

JUNE 2023

# PARENTS4PARENTS PRESS

Official Newsletter of The Ontario Association of  
Parents in Catholic Education - OAPCE

"We are many,  
We are one."

## Message from OAPCE

Dear OAPCE Representatives, Parents, Guardians, and  
Partners in Education,

Galatians 6:9

*So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up,  
the time will come when we will reap the harvest.*

As the school year comes to a close, we want to thank you for sharing your gifts of time and energy with us, and for supporting our children and/or students, and each other! We are blessed to have you join us throughout the year at our regional committee meetings; for subscribing to our newsletter; and for sharing OAPCE news among your respective communities. We were thrilled to connect in person with many of you at our recent spring conference in Kingston! We value your ideas, suggestions, comments, and participation as it guides and keeps our efforts towards fulfilling our mission of “engaging, advocating, and enhancing”, on behalf of our children, informed, balanced, and effective! Your selfless contributions, which enhance our children’s journey through education, inspire us every day!

As OAPCE begins its year long celebration of its 85th anniversary the organization will be taking on a much more involved role of advocacy for Catholic Education. Catholic Education is going through a very challenging time with the many different issues, concerns and items that our children are facing each day. We remain committed that parents are their child's first educator and want to work in partnership with all individuals at the schools to help ensure their children achieve success. Ensuring that our children are learning through a Catholic lens is of utmost importance. As is that the children are provided with a non-politicized education curriculum they deserve. All other conversations should only reside with the approval and support of the parent.

Congratulations to all our elementary and secondary graduates and their families, as they turn the page on a new chapter in their lives! Wishing you all God’s enduring love, hope, wisdom, and faith along your journey, and a safe and restful happy holiday!

## This issue:

Message from OAPCE  
PAGE 01

Message from the  
Liaison Bishop  
PAGE 02

Year End Report  
PAGE 03

ENGAGE:  
Spring Conference  
PAGE 06

ADVOCATE:  
PAGE 07

ENHANCE:  
Institute for Catholic  
Education Symposium  
PAGE 08

The Family Zone  
PAGE 09

BeyondU  
PAGE 10

 [oapce@oapce.org](mailto:oapce@oapce.org)

 [@oapceontario](https://twitter.com/oapceontario)

 [@oapceontario](https://facebook.com/oapceontario)

 [oapce.org](http://oapce.org)



# Summer Message from the Liaison Bishop ✠ Yvan Mathieu, SM

## Message from the Liaison Bishop

BY ✠YVAN MATHIEU, SM

Dear members of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE),

Summer is about to start. After a very full year of work and commitments, it will be good to have some time for ourselves and for our families. As vacation time is near, I like to remember the invitation Jesus made to his apostles after they came back from their first mission. “He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.” (Mk 6:31) It is important therefore to take seriously that time of rest.

What is fascinating is that, while he wants his apostles to rest, he himself continues his mission. Once they arrived in that deserted place, many had followed them. “He saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.” (Mk 6:34) Jesus refused to let them go without food. With the help of his disciples, he fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish: “they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.” (Mk 6:43) Jesus will continue to be at work in our families this summer.

As members of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, it is important to take our summer rest seriously. We can take that time off while continuing to evangelize the members of our families. In his June 4 message, pope Francis’s words suggested that “we can think of God [...] through the

image of a family gathered around the table, where life is shared. [...] it is not only an image; it is reality! It is reality because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that the Father poured into our hearts through Jesus (cf. Gal 4:6), makes us taste, makes us savour God’s presence: the presence of God, always close, compassionate and tender. [...] The invitation he extends to us, we might say, is to sit at the table with God to share in his love.”

What a beautiful invitation: to sit at the table with God. Allow me to continue to quote pope Francis. By allowing God to sit at our summer table, “we commit ourselves to bear witness to God-as-love, creating communion in his name.” What a summer this will be! We will be strengthened by our rest and by the loving presence of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That way, we will be able to start anew our mission in September: to “bear witness to God-as-love,” to “offer everyone the food of God’s forgiveness and Gospel joy.”

And I conclude with pope Francis’s words: “may Mary help us to live the Church as that home where one loves in a familiar way, to the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

A wonderful summer to you all!

✠ Yvan Mathieu, SM



# OAPCE 2022-2023 Year End Report

## Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education



### **This past school year, the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) has continued to advance**

its parent engagement strategy with a focus on communication tools and channels that will maximize information sharing across the province among OAPCE liaison representatives in the membership boards to parents and stakeholders.



