



The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education Membership Overview and Benefits

About the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education:

Since 1939, the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) is a provincial not-for-profit organization working with a network of education partners and volunteer parent leaders to promote and protect Catholic Education, as well as actively support parent involvement at all levels. It is the longest standing parent organization in Catholic Education, the only one recognized by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, and in 2024 we are celebrating our 85th anniversary.

Our Vision:

OAPCE is the voice of parents that advocates for, promotes and protects publicly funded Catholic Education in Ontario.

Our Mission:

Our mission is to “Engage, Advocate, and Enhance” Catholic education at the provincial and regional level through the strength of our collective voice. By connecting to home, school, and church, OAPCE collaborates with local and provincial education partners to ensure the voice of parents is represented. We have strong relationships and the support of many Catholic partners. We support one another in promoting and protecting the gift of publicly funded Catholic education for generations to come. Our partners assist in promoting all our initiatives, meetings and events, including the OAPCE Conference. They include:

Institute of Catholic Education (ICE) as a Board of Directors Member
Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario (ACBO)
Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario (CEFO)
Catholic Principals Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Ontario Catholic School Trustees’ Association (OCSTA)
Ontario Catholic Schools Business Officials Association (OCSBOA)
Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers Association (OCSOA)
Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA)

What makes OAPCE unique?

We are like no other, and there is no other. OAPCE is the only Catholic parent association recognized by the Ministry of Education and is mandated through the Education Act in Regulation 612 School Councils. OAPCE provides a voice for parents who share a common goal in advocating for the continuation and preservation of publicly funded Catholic education in the province.

Our central mandate is to share information with parents to better inform them of local school boards and Ministry of Education policies. As advocates for Catholic Education, by providing proper information and resources for parents, we support them to help their children succeed in school. If all our children succeed, then Catholic education succeeds.

Ensuring that our faith is paramount in schools integral to all that we do. We offer faith formation opportunities for parents and provide resources, guidance, and support in all aspects that impact them, both locally and provincially.

Regional Parent Involvement committees (PIC's) that are also mandated in Regulation 612 for all Public and Catholic School Boards have their own purpose: "27. (1) The purpose of a parent involvement committee is to support, encourage and enhance parent engagement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being." PIC's provide input at the board level only, whereas OAPCE does this as well at a provincial level. The official mandate of a PIC does not include advocacy of Catholic education, faith formation opportunities for parents or to have any impact on education decisions.

How does OAPCE represent the voice of parents?

OAPCE Liaison Representatives:

As per Section 612 of the Education Act, when a school board pays membership, every local parent school council is required to have an OAPCE liaison representative. This position must be held by a Roman Catholic parent or guardian of a child currently in a Catholic District School Board. This position is an additional voting parent member position to the usual school council membership and the purpose is to provide contact between the school council, the regional committee, and the provincial Association. These OAPCE liaison representatives will sit as part of a Regional Committee and become the conduit to share parents' views and concerns with OAPCE.

OAPCE is governed by a Board of Directors who work on a volunteer basis. These Directors have a direct connection to their region's OAPCE liaison representatives and provide opportunities to meet with them in their regional committees. Through meetings and ongoing discussions, the parent perspective is heard and provides a voice to the provincial association.

OAPCE is committed to supporting parents and educators in their mission. It elevates the public education profile by providing parents with information and resources. It provides a platform for advocacy and engagement for parents to create an educational environment that nurtures the hearts and minds of children, enabling them to become informed, compassionate, and faithful Catholics who will positively contribute to our society.

[Why be a member of OAPCE and the Benefits of Membership](#)

What does OAPCE do?

- 1) OAPCE has a direct connection and meets with the Minister of Education on an ongoing basis. We provide extensive feedback and discussions regarding the issues in Catholic education today.
- 2) OAPCE meets with the Ministry of Education's Inclusive Education Priorities and Engagement Branch, Parent initiatives and working tables, Curriculum Review, Student Achievement Division, Healthy Schools, the Minister's Partnership Table, the EQAO's Assessment Review Committee as well as the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT).
- 3) As the voice of parents in Catholic Education, OAPCE advocates for the importance of Catholic education and any changes to publicly funded education. Most recently, we were invited to address the committee regarding *Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023*, which proposed amendments to the Education Act. OAPCE expressed support for areas of the bill such as:

*The emphasis on the need for each child to achieve their best potential, with a stronger focus on the fundamentals of reading, writing, and math, while also adapting to the new technological world.

*The importance of accommodating different learning styles and ensuring that parent suggestions are respected to promote the best performance and health of students.

*The current low levels of parent involvement and reiterating that parental engagement is integral to student success.

*The need for support and guidance for parents and highlighted in the Education Act for parents to work with groups such as OAPCE.

*A protocol for parents' complaints, emphasizing the importance of transparency regarding complaint resolutions – that schools and boards should track complaints and be accountable to them.

*Ensure transparency in boards regarding funding.

*The need for more collaboration with boards on the code of conduct, aiming to remove politicization and promote transparency in this area.

*Most importantly, above all, parents are their child's first educators and should be respected as such in all aspects of education.

- 4) OAPCE is an equal Board member on the Institute of Catholic Education (ICE) Board of Directors. As the only partner association that represents parents from across the province, we are invited to, and participate in consultations of importance on religious curriculum. Most recently, and ongoing, is our participation in the new Family Life curriculum. OAPCE Liaisons and Directors participated in an extensive consultation in the beginning stages and continues to provide input as it is being developed for the Fall of 2024.
- 5) OAPCE provides a parent perspective to the provincial media, including the Catholic Register, Salt and Light TV, and all other media outlets.
- 6) OAPCE invites parents in Catholic education all across Ontario to participate in our annual conference that consists of keynote speakers, celebrations of our faith, and workshops related to parenting, navigating, and enhancing our education system and supporting student achievement in Ontario. OAPCE liaison representatives are invited to attend with no charge to the all day conference.

- 7) OAPCE hosts many regional committee meetings throughout the year, providing valuable insights and resources. This year in our regional meetings these were some of the presentations provided:

***Home, School and Beyond:** Our Co-Executive Director, J. Perri, provided an engaging “Puzzle-building” exercise in which parents worked together to solve the big picture. Catholic Education is going through a challenging time with the many different issues, concerns and items that our children are facing each day. As 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, we also want to ensure that our children are learning through a Catholic lens.

***The Gift of Christmas: Given, Shared, Received:** Teresa Hartnett, Diocese of Hamilton, provided us with an Advent retreat to learn about the three gifts of Christmas, given to all by Jesus’s birth – gifts we are called to share with our family, friends and colleagues, and most importantly the Holy Family – a true representation of our own families.

***A Parent’s Insight: Exploring the Benefits and Drawbacks of ChatGPT and AI Technology:** Workshop by Anthony Perrotta, Principal & Educational Leader. This parent workshop aimed to explore the impact of ChatGPT and AI technologies in schools. We discussed the benefits, such as personalized learning and efficient assistance, while also addressing concerns like privacy, potential biases, and the need for responsible student use.

- 8) Support for parents and leadership development has been accomplished through a variety of means to suit the needs of all parents.

a) Parent-friendly information and skill-building opportunities on the OAPCE website:

The OAPCE website provides updates on OAPCE provincial and regional business. In addition, the website contains useful resources for parents to access and share. Most recently we have launched our new OAPCE Blog post which discusses current issues in Catholic Education with several guest writers and contributors.

<https://oapce.org/>

b) Webinars

OAPCE offers regular webinars, including Catholic Virtual Ontario, the newest platform created by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association to provide courses for students to meet their mandatory online course requirement now set out by the Ministry of Education. They have also had various webinars on social media safety, the value of incorporating family time through various different movie experiences that connect to the Catholic Graduate School Expectations as well as ongoing parent engagement webinars.

c) Newsletters – Parents4Parents Press – OAPCE publishes a regular newsletter for all parents providing updates of the actions of the Ministry of Education, news from Catholic education partners, as well as reports from the regions across the province.

d) Parents 4 Parents 1 Pager - this year, OAPCE published a new one page resource focusing on reclaiming and reengaging parents as partners. It is available digitally on the website and hard copies were distributed to parents across the province.

e) Information sharing through social media postings and mailings:

OAPCE work and advocacy is shared on our social media accounts. Here are a couple of examples:



f) OAPCE’s annual Fall and Spring conferences – the ONLY Conference in the Province for Parents in Catholic Education:

We hold several annual conferences for parents across Ontario in the fall in conjunction with our commissioning ceremonies and in the spring. We were able to host several one day conferences or meetings to welcome and commission our new OAPCE liaison representatives for the year and provide them guidance on their role in our organization.

In April 2024, Parents, Guardians, Representatives, and Educational Partners from across the province came together in Toronto, Ontario, at Monsignor Percy Johnson SS for OAPCE’s 85th Anniversary Spring Conference: *Celebrate OAPCE 85: A Celebration of Change, Commitment and Catholic Education*. 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 — **Karl Subban, Joe Perri, Dr. Anne Jamieson, and Chris Bray**. It also included a visit from **Minister Stephen Lecce** where he previewed the province’s cell phone restriction and anti-vaping initiatives to our delegates. There was also a wide variety of services and products that were made available for browsing from our vendors. Participants then had the opportunity to celebrate mass together as a community at St. Benedict’s Parish, which included a blessing for all our parents, guardians, OAPCE representatives, and education partners from his Grace, **Archbishop Francis Leo, Bishop Yvan Mathieu**, and St. Benedict Parish priests. The day concluded with a wonderful evening with our awards ceremony to recognize the outstanding contributions of our OAPCE Award recipients.

In tandem with the 85th conference, OAPCE published a position paper [“Empowering Parents and Preserving Catholic Education: Ensuring Student Success and Well-Being in Ontario”](#) that emphasizes the critical importance of publicly funded Catholic education in Ontario to ensure the success and well-being of students, highlighting the crucial role of parents as primary educators and advocates for their rights within the educational system.

This list is not exhaustive.

In conclusion:

In this 85th year in operation of OAPCE, we are tasked to challenge ourselves to reach even more parents across the province of Ontario than ever before. In a world where education is constantly evolving to meet the needs of a technologically advancing society, parents have a vital role to play in this process.

We have managed to grow year after year with the dedication and hard work of our OAPCE Representatives, Directors, Executive Leadership Team, and various Partners. OAPCE stands as a pillar of support for parents in Catholic Education, empowering them to take on informed and active leadership roles and advocating for their rights. The organization encourages parents to embrace their role as leaders in their school communities, ensuring that all children receive a higher quality of education and succeed to the best of their ability.

Through conferences, workshops, resources, webinars, our website and other inspirational methods, OAPCE supports and equips parents with the knowledge and tools they need to not only to become leaders but also to navigate and tackle any issues in their child's education, family situations, understanding the system, or how to support the mental health of their children. Most importantly we will continue to advocate for the continuation of the Gift of Catholic Education.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all members of the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education we thank you for your ongoing support.

Joe Perri - Co-Executive Director
Annalisa Crudo-Perri - Co-Executive Director
Denice Garell-Teti - OAPCE Chair/Director, Halton
Elizabeth Wylie - OAPCE Communications Director, Hamilton