



**Date:** June 18, 2024  
**Prepared by:** Michelle Sawa, Superintendent of Education  
**Subject:** Family Life Education Curriculum

## **Background**

The Institute for Catholic Education has published an updated **Family Life Education policy document/curriculum** for Catholic Schools in Ontario (grades 1-8). This curriculum is created by educators and theologians and approved by the Catholic Bishops of Ontario.

The Family Life curriculum complements our Religious Education curriculum (2012) presenting an age-appropriate education about the Catholic faith inspired by Gospel values. Religious Education represents 80% of the curriculum delivery and Family Life Education represents 20% of the curriculum delivery in our Catholic schools.

The approach of this curriculum document aims at centering family as a gift from God. A Pastoral approach emphasizes sensitivity to individual circumstances and respect for the wisdom of the church.

The New Family Life curriculum has been divided into three distinct but related strands:

- Families: A Living Communion of Love
- Families: Called to be in Relationship
- Families: Created in Love, Wonderfully Made

In addition to the content knowledge in each grade, this document provides “Hope Expectations” for our students. These expectations support the understanding that Family Life Education is not merely a matter of relating knowledge – but a hope that students will come to see the beauty of God’s gift of family, marriage, and sexuality.

The new Family Life curriculum takes effect in the Fall of 2024. A new program “Blessed and Beloved” is currently being published for grade 1 to support the new curriculum. We have purchased the program for our Grade 1 classrooms and will in-service educators in the Fall. The proposed rollout of grades 2-8 is as follows:

- Grades 2, 3- September 2025
- Grades 4, 5, 6- September 2026
- Grades 7, 8- September 2027

Fully Alive will continue to be the program used in grades 2-8 as this is the only resource approved by the Bishops for use in Family Life education. Until the new program is published for grades 2-8, concordance charts will be developed to support educators as they align the new curriculum with the



current resource (Fully Alive). Interim gap lessons for Grades 6-8 are also being developed.

To learn more about the curriculum, additional support resources are posted on the Institute for Catholic Education's website.

### **Recommendation**

**That the St. Clair Catholic District School Board received the report: *Family Life Education Curriculum*, for information.**

# Family Life Education - How it all Fits Together



## How is Family Life Education related to the Health curriculum?

Family Life Education in Catholic schools touches on many topics from a Catholic viewpoint including what it means to be human, what it means for us to be created by God, the gift of our families, the gift of children in families, the learning that takes place in families – learning to live, love and pray, learning to forgive and to serve.

Family Life Education is much more than just information about sexuality. It affirms the importance of virtues and the formation of our conscience in moral decision making. It encourages critical thinking skills. It complements the learning in Religious Education and seeks to affirm lessons that are modelled in the home.

The Ministry of Education sets the Health and Physical Education curriculum, which is sometimes called “HPE”. HPE has four strands or four areas of learning:

- Strand A: Social Emotional Learning Skills
- Strand B: Active Living
- Strand C: Movement Competence: Skills, Concepts, and Strategies
- Strand D: Healthy Living

Under Strand D: Healthy Living, five topics are covered including:

1. Healthy Eating
2. Personal Safety and Injury Prevention
3. Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours
4. Human Development and Sexual Health
5. Mental Health Literacy