The spring of 2022 saw the return of our in-person conference that was held in Milton, Ontario. The theme of the conference was "Re-Claiming and Re-Engaging Parents As Partners." During the conference, the audience was treated to a carousel of connections that saw a stellar line up of speakers during the course of the day. Each speaker's presentation continues to be made available as an ongoing resource for parents at <https://www.oapce.org/conference2022/>. Conference delegates were invited to explore the vendor market. This market was focused on providing resources for parent engagement and school councils as well as fundraising ideas. Delegates also received a series of books from several of the vendors.

OAPCE has invested heavily in a robust web presence with a focus on providing regional committees with the opportunity to grow their local sites within the greater provincial website. Regional directors have been working to ensure that regional websites reflect local events and priorities. This has resulted in an increased visibility for all regions, new or existing, to maintain the consistency of the OAPCE brand. We will continue to explore appropriate social media channels to further engage parents.

Regional committee growth across the province has been a significant priority this past school year. Specific regions with new OAPCE Directors included Waterloo, Algonquin Lakeshore, and Niagara. These regions held inaugural regional meetings that provided essential information relating to governance and policies to parents. All regions also hosted a guest speaker at the meetings for the personal development of all parents. This brought a consistent message and created an equitable learning experience for parents in all corners of the province.

- For your information, all year end reports were approved by parents at the April 22, 2023 AGM. They are linked on the website if you wish to read them.
- <https://www.oapce.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-2023-YEAR-END-REPORT.pdf>



## Advocacy for publicly funded Catholic education is a cornerstone of OAPCE's mandate.

In March, OAPCE engaged with the Minister of Education to highlight some key issues that parents have raised collectively from across the province. One item most notably was to develop a strong and inclusive parent engagement strategy to support parent engagement in a post-COVID world. OAPCE shared that this could be as simple as revamping and updating the outdated parent engagement resources on the Ministry website.



A recurring theme among the secondary school parents was the need for students to have more time to “catch-up.” This was evident in our 2021 Parent Survey. OAPCE tabled that consideration be given to consider reinstating an additional year of high school. Most parents wish for Grade 13 or OAC (Ontario Academic Credit) to be brought back. Parents feel that many students are still adjusting to what life is like after the pandemic. Many are still playing catch up academically and navigating their mental health, along with other issues and pressures.

In addition, OAPCE continues to reach out regularly on topics tabled from across the province to bring them to the Ministry's attention by attending meetings with the Parent Education Priorities and Engagement Branch. Most recently, OAPCE followed up on last year's parent survey that identified that more support is needed for students as a result of the wide sweeping losses in all areas of development due to the pandemic. We continue to engage to be actively included and consulted rather than simply informed of decisions.

The advocacy work that OAPCE does is also in partnership with several other organizations. Most notably this past school year, the role of Chair of the Institute of Catholic Education (ICE) was held by our OAPCE Executive Director. This strong and effective partnership will see OAPCE as an integral support to the annual ICE Symposium taking place in May 2023. OAPCE was also integral in hosting several information sessions with parents from across the province in partnership with ICE to help advance the parent engagement around the hope expectations for the resource updates that are planned as they refresh the teaching material of the Fully Alive program.

Our advocacy has always focused and will continue to focus on an effort to ensure that our children across the province are learning in a Christocentric environment and being taught the curriculum through the lens of the Catholic faith. Parents recognize that the relationship between learning and believing is fundamental in Catholic schools and expect their children to graduate within the framework of the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs). Graduates not only gain knowledge and skills but values, empathy, and compassion.



## Enhance

### **At OAPCE, enhancing parent education is firmly grounded in the continuous learning of parents.**

As such, OAPCE looks to host several learning events throughout the year with a goal to remove barriers to have parents actively participate and is eager to provide parents with resources and information that will support parents in their communities. Each year, our conference provides travel subsidies for parents attending out of the host area as well as recording conference speakers so that sessions can be posted to the website at a later date for those parents who cannot participate in person.

OAPCE successfully produced monthly issues of our newsletter publication "Parents4Parents Press." This faith-based publication highlights updates to support advocacy and engagement opportunities through OAPCE activities, Ministry updates, and resources and showcases Catholic partnerships. In addition, OAPCE designed, developed, and published several parent engagement support tools — Parents4Parents 1Pagers. These focus on key activities that parents can undertake in various areas within the parish, school, community, and online.

