



Connections for Catholic School Districts

The Ministry of Education's **Healthy Choices: Substance Use and Digital Safety Modules for Grade 6 Students** provide a ready-made opportunity to enhance learning about substance use, digital media literacy and making healthy informed decisions. They intentionally link with the Health and Physical Education and Language curricula, and there are many opportunities to highlight the connection between faith and safe and supportive decision making within a Catholic context.

"Forming our conscience is the work of a lifetime, in which we learn to cultivate the very sentiments of Jesus Christ, adopting the criteria behind his choices and the intentions behind his actions" (cf. Phil 2:5)(Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, Synod of Bishops, October 2018). As Catholic educators, you have the privilege of guiding students in developing moral discernment in support of human dignity. This equips students to make choices related to digital media or substance use that align with the values of the Gospel.

The following suggestions are only a few of the many possibilities for connecting the learning within the modules to faith. We encourage you to have students explore how faith can inform and support healthy decision-making related to digital media and substance use. This can help you and students discover deeper connections and insights.

The screenshot shows a magazine spread. The top half features a large image of a young man, Carlo, with a caption: "In the Conversation on Youth, Cardinal Peter Turkson speaks openly to young people of the gift of discernment and the importance of being responsible digital citizens. He encourages young people to be aware of the ways in which social media can be used for good or evil, and to practice discernment in the use of digital media." Below this is a sidebar with the title "Our Online Witness: Responsible Digital Citizenship through the lens of the Catholic Grandparents". The bottom half of the spread contains several columns of text and a small image of Carlo's mother, who is described as a "devout Catholic" who "teaches her son the importance of discernment and the value of the Eucharist".

"be creative, original and aware that God has plans for each of us – even in our online activity."



STUDENT VOICE

You may wish to encourage students to engage in scripture by identifying personal passages that resonate with what they have learned.



TRY IT!

As students reflect on the many factors and values, including faith-based, that help them make informed decisions that support their well-being, consider taking time to reflect. How does your faith support you to make healthy decisions and set or maintain habits that support your dignity, well-being and align with your values and identities?



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| Digital Media: Safe and Healthy Personal Choices | | |
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| ACTIVITY | ACTIVITY CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS |
| Minds On: Understanding key terms | <p>This activity allows students to build a shared understanding of key terms to fully engage in the lesson.</p> <p>The questions below could be used to prompt students to think about how digital media literacy is connected to Catholic values and Catholic Social Teaching. Students might also identify digital media or technology that connects to their faith life, such as digital Bibles or faith-based blogs or websites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does digital media fulfill or work against Catholic Social Teaching principals such as human dignity, community, the common good, solidarity or promotion of peace? Are there any digital media/technology materials that connect to or deepen your faith life? | <p>Family Life Education [B3.2] Evaluate how families help shape them to become responsible citizens who respect the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others. (Links to be made to Catholic Social Teaching, Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action.)</p> <p>Religious Education LS1.3: Identify the areas of "personal responsibility" that students assume in their lives and connect this to the vocation to participate in family, school and parish.</p> <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations 2 (e) Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life. 7 (e) Witnesses Catholic Social Teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society.</p> <p>Scripture You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <i>Mark 12:31</i> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <i>Philippians 2:3</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, love, conscience, responsibility, respect, justice</p> |
| Action: Level up | In this activity, students identify some of the privacy and safety risks that exist online and explore tools to help them take charge of their digital media experience and support their relationships/interactions online. | <p>Family Life Education [B1.2] Examine how friendships grow, develop and mature over time, and identify skills (e.g., communication skills, kindness and mercy, conflict resolution, etc.) needed to navigate challenges and change.</p> <p>[B3.1] Represent ways in which discernment and right judgement show spiritual maturity and help people to grow in virtue.</p> |

| Digital Media: Safe and Healthy Personal Choices | | |
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| Action: Level up (cont'd) | <p>Students could use this poster and/or slide deck to think about how the Catholic Graduate Expectations might connect to a particular scenario.</p> <p>Students could also use the Catholic model of moral decision making to help them analyze and think through the proposed scenarios within the activity.</p> | <p>Family Life Education [C2.2] Communicate how families can help foster confidence during adolescence to build healthy relationships, understand the concept of consent, grow in social-emotional learning and make informed decisions that respect self and others, in-person and online.</p> <p>Religious Education IML1.2: Explain through example, how God's gift of human reason promotes human dignity (reason and conscience e.g., natural law, work together to help us discern what is good and what is evil) and identify ways we can use reason to participate in the wisdom and goodness of Creation (e.g., care of the created universe, natural and human sciences, human development and building of communities, etc.). ML2.3: Apply a Catholic model of moral decision-making (i.e. SEE, JUDGE, and ACT) to ethical issues that arise at school or in the world (bullying, fighting, failing to do homework, and disrespecting authority). ML3.1: Locate and examine gospel passages to identify how Jesus called individuals to holiness and guided them in the moral life (e.g., Matt. 19:16-26 - the rich young man, Jn. 4:1-26 – the Samaritan woman, Mk. 10:35-45 – the disciples request for positions of honour, etc.).</p> <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations 1 (d) Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic Social Teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good. 3 (c) Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems. 3 (d) Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience. 4 (g) Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.</p> |

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| Action: Level up (cont'd) | | <p>Scripture In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. <i>Matthew 7:12</i></p> <p>Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity <i>Titus 2:7</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, love, family, conscience, responsibility, respect, tolerance, kindness</p> |
| Consolidation: Sharing strategies and learnings | <p>This consolidation activity allows students to reflect on and personalize their learning.</p> <p>Students might identify faith-based values or factors that might help them make decisions and stay safe online.</p> <p>Students might also identify faith-based supports such as speaking to a faith-leader when they need help or advice.</p> | <p>Family Life Education</p> <p>[B3.2] Evaluate how families help shape them to become responsible citizens who respect the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others.</p> <p>[B3.3] Identify how God calls each person to reflect human dignity in their thoughts, emotions and actions which positively influence mental health, well-being and relationships.</p> <p>[C2.2] Communicate how families can help foster confidence during adolescence to build healthy relationships, understand the concept of consent, grow in social-emotional learning and make informed decisions that respect self and others, in-person and online.</p> <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>1 (i) Integrates faith with life.</p> <p>3 (d) Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience.</p> <p>4 (g) Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.</p> <p>Scripture If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. <i>James 1:5</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, hope, wisdom, responsibility, respect, kindness</p> |

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| Optional Extension: Sharing the learning | <p>The optional extension activity allows for student voice and choice by having students share their learning with an audience, such as the wider school community or parents/caregivers.</p> <p>Students might also be prompted to explore and share about the life of Carlos Acutis, commonly referred to as the "Patron Saint of the Internet". Acutis was a skilled programmer but also deeply devoted to the Catholic faith. He used his technological skills to create a website documenting Eucharistic miracles worldwide. He was canonized as a saint on September 7, 2025.</p> | <p>Religious Education</p> <p>ML3.4: Examine the lives of the saints and provide examples of how their lives modeled for us what it means to live a moral and holy life (e.g., St. Brother André, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, St. Padre Pio, Blessed Mother Teresa).</p> <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>2 (e) Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the art, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.</p> <p>2 (c) Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others.</p> <p>4 (g) Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.</p> <p>Scripture Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. <i>Mark 16:15</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, hope</p> |



BRIGHT IDEAS

Using the [adapted elementary wording for Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations](#) might make the language more relevant and accessible to grade 6 students.



| Substance Use: Addictions and Related Behaviours | | |
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| ACTIVITY | ACTIVITY CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS |
| Minds On: Exploring the facts | <p>This activity supports students in building definitions of key terms and introduces students to the range of effects of several substances.</p> <p>Alcohol is one of the substances highlighted in the pre-learning activity and within the lesson as well. Educators might use this as an opportunity to breakdown stigma associated with alcohol consumption by discussing its use and symbolism in the Catholic faith.</p> | <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>1 (c) Actively reflects on God's Word as communicated through Hebrew and Christian scriptures.</p> <p>Scripture Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' <i>Matthew 26:27</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Wisdom</p> |
| Action: Building a shared understanding | <p>In this activity students will explore facts about substance use. Once again, students might explore the role of certain substances within the context of faith, spiritual or cultural ceremonies or rituals.</p> <p>Within this activity, students will also explore reasons why people may choose to use substances or not. This is an opportunity to share and highlight faith-based reasons.</p> | <p>Religious Education</p> <p>CL2: Understand the order of the Mass and the meaning of the various rites within the Liturgy.</p> <p>CL2.1: Identify the parts of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist and explain their fundamental unity in relationship to the New Testament narratives (e.g., Emmaus, Last Supper).</p> <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>1 (c) Actively reflects on God's Word as communicated through Hebrew and Christian scriptures.</p> <p>2 (a) Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values.</p> <p>Scripture An intelligent mind acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. <i>Proverbs 18:15</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, wisdom, conscience, responsibility</p> |

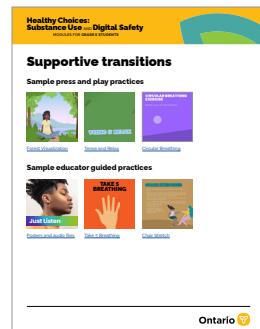
| Substance Use: Addictions and Related Behaviours | | |
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| ACTIVITY | ACTIVITY CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS |
| Consolidation: Making informed choices | <p>In this activity students will reflect on the factors that influence their decision making related to substance use.</p> <p>As with the previous activity, students might identify faith-based factors that help them make healthy informed decisions.</p> <p>Students might also identify refusal strategies that are tied to faith, such as sharing scripture or faith-based reasons that support their decisions.</p> | <p>Family Life Education</p> <p>[A2.1] Determine ways in which beliefs and values nurtured within the family form identity and help with discernment of purpose and vocation.</p> <p>[B3.1] Represent ways in which discernment and right judgement show spiritual maturity and help people to grow in virtue.</p> <p>[B3.3] Identify how God calls each person to reflect human dignity in their thoughts, emotions and actions which positively influence mental health, well-being and relationships.</p> <p>[C1.3] Illustrate a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others.</p> <p>[C2.2] Communicate how families can help foster confidence during adolescence to build healthy relationships, understand the concept of consent, grow in social-emotional learning and make informed decisions that respect self and others, in-person and online.</p> <p>Religious Education</p> <p>ML1.2: Explain through example, how God's gift of human reason promotes human dignity (reason and conscience i.e., natural law, work together to help us discern what is good and what is evil) and identify ways we can use reason to participate in the wisdom and goodness of Creation (i.e., care of the created universe, natural and human sciences, human development and building of communities, etc.).</p> <p>ML2.3: Apply a Catholic model of moral decision-making (i.e., SEE, JUDGE, and ACT) to ethical issues that arise at school or in the world (bullying, fighting, failing to do homework, and disrespecting authority).</p> <p>ML3.3: Explain using examples of the relationship between making good moral choices, developing Christian virtues and holiness.</p> |

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| Consolidation: Making informed choices (cont'd) | | <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>1 (d) Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic Social Teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good.</p> <p>3 (c) Thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems.</p> <p>3 (d) Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience.</p> <p>4 (g) Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.</p> <p>Scripture Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. <i>Romans 12:2</i></p> <p>Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. <i>Psalm 25:4</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, wisdom, courage, conscience, responsibility</p> |
| Optional Extension: Kids, alcohol and advertising: messages about drinking | <p>The suggested lesson from MediaSmarts provides an opportunity for students to develop a beginning understanding of their own attitudes towards drinking, as well as an understanding of the different groups that deliver messages about alcohol.</p> <p>Students could explore how their faith forms their attitudes and beliefs around alcohol consumption.</p> <p>Students could also learn about thinking critically about advertising and media through a faith-based lens.</p> | <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations</p> <p>2 (e) Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the art, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.</p> <p>4 (g) Examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.</p> <p>Scripture The simple believe everything, but the clever consider their steps. <i>Proverbs 14:15</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, wisdom</p> |

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| ACTIVITY | ACTIVITY CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL CONNECTIONS |
| Optional Extension: Sharing the learning | <p>The optional extension activity allows for student voice and choice by having students share their learning with an audience, such as the wider school community or parents/caregivers.</p> <p>Students could include faith-based connections to their learning in their communications.</p> <p>Encourage students to consider sharing their learning with members of their faith community (e.g., faith leader), and how they might do so (e.g., parish newsletter).</