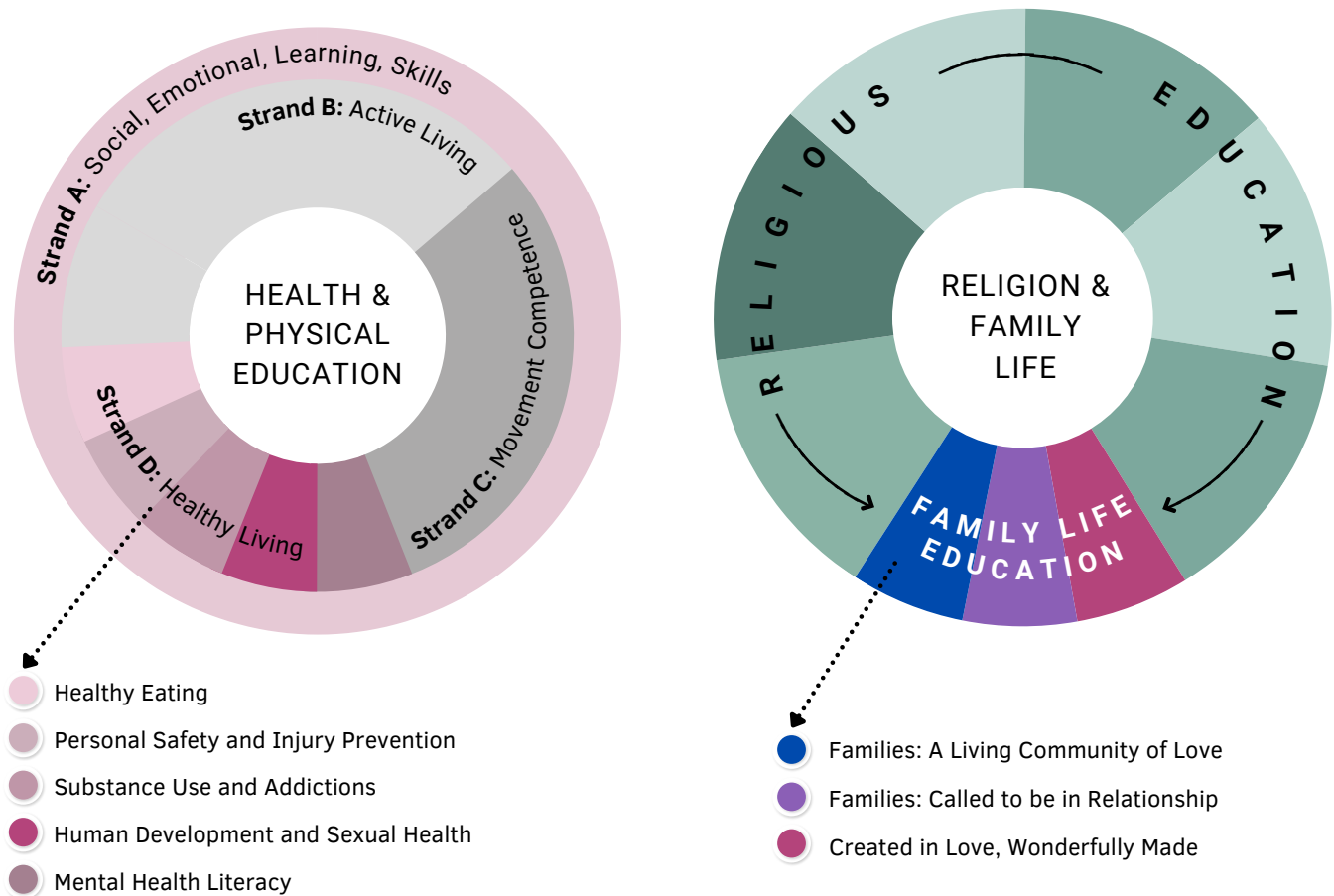
In Catholic schools, many of these topics of Healthy Living are touched upon in Family Life Education including mental health literacy along with many of the skills of Strand A for Social Emotional Learning Skills. Family Life Education also presents the human development and sexuality expectations (there are approximately 25 specific expectations from Grade 1 to 8 in HPE dealing with the body, sexuality, healthy relationships, healthy body image, reproduction, bullying and consent) through a Catholic viewpoint informed by Gospel values.

Family Life Education is complementary to the Religious Education program in Catholic schools. Religious Education represents 80% of the curriculum delivery and Family Life Education represents 20% of the curriculum delivery.