OAPCE was pleased to partner with the Ontario Catholic School Trustee Association (OCSTA) to present a webinar in the fall in conjunction with "Catholic Virtual Ontario" (CVO). This well-attended event helped educate parents on the availability of Catholic designed, developed, and delivered online learning courses. The recording remains available on the OAPCE website for parents that were unable to attend the event in real time.



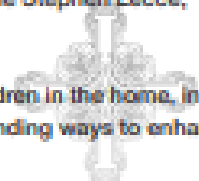
## Internal Operations

During the year, OAPCE saw many changes within the membership for our Board of Directors. We said goodbye to our Liaison Bishop from the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, Most Rev. Bishop Dabrowski and welcomed Most Rev. Bishop Yvan Mathieu. We are forging a wonderful new relationship with Most Rev. Bishop Mathieu and look forward to his continued guidance and support of OAPCE. Within the regions, many long-standing OAPCE Directors' terms expired. We thank them for their years of volunteer service on the OAPCE Board of Directors and in their communities, as well as for helping us achieve our many objectives. We also welcomed several new Directors this year, including Algonquin Lakeshore, Hamilton, and Niagara.

On the governance side, the organization continues to maintain good standing within the Canada Revenue Agency, meeting all of the requirements of a nonprofit organization. The annual financial review was successfully completed and is available on the website. In addition, the biannual review of the bylaws was conducted, and amendments will be tabled for approval at the annual general meeting held in Kingston on April 22, 2023.

To end, we thank all of our Catholic School Board members for their support. We also thank all our publicity funded Catholic Education partners for their continued relationship, most notably the Institute for Catholic Education and its Executive Director, Dr. Anne Jamieson, for her strong commitment to our organization and to our Executive Director. Thank you to Honorable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education for his ongoing support of OAPCE and Catholic education.

Most importantly, a huge thank you to all of our parents across the province for continuing to support their children in the home, in the classroom, at the school and board levels, and in the parish. Without this strong engagement, advocacy, and finding ways to enhance our system, the gift of Catholic Education would not be as it is today.





# Engage

On April 22nd, parents, guardians, OAPCE representatives, and education partners from across the province convened in person in beautiful Kingston, Ontario for OAPCE's 84th Anniversary, Spring Conference, and Annual General Meeting. We were thrilled to welcome and connect with new and familiar faces from across the province, as well as to listen and interact with our guest speakers.

Blessed with mild weather, we are so grateful for the wide variety of services and products that were available for browsing from our vendors, and for the opportunity to celebrate mass together as a community at St. Mary's Cathedral, which included a blessing for all our parents, guardians, OAPCE representatives, and education partners. This day concluded with a wonderful evening of delicious fare, music, and dancing, and an awards ceremony to recognize the outstanding contributions of our OAPCE Award recipients.

Special thanks to the ALCDSB for their support and help!





# Advocate

Our OAPCE Co-Executive Director, Joe Perri, appeared in front of a committee at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding input for the Better Schools Act Bill 98. Go to [www.oapce.org](http://www.oapce.org) to a video of the presentation. As a result of the Bill being passed in June, both Co-Executive Directors recently met with the Ministry of Education to provide input into a "Parent Guide" that will consolidate existing parents' rights in legislation, regulation and policy. We will share more information regarding this most important piece of legislation for parents as the guide will be released in the Fall of 2023!

On May 16, 2023, OAPCE was invited to Queen's park lobby day for Catholic Education - this is a day when all Catholic partners go to Queen's Park to advocate for Catholic Education - OAPCE as the voice of parents was acknowledged by the Minister of Education for our commitment as well as by the NDP Leader and by Archbishop Leo.

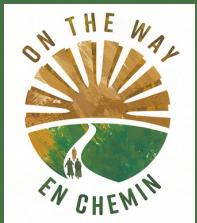
Our Co-Executive Directors invited the The Minister of Education to the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) Symposium hosted in May. It was the first time any Minister of Education accepted an invite to such an event and he was well received by all - He gave a few words and committed to publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario and once again acknowledged OAPCE and the work that we do to promote and protect the gift of Catholic Education.

