on the person as human, and then enriches it with supernatural gifts, virtues, and values - and a supernatural call. It is indeed possible to speak about Christian education; the Conciliar declaration provides us with a clear synthesis of it. Proper pedagogical formation, finally, will guide these students to a self-formation that is both human and Christian, because this is the best possible preparation for one who is preparing to educate others.

64 Interdisciplinary work has been introduced into Catholic schools with positive results, for there are questions and topics that are not easily treated within the limitations of a single subject area. Religious themes should be included; they arise naturally when dealing with topics such as the human person, the family, society, or history. Teachers should be adequately prepared to deal with such questions and be ready to give them the attention they deserve.

65 Religion teachers are not excluded. While their primary mission must be the systematic presentation of religion, they can also be invited - within the limitations of what is concretely possible - to assist in clarifying religious questions that come up in other classes. Conversely, they may wish to invite one of their colleagues to attend a religion class, in order to have the help of an expert when dealing with some specific issue. Whenever this happens, students will be favorably impressed by the cooperative spirit among the teachers: the one purpose all of them have in mind is to help these students grow in knowledge and in commitment.

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal, #98-102
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988.

1. *What is a Christian formation process?*

98 The declaration of the Council insists on the dynamic nature of integral human formation,(106) but it adds immediately that, from a Christian point of view, human development by itself is not sufficient. Education “does not merely strive to foster in the human person the maturity already described. Rather, its principal aims are these: that as the baptized person is gradually introduced into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, he or she may daily grow more conscious of the gift of faith which has been received ...”.(107) What characterizes a Catholic school, therefore, is that it guide students in such a way "that the development of each one's own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he or she became by baptism". We need to think of Christian education as a movement or a growth process, directed toward an ideal goal which goes beyond the limitations of anything human. At the same time the process must be harmonious, so that Christian formation takes place within and in the course of human formation. The two are not separate and parallel paths; they are complementary forms of education which become one in the goals of the teacher and the willing reception of the students. The Gospel notes this harmonious growth in the child Jesus.

99 A Christian formation process might therefore be described as an organic set of elements with a single purpose: the gradual development of every capability of every student, enabling each one to attain an integral formation within a context that includes the Christian religious dimension and recognizes the help of grace. But what really matters is not the terminology but the reality, and this reality will be assured only if all

the teachers unite their educational efforts in the pursuit of a common goal. Sporadic, partial, or uncoordinated efforts, or a situation in which there is a conflict of opinion among the teachers, will interfere with rather than assist in the students' personal development.

2. Educational goals

100 The responsibility of a Catholic school is enormous and complex. It must respect and obey the laws that define methods, programs, structure, etc., and at the same time it must fulfill its own educational goals by blending human culture with the message of salvation into a coordinated program; it must help each of the students to actually become the "new creature" that each one is potentially, and at the same time prepare them for the responsibilities of an adult member of society. This means that a Catholic school needs to have a set of educational goals which are "distinctive" in the sense that the school has a specific objective in mind, and all of the goals are related to this objective. Concretely, the educational goals provide a frame of reference which:

- defines the school's identity: in particular, the Gospel values which are its inspiration must be explicitly mentioned;
- gives a precise description of the pedagogical, educational and cultural aims of the school;
- presents the course content, along with the values that are to be transmitted through these courses;
- describes the organization and the management of the school;
- determines which policy decisions are to be reserved to professional staff (governors and teachers), which policies are to be developed with the help of parents and students, and which activities are to be left to the free initiative of teachers, parents, or students;
- indicates the ways in which student progress is to be tested and evaluated.

101 In addition, careful attention must be given to the development of general criteria which will enable each aspect of school activity to assist in the attainment of the educational objective, so that the cultural, pedagogical, social, civil and political aspects of school life are all integrated:

a) Fidelity to the Gospel as proclaimed by the Church. The activity of a Catholic school is, above all else, an activity that shares in the evangelizing mission of the Church; it is a part of the particular local Church of the country in which it is situated, and shares in the life and work of the local Christian community.

- b) Careful rigor in the study of culture and the development of a critical sense, maintaining a respect for the autonomy of human knowledge and for the rules and methods proper to each of the disciplines, and at the same time orienting the whole process toward the integral formation of the person.
- c) Adapting the educational process in a way that respects the particular circumstances of individual students and their families.
- d) Sharing responsibility with the Church. While school authorities are the ones primarily responsible for the educational and cultural activities of the school, the local Church should also be involved in appropriate ways; the educational goals should be the result of dialogue with this ecclesial community.

It is clear, then, that the set of educational goals is something quite distinct from internal school regulations or teaching methods; and it is not just a description of vague intentions.

102 The educational goals should be revised each year on the basis of experience and need. They will be achieved through a formation process which takes place in stages; it has a starting point, various intermediate points, and a conclusion. At each stage, teachers, students and families should determine the degree of success in achieving these goals; where there is insufficient progress they should look for the reasons and find suitable remedies. It is essential that this evaluation be seen as a common responsibility, and that it be carried out faithfully.