In practice, this means that Religious Education is typically taught 4 days per week and Family Life Education is taught one day a week. There are approximately 40 lessons of Family Life Education throughout the year in each grade.

We invite you to consider the graphic below to see the relationship between these important subject areas.

## HOW DOES FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION RELATE TO HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION?



Take a look at the Strands of Family Life Education and the topics they touch upon.

### Strand A - Families: A Living Community of Love

Students develop an understanding and appreciation of:

- the family as the first community
- the family as a 'little' church or a 'domestic church'
- the importance of their own family "there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems".<sup>1</sup>
- how God is present in the formation of their identity, through families, the church and the sacraments
- how everyone has a special purpose – God-given gifts and vocation

### Strand B - Families: Called to be in Relationship

Students develop an understanding and appreciation of:

- our Christian identity as bigger than just ourselves – that it is rooted in being members of the Body of Christ
- the Holy Family as an example of family life
- how family, school, and parish relationships work together to help them grow as loving, compassionate, respectful, and caring family members
- the sacramentality of marriage and families
- the duties, rights, responsibilities, decision making and discernment within families and communities

### Strand C - Families: Created in Love, Wonderfully Made

Students develop an understanding and appreciation of:

- the human person as a unity of body, mind, and spirit
- sexuality is a gift from God
- the Catholic belief in the sanctity and beauty of every single human life from conception to natural death

## Vocation

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*Our deepest hope for students is that they come to know they have been made on purpose for a purpose*

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## Our Deepest Hope

Our deepest hope for students is that they come to know they have been made on purpose for a purpose – that God calls them to holiness and gives each of them unique gifts for the good of their families, their communities and the world.

Through Family Life Education and Religious Education, we hope our students come to know ever more deeply who and whose they are as beloved children of God.

## A Special Note to Parents

The current Family Life program includes letters to parents at the start of every unit so that the home and school relationship can be strengthened by open communication about what topics will be dealt with in upcoming lessons. This will continue to be the case.

You can learn more about the curriculum by visiting our website: [www.iceont.ca](http://www.iceont.ca).

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## References

- 1 Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* of Pope John Paul II, 1981, 57.

# Family Life Education - Topics at a Glance

Family Life Education in Catholic schools seeks to help students know what it means to be human, what God calls us to in loving relationships and what our vocation is. It reflects a distinctively Catholic view of human life, sexuality, marriage, and family. It incorporates the curriculum expectations set out by the Ministry of Education's Health and Physical Education Curriculum, from Strand D – Healthy Living, along with the Social Emotional Learning Skills of Strand A. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values acquired in Family Life Education are meant to complement those instilled by families.

Family Life Education in Catholic schools must be understood in its proper context and approach. It is much more than a list of topics. In this resource, we offer some of the insights that inform our approach. This resource is a summary only. For the full curriculum document, please consult the website [www.iceont.ca](http://www.iceont.ca).

## A Catholic View of the Family

The family is the place where we learn how to live, love and pray. Moreover, the family, assisted by the Church, presents to young people the context for discerning and discovering “the beauty and grandeur of the vocation to love and the service of life.”<sup>1</sup>

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## A Disposition of Tenderness

The students for whom the Family Life Education curriculum in elementary schools has been developed are young. Some will be as young as 5 years old. This curriculum will accompany them into their early adolescence around the age of thirteen. With these young people in mind, our approach is informed by a disposition of tenderness.

## The Three Strands of Family Life Education

The learning expectations in Family Life Education are divided into three broad strands. On the following pages, you will see the main topics covered in each of these strands according to Grade.