OAPCE is making an impact and getting noticed for decisive and strong advocacy for parent involvement in Catholic Education. As a result, we have to be assertive and aggressive to take advantage of the opportunities at hand. Our Strategic Plan will lay out the specific steps involved to secure the future of Catholic Education in Ontario.

The work to "Engage, Advocate, and Enhance" is ongoing:

- Ensure you have directed your taxes for supporting Catholic Education ([read more here](#))
- Follow [@oapceontario](#) for updates and visit the website [www.oapce.org](http://www.oapce.org) for more information
- Ensure you are signed up for OAPCE emails and respond to parent surveys in a timely manner.

“Our advocacy has always and continues to focus on ensuring that children in Catholic Education across the province are able to learn an up-to-date curriculum to ensure their future success.”



# ENHANCE

## Institute for Catholic Education: On The Way / En Chemin Symposium

OAPCE attended the recent Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) symposium from May 8-10, 2023. The Symposium focused on adult faith formation. It's an event that is held once every five years and is open to all Catholic school boards across Ontario - OAPCE was a big contributor and helped to organize throughout the year leading up to it.

Attendees represented the English Catholic and French Catholic district school boards, representatives from the ICE partner organizations, members of the clergy, bishops, chaplains and religious educators, and various guests from across Canada who work with ICE for Catholic education and Faith Formation.

A debrief session was held after the symposium by appointed "careful listeners" – the outcome will hopefully be a paper showing hopes, wishes, challenges with adult faith formation in re-engaging and restoring faith.

One great idea that was shared was perhaps a family of schools (within a parish) would work together to organize events to help celebrate sacraments and help parents and children connect to the parish /school community.







# THE FAMILY ZONE

## Summer Fun Guide to Family Faith Formation

Summer is the perfect time to relax, slow down, and try new and fun activities. It can also be a time to initiate and develop faith conversations while enjoying the outdoors and reconnecting with your family. Here are some great activities for you and your kids to check out:

- Gardening: Gardening is a great way to teach about faith, as plants and faith both have seeds that grow. Jesus used seeds and plants as metaphors for living a faithful Christian life. Plant a wildflower seed bomb in your garden to help native pollinators like bees and butterflies. Read the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23 and talk about sowing seeds in places where plants won't grow (rocky or weedy ground) and why you have to plant the seed bomb in good soil.

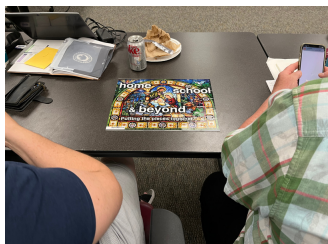
Resource: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-make-seed-bomb>

- Nature Walks or Hikes: Taking a walk or hike along a forest trail is a great way to observe the wonders of nature and God's creation. Consider framing your walk with verses from the Book of Genesis about how God created the heavens and the earth. Bring binoculars with you and observe plants, birds, and other wildlife through them. Have younger children make their own binoculars to take along!

Resource: <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/toilet-paper-roll-binoculars-4164742>

- Activity Books: This Catholic-based activity book for kids by Connie Clark is full of puzzles, games, summer sports and food, fun facts, Bible verses, and prayers to help celebrate summer as a gift from God. There are even special sections on summer saint days and Catholic travel destinations!





# THE FAMILY ZONE

## Home, School and Beyond



**Joe Perri, Co-Executive Director of OAPCE, led an engaging presentation at the Toronto regional meeting & Board of Directors Meeting. OAPCE is excited to bring forward personal insight and perspective that both compel and motivate others towards their own success benchmarks. These types of shared experiences and learnings are beneficial for greater parent/child/educator engagement.**



**Catholic Education is going through a challenging time with the many different issues that our children are facing each day. We are at a crucial junction where we have to join as Parents, Educators and Leaders, to put the pieces together to ensure the success of our children's future. Ensuring that the voices of the many parents' are heard-**





# JOE PERRI

**CO-ED AND  
CONFIDENCE COACH**

*"Be Ready to Be Engaged"*



**"GAME CHANGER"**  
Turning ideas into action  
to help you re-imagine  
your life.

Providing a positive  
approach to attain your  
life's goals.

**"REAL"**  
Guiding you from  
personal life experience  
that brings coaching  
to a new level.  
Inspiring you to take  
charge of your destiny.

**"ENGAGING"**  
Presentations that will  
compel all audiences.

**\*\*UNSCRIPTED\*\***  
**LIVE Q & A**