The end of each school year is one appropriate time for such an evaluation. From a Christian perspective, it is not enough to say that this is the time for examinations. The academic program is only one part of the process, and the end of the school year is also the time for a serious and intelligent examination of which educational goals have been achieved and which have not. A much more decisive time comes at the completion of a student's years in the school, because this is the moment when students should have reached the maximum level of an education that integrates the human and the Christian.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #8.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

8. Thus the Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterized by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation. And for the Catholic school to be a means of education in the modern world, we are convinced that certain fundamental characteristics need to be strengthened.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, #14.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997.

Cultural identity of the Catholic school

14.

From the nature of the Catholic school also stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis between culture and faith. Indeed, knowledge set in the context of faith becomes wisdom and life vision. The endeavor to interweave reason and faith, which has become the heart of individual subjects, makes for unity, articulation and coordination, bringing forth within what is learnt in school a Christian vision of the world, of life, of culture and of history. In the Catholic school's educational project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. The various school subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. All of which demands an atmosphere characterized by the search for truth, in which competent, convinced and coherent educators, teachers of learning and of life, may be a reflection, albeit imperfect but still vivid, of the one Teacher. In this perspective, in the Christian educational project all subjects collaborate, each with its own specific content, to the formation of mature personalities.

Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love, #64-69.
Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013.

The Curriculum as the Expression of the School's Identity

64. The curriculum is how the school community makes explicit its goals and objectives, the content of its teaching and the means for communicating it effectively. In the curriculum, the school's cultural and pedagogical identity are made manifest. Developing the curriculum is one of the school's most demanding tasks, because here one makes explicit what are the school's reference values, subject priorities and practical choices.

65. For a Catholic school, examining its curriculum leads to strengthening what is specific to its nature. It means strengthening the particular way it serves individuals, using the tools offered by culture. Thus, the school's programs can be effectively harmonized with the school's original mission. One cannot be content merely with an up-to-date didactic offering that simply responds to the demands deriving from the ever-changing economic situation. Catholic schools think out their curricula to place center-stage both individuals and their search for meaning. This is the reference value, in view of which the various academic disciplines are important resources and take on greater value to the extent that they are tools for educating. From this perspective, what is taught is not neutral, and neither is the way of teaching it.

66. It has been said that we live in a knowledge-based society. However, Catholic schools are encouraged to promote a wisdom-based society, to go beyond knowledge and educate people to think, evaluating facts in the light of values. They educate people to take on responsibility and duties, and exercise active citizenship. Among matters taught specifically in Catholic schools, pride of place must be given to the knowledge of different cultures, with attention given to helping the students encounter and compare the various cultures' many different viewpoints. The curriculum must help the students reflect on the great problems of our time, including those where one sees more clearly the difficult situation of a large part of humanity's living conditions. These would include the unequal distribution of resources, poverty, injustice and human rights denied. "Poverty" implies a careful consideration of the phenomenon of globalization, and suggests a broad and developed vision of poverty, in all its various forms and causes.

67. A good curriculum can merge theoretical lessons with presentations from informed speakers, where life-experiences are presented in light of faith's view of the world. A good curriculum can also contain practical experiences for sharing and assuming responsibilities.

The two poles are directed towards each other: lessons are informed by hearing about the life-experiences; knowledge becomes experience; and experience acquires the force of a cultural offering, of proclamation.

In teaching the various academic disciplines, teachers share and promote a methodological viewpoint in which the various branches of knowledge are dynamically correlated, in a wisdom perspective. The epistemological framework of every branch of knowledge has its own identity, both in content and methodology. However, this framework does not relate merely to "internal" questions, touching upon the correct realization of each discipline. Each discipline is not an island inhabited by a form of knowledge that is distinct and ring-fenced; rather, it is in a dynamic relationship with all other forms of knowledge, each of which expresses something about the human person and touches upon some truth.

68. Schools are challenged by the multicultural make-up of their classes. They must be able to rethink what is taught; the learning methods; their own internal organization, roles and relationships with families; and the social and cultural context where they are to be found. A curriculum that is open to the intercultural perspective presents the students with a study of civilizations that were previously unknown to them, or were remote from them, but which now are brought to their attention, as well as being brought much "closer" thanks to globalization and modern means of communication, crossing barriers of space and ideological defenses. Teaching that aims to help students understand the reality in which they live cannot ignore the aspect of encounter. On the contrary, teaching has the duty to favor dialogue, as well as cultural and spiritual exchanges.

69. On the didactic level, schools must present their own intercultural concerns while remembering the two levels of learning: the cognitive and the relational-affective. On the

cognitive level, schools develop the contents of the curriculum: areas of knowledge to be taught and skills to be promoted. On the relational-affective level, schools develop attitudes and ways of talking about others, teaching the students to respect diversity and take different viewpoints into account, cultivating empathy and collaboration.

Canon Law

Canon #806 §2. Directors of Catholic schools are to take care under the watchfulness of the local ordinary that the instruction which is given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.

Canon #803 §2. The instruction and education in a Catholic school must be grounded in the principles of Catholic doctrine; teachers are to be outstanding in correct doctrine and integrity of life.