Strand A: *Families: A Living Communion of Love*  
 Strand B: *Families: Called to be in Relationship*  
 Strand C: *Created in Love, Wonderfully Made*

## Topics at a Glance by Strand and Grade

Strand	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
<b>A</b>	<p>Families are a gift from God</p> <p>Explore God-given talents – mine and others</p> <p>Celebrating joyful events at home with family (birthdays, birth of new baby, Christmas, etc.)</p> <p>Celebrating faith with and in our family</p> <p>Family is the ‘domestic church’</p>	<p>Participation in families – our communities as a kind of family – home, school, parish</p> <p>Talents developed in families</p> <p>Domestic church celebrates all year long – family life and the liturgical seasons (Advent, Lent, Ordinary Time, etc.)</p>	<p>Our sense of belonging developed in families</p> <p>How we support families at home, at school and at church</p> <p>Development of talents help us grow healthy and holy</p> <p>Domestic church – the student’s participation in support of celebrations</p>	<p>Family as basic cell of society</p> <p>Church as family of families</p> <p>Church helps form identity and discern purpose</p> <p>Domestic church in relation to Universal Church</p> <p>Call to evangelize</p>
<b>B</b>	<p>Special people in family, school, community</p> <p>Joy of marriage - Marriage is about promises/ commitment</p> <p>Healthy trusted relationships</p> <p>Decision making – Social Emotional Learning skills</p>	<p>Families help us grow in friendship, love, mercy, faith</p> <p>Jesus born into a family</p> <p>Marriage as gift from God</p> <p>Decision making – consent, self-control, respect</p> <p>Healthy trusted relationships</p>	<p>Members of family as gift of God</p> <p>Marriage as covenant</p> <p>Qualities valued in friendship</p> <p>Healthy family relationships – accepting differences, inclusion, open communication, mutual respect, consent</p>	<p>Different roles in the family</p> <p>Marriage as self giving and open to new life</p> <p>Moral decision making</p> <p>Families help shape us to become caring and responsible citizens</p> <p>Choices for good mental health</p>
<b>C</b>	<p>Beauty of creation – including people</p> <p>Gift of senses</p> <p>Healthy balanced lives</p> <p>Families nurture new life</p> <p>Growth of baby in utero</p> <p>Created male and female – all bodies share similarities and differences</p>	<p>Human body as gift</p> <p>Gift of senses to learn about the world</p> <p>Healthy living as care of the body, mind, spirit</p> <p>Male and female body parts (e.g. sperm, ovum, cells, uterus birth canal, breasts)</p> <p>Stages of human development</p>	<p>Responsibility to care for all creation</p> <p>Everyone different and unique – sacredness of human life</p> <p>Sharing feelings with God and family</p> <p>Healthy body image</p> <p>Bringing about new life – biology and gift from God</p>	<p>Love of whole self – body, mind, spirit</p> <p>Promoting human dignity in the family</p> <p>Families support healthy living</p> <p>Families assist growth from childhood to adolescence</p> <p>Physical, spiritual, emotional changes at puberty (intro)</p>



Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	
<p>Life in families prepares us for life in society</p> <p>Caring Family Members (from OCSGE*)</p> <p>Domestic church helps form their identity and discern their purpose</p> <p>Using gifts and talents for the good of others</p>	<p>God's saving love as gift</p> <p>Family traditions in celebrating faith</p> <p>Formation – learning about self and vocation</p> <p>Families can encourage one another in virtuous living</p>	<p>Families as gift to society</p> <p>Families respond to God's gift through gratitude and commitment</p> <p>Families support development of vocation</p> <p>Gifts for the common good and in solidarity with others</p> <p>Young people as evangelizers</p>	<p>Families communicate God's love</p> <p>Call to holiness</p> <p>Use of gifts for the world</p> <p>Vocation and formation of identity common good</p> <p>Student's participation in family life as evangelizers</p>	<b>A</b>
<p>Great Commandment – love of God and neighbour</p> <p>Trust in relationships</p> <p>Welcoming children in families by birth, adoption, fostering</p> <p>Discernment</p> <p>Families help develop Social Emotional Learning skills</p> <p>Families help form Responsible Citizens (from OCSGE*)</p>	<p>Mercy and forgiveness in conflict resolution</p> <p>Support of family through the parish</p> <p>Loving relationships Sacramental vs civil marriage</p> <p>Discernment and right judgment as spiritual maturity</p> <p>"Dignity of all" important to mental health and healthy relationships</p>	<p>Love, mercy and trust in relationships</p> <p>Family and friendship Knowing God helps us to know ourselves</p> <p>Marriage as intimate and faithful union</p> <p>Informed conscience, discernment, right judgement</p> <p>Families, school, community support mental health</p>	<p>Relationships with others help us learn about ourselves</p> <p>Marriage as a Sacrament</p> <p>Free will – true human freedom</p> <p>Healthy habits and coping strategies for emotional, physical, spiritual, social, mental health</p>	<b>B</b>
<p>Family relationships promote dignity – personal space, bodily integrity, appropriate touch, modesty</p> <p>Catholic faith supports growth of personal self-concept, self-awareness</p> <p>Factors that contribute to health and well-being</p> <p>Changes and stressors during puberty</p> <p>Virtue of patience in the process of growth</p>	<p>God is truth, beauty and goodness</p> <p>Persons as made in God's image – body as sacred – temple of the Holy Spirit</p> <p>Sexual development - male and female fertility</p> <p>Respectful online interactions – negatives such as bullying and sexually explicit media – harmful effects of stereotypes</p> <p>Friends and family help us grow – healthy relationships</p>	<p>Treating the body with care – unity of body and soul</p> <p>Sexual attraction in adolescence – importance of patience and self control, chastity, abstinence</p> <p>Understanding sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs)</p> <p>Online safety</p> <p>Families supporting growth from adolescence to adulthood</p>	<p>Human dignity grounding equity, peace, justice</p> <p>Comparing secular understanding of identity to Catholic understanding - factors for healthy development for all</p> <p>Role of hormones in physical, mental and emotional health and growth</p> <p>Natural family planning</p> <p>Sacredness of all life - conception to natural death</p>	<b>C</b>

\*OCSGE - Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (see <https://iceont.ca/ocsge/>)

## Some Considerations of the Pastoral Approach in Family Life Education

Family Life Education addresses matters of deep meaning and practical relevance for how we are called to live our lives: issues relating to sexuality, marriage, physical and emotional well-being, the procreation and raising of children, the nature of the family and its place in human society and the Church.

These matters must be taught using a pastoral approach, which by its nature includes both sensitivity to individual circumstances and respect for the wisdom of the Church, who seeks to proclaim the truth revealed by God and propose what will yield true human flourishing.

In Luke's account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus we are taught about true accompaniment. In that encounter, Jesus met the disciples, walked with them and listened to their fear, confusion and disappointment. He then lovingly and firmly sought to instruct them, as "he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures" (Lk 24:27).

This famous biblical encounter is an apt model for Family Life Education: as teachers in Catholic schools, we meet students in our classrooms, hallways and schoolyards with their many questions, often with underlying doubts and anxieties. And we are called to respond to them lovingly, with the life-giving message of the Gospel and the richness of what the Church teaches; to share with them, as Pope Francis says, that "the Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed."<sup>2</sup>

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We recognize:

- Discovery and understanding in Family Life Education is gradual.
- The Catholic school is a place of real and pastoral ministry and participates in the mission of the Church in this regard.
- We are called to support and care for families because we know from research and through faith that strong families are important for the health and well-being of children.
- Family Life Education along with Religious Education is part of the new evangelization.

*The Church finds herself facing a 'new stage of evangelisation' ... Our times are complex, pervaded by profound changes. And yet the Holy Spirit continues to arouse the thirst for God within people, and within the Church a new fervour, new methods, and new expressions for the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>*

### References

- 1 Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* of Pope John Paul II, 1981, 1
- 2 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis, 2016, 1
- 3 *Directory for Catechesis*, 2020, 37

This document also quotes widely from the Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document Family Life Education, Grades 1-8, 2023.

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