



EDUCATING FOR LIFE

VISION FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT OUR LADY OF THE WAYSIDE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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EDUCATING FOR LIFE

VISION FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT OLWCS

INTRODUCTION

At OLWCS, we recognize that our students have a distinctive place in their family, school, community, country and Church as persons whom God has created and called. Supportive and inspiring teachers, a lively Catholicism and a genuine respect for family and culture form a milieu in which boys and girls can become joyful young men and women of accomplishment, service and faith. By interweaving the classical, natural, and Catholic into an integrated learning experience, Wayside offers students an outstanding Education for Life in terms of faith, vocation, livelihood, citizenship and personal fulfilment.

THE STRANDS

1 Classical

From the tradition of Western civilization, Wayside has adapted the classical emphasis upon grammar, logic and rhetoric known as the Trivium. At the primary, intermediate and secondary levels, mastering fundamentals (grammar), thinking clearly (logic) and communicating well (rhetoric) permeates every educational endeavour regardless of the discipline. Possession of these 'tools of learning' equips the young person to succeed admirably in any walk of life.

While the horizons of history seem endless, a student's time is limited. And so, his course of study must be focussed in order to attain understanding. Over twelve years, the Wayside student mines the richness of Western learning – as represented by the heritage of the great cities of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome and mediated through Christian Europe – by systematically examining aspects of the ancient, medieval, renaissance and modern periods.

Supporting this acquisition of the tools of learning and learning about Western Civilization itself is the study of two other languages: Latin and Music. From the gentle and almost imperceptible process of memorizing words as a Grade One student to the translation of texts as a senior, Wayside students learn how to see reality from the Latin viewpoint, to discipline their minds, to expand their vocabulary, to strengthen their grasp upon the basics of grammar and to understand better languages indebted to Latin, which has a place of precedence in the history and writings of the Church.

In a complementary fashion, Wayside students explore and make their own the cultural and musical heritage of the sacred choral music of Beethoven, Brahms, Handel, Mozart, Palestrina, Victoria, Haydn and Reger under the expert direction of a professional conductor. Characterized by its association with Sacred Scripture, set apart from that which is secular, recognizable as true art and most suitably sung in a liturgical setting, this music lifts up the soul to God, develops confidence in public appearance, teaches teamwork and immerses students in the best of Western heritage.



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2 Natural

Throughout the primary and intermediate years, Wayside continually stimulates the child's sense of wonder and curiosity, and develops her skills, by exploring the natural world through frequent outings, observing this world in a scientific and artistic way, recording observations (both text and sketch) in personalized Nature Journals, identifying and classifying regional flowers, trees, birds, mammals and insects, making collections for the purpose of learning how to label, classify and display, and conducting simple experiments to understand the scientific method. In the secondary years, this experiential foundation is firmly built upon by spending several weeks every year very practically applying the scientific method to an almost infinite variety of biological subjects in field, forest and stream.

Learning about the local environment through sustained personal contact, observation, questioning, sketching, personal presence and experimentation helps the student to experience the beauty, interconnectedness, and diversity of the natural world: a world we inhabit and are an intimate part of, which is not simply an external object to be manipulated. Wayside marries a reverent, careful appreciation of the natural world to a scientific knowing of it.

3 Catholic

The Catholic Faith informs every aspect of a Wayside education in a manner which enhances the academic enterprise. Most especially, this presence is manifested by teacher-mentors who witness joyfully to the Catholic Faith and have received publically the *mandatum* from the Bishop of the Diocese of Peterborough.

Dedication of the school to the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mother, under her title of "Our Lady of the Wayside," daily Mass and prayers by the entire school in the Chapel in front of the Blessed Sacrament, Adoration, Confessions, observance of the rhythms of the liturgical year, familiarity and use of Sacred Scripture, reading the lives of the saints, becoming friends with one's personal patron saint, reciting the Holy Rosary and the Divine Mercies and singing Sacred Music are a normal part of a Wayside education.

A solid catechetical program, employing magisterially approved and time-tested materials, ensures a gradual grasp of the fundamentals of the Faith. In an age appropriate manner, students are also introduced in the course of their studies to important Catholic writers, thinkers, artists, activists, scholars, scientists, saints, bishops and popes who have made stellar contributions to culture and building up Western civilization.

INTEGRATED LEARNING (OUR PEDAGOGY)

Pedagogy refers to the art of teaching and integration is the act of combining into a unified whole. At Wayside, understanding this unified whole requires reference to the:

- i. 'what', 'why' and 'how' of education;
- ii. criteria used for selecting educational sources;
- iii. balance of the program;
- iv. familial character of the school.



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1 The 'Why', 'What' and 'How' of a Wayside Education¹

The 'Why' of a Wayside education, as stated in the opening paragraph of this document, is "an outstanding education for life in terms of Faith, vocation, livelihood, citizenship and personal fulfillment." This education mostly aims at the general rather than the specialized, at integral human rather than technical formation, at the liberal arts rather than vocational training.

The 'What' and 'How' of education refer to what is to be learned and how this learning will take place. Briefly, these can be understood in terms of the inter-relations of goals, means, and areas/operations/activities relative to the acquisition or enlargement of knowledge, skills and ideas/values.

At Wayside, the goal of the acquisition of organized knowledge is attained by means of didactic instruction; i.e., drill, textbook work, directed teaching (lectures for older students) and memorization of the facts of subjects. The goal of the development of intellectual and learning skills is attained by means of coaching and supervised practice in operations like reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating, problem-solving, observing, measuring, estimating and exercising critical judgment. Finally, the goal of the enlargement of understanding of ideas and values is attained by means of Socratic questioning and active participation in discussion of texts during seminars, examination of works of art and involvement in artistic activities like Music, Drama and the Visual Arts.

Most often these three basic sorts of learning – Didactic teaching, coaching and supervised practice and discussion and participatory activity – occur in the same class. They inform and strengthen each other. While some didactic instruction is indispensable, the heart of education lies in extended, guided conversations, supervised practice of skills and participatory activities: the latter deepen and encourage appropriation of learning because they fire the heart, soul and mind of the student.

2 Sources

Educational sources are any materials used to inform one's learning: e.g. a Shakespearian play, a stream teeming with crayfish, or a piece of pottery crafted by a local artisan. At Wayside, quality is preferred over quantity; and, the quality of a source is assessed relative to what is original, excellent, lasting, human or wondrous. Whenever possible, primary sources are preferred to secondary; sources emphasizing what is good, true, beautiful and virtuous are preferred to those of lesser worth; sources promoting knowledge of the human condition, possibilities and purpose are preferred to those simply conveying facts and figures; and, sources inspiring wonder of the natural world are preferred to those which treat creation merely as data for dissection.

¹This section paraphrases and borrows liberally from Mortimer J. Adler, *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1982) 21-36.



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3 Balanced

Balance refers specifically to an integrated education in which the manner, quantity and selection of subjects studied - as well as the intellectual, emotional and virtuous growth these induce in the learner – are in harmony.

While subject areas are necessary for educating, the best educational experiences are not the result of the division of knowledge into disciplines. Life is not so constructed. The whole, indeed, is greater than the sum of the parts. The best learning occurs when disciplinary walls give way to interdisciplinary study: e.g. sketching the snowflake, using calligraphy to title the page, blessing the Lord for the gift of frost and snow with the Prophet Daniel, writing the poem or imaginary story about the day snow first fell upon the earth, and re-telling the story or reciting the poem from memory. At the secondary level, interdisciplinary seminars in the areas of Literature and Thought and History and Geography promote integration and create opportunities for satisfying experiences that emerge out of the unity of the learning approach and disciplines.

The inbuilt preference for spiral, personal and poetic learning in the Wayside curriculum creates a balance that counters the fragmentation, separation and isolation which afflicts much learning today. Spiral learning means what is learned at one stage is re-visited and deepened at another. This creates the possibility for coherence, texture, vibrancy and insight. The child who encounters the warrior-king Odysseus in a story-book in Grade Three and masters the geography of the Greek world in Grade Seven is better prepared to understand this epic poem when he reads it in Grade Ten. Personal learning puts the student in touch with the talented, proficient, expert, learned, artistic, and trained in our community through imaginative and flexible arrangements such as those envisioned in the Senior Research Project. While scientific and abstract reasoning are definitely developed and supported at Wayside, a place of privilege is granted to poetic knowledge; that is the first-hand knowledge gained from a patient, leisurely, disciplined encountering, consideration and assessment of reality in its particularity, concreteness, variety, sensuousness and density. Spiral learning counters the fragmentation of learning over time and space; personal learning counters the separation of learning in the classroom from learning in the wider community; poetic learning counters the isolation of direct learning from contact with reality itself which can result from living in a world mediated by technology.

Balance is also achieved in a Wayside curriculum by ensuring that everyone receives a rounded education. Unsurprisingly educational trends in a society enamoured by consumerism, entertainment, technology and economic imperatives are affected by the ideas that 'more is good' and 'change is good'. In the acquisition of an education for life, however, less is often more and the perennial usually outweighs the passing. At Wayside, students study a common curriculum of essentials with few electives from which exemptions are rare. The student who favours Literature is led to discover the value of Biology, Physics and Chemistry; while the student who favours Calculus is led to discover the value of choral Music, Art, and Drama. The rounded education also means that the body as well as the soul is schooled: thus a Wayside education involves daily exercise and a varied physical education program.



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4 Familial Character

Finally, a word or two is necessary to explain the related meanings which attach to the phrase, 'family character,' relative to a Wayside education. In the most elemental sense, this phrase recognizes the principle of Catholic sacramental and social teaching that mothers and fathers are the first and best educators of their children. Wayside exists to support the basic cell of society: the family. The phrase also recognizes that Wayside exists as a community of families voluntarily providing educational opportunities for other families as an apostolic activity which is part of the mission of the Church. Finally, the phrase speaks to the loving Christian community which Wayside seeks to develop amongst its students, staff, parents, volunteers, alumni and spiritual and material benefactors. This character manifests itself by gestures of hospitality, by respect for others as *imago Dei* which is the foundation of any etiquette, by the exercise of a shared stewardship and, occasionally, by common activity which transcends groupings by grade, age or skill – for example, our annual All Saints Day festivities (Holy Mass, Litany of the Saints, Costume Party and Games) and our building, decorating and mounting of bird houses on the property.

SUMMARY: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WAYSIDE EXPERIENCE

The desired characteristics of a student's experience at Wayside have been capsulated in the table of adjectives below. The text above is an expansion of this table. The experience should be:

CATHOLIC	CULTURAL	FOUNDATIONAL
HISTORICAL	ORIGINAL	LASTING
WESTERN	CLASSICAL	INTEGRATED
NATURAL	FAMILIAL	PERSONAL
BALANCED	INSPIRING	