



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Learning and Living in Faith*

## Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: April 22, 2024

Subject: **Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week 2024**

Origin: Katharine Stevenson, Superintendent of Education

## Purpose

Each year, the Catholic community of Ontario engages in a week-long celebration of the unique identity and distinctive contributions of Catholic education during Catholic Education Week. This week is also nationally designated as Mental Health Week. This report will provide an overview of the way in which the DCDSB will recognize and celebrate both Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week from May 5 to May 10, 2024.

## Background

Catholic Education Week (CEW) is held each year in May in the 29 Catholic School Boards across Ontario. This year, CEW is May 5 to May 10. The theme for CEW 2024 is “Catholic Education: We are Called to Love,” and the spiritual quotation that anchors this theme is, “If we love one another, God lives in us” (1 John 4:12).

Each year, the CEW theme is accompanied by five sub-themes, which serve to deepen understanding of the theme from different theological perspectives. Each day of CEW (Monday to Friday) highlights a different sub-theme. The CEW 2024 sub-themes are “We are Called to Love...”

- As a people of hope
- As a people of faith
- As a people of mercy
- As a people of justice
- As a people of joy

The themes for CEW 2024 have been inspired by the following considerations:

## Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week 2024

- The upcoming Jubilee Year of 2025, “Pilgrims of Hope,” announced by Pope Francis
- The fifth anniversary of *Renewing the Promise*, the Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Ontario on the mission and vision of Catholic Education
- The recent synod of the Church as a model of listening as an act of love and to strengthen relationships
- The Papal Visit to Canada and our hope for our continued work for Truth and Reconciliation
- The correspondence with Mental Health Week as a reminder to support each other’s wellbeing with love and compassion
- A continued focus on Equity and Inclusion in Catholic schools in recognition of God’s unconditional love for all God’s children

A rich repository of resources is made available to the Catholic educational community on the Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA) website at <https://www.ocsta.on.ca/project/we-are-called-to-love/>

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s Mental Health Week is May 6 to May 12. This year’s theme is “A Call to be Kind: Because compassion connects us all.” This year’s Mental Health Week is centred on the healing power of compassion, as well as kindness as intrinsic to our shared humanity. Among the messages in the Canadian Mental Health Association’s toolkit is, “Compassion isn’t just about being kind to others, it’s about extending that same kindness to ourselves.”

### **Information**

The Faith Formation Department and Student Services have collaborated to provide several resources to classroom educators to support the recognition of Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week. These resources include:

- Administrator/Chaplain Package, which includes morning prayers and announcements for each day (Monday to Friday). Each morning prayer highlights the sub-theme for the day. Each day’s announcement focuses on a different mental health strategy; breathing, muscle relaxation, visualization, distraction, and gratitude.
- OCSTA Catholic Education Week Lesson Plans for use with the OCSTA curated book list for kindergarten, primary, junior, and intermediate classes
- Virtual Field Trips, which are daily activities and mental health strategies highlighted within a press-and-play PowerPoint presentation. Elementary and secondary educators can access age-appropriate tools to engage and connect with students in order to support their faith, mental health, and wellbeing.

The Communications Department has created a joint Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week webpage to share information and resources with DCDSB students and families. Here, families can enjoy many of the OCSTA books related to the CEW sub-themes, access other OCSTA resources, such as the CEW song and prayer, and

explore mental health resources. Also included are some highlights of the week's events. For example:

- Monday, May 6 – System-Wide Mass and Distinguished Catholic Educator and Leader Award Ceremony at St. Bernadette Parish
- Wednesday, May 7 – The CEW Provincial Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. Gerard Bergie. The Mass will be live-streamed beginning at 11:00 a.m.
- Friday, May 10 - Staff and students will be encouraged to wear green to acknowledge that every person has mental health that requires care, just as physical health requires care.

Elementary and secondary schools will each plan classroom and whole-school activities and celebrations. Through communication home, families will be welcomed to join in the celebrations, which will then be further celebrated on school social media, in newsletters and parish bulletins, and through DCDSB communications. This week is an opportunity to give witness to our distinct Catholic identity and the gift of publicly funded Catholic education in our community and beyond.

TB/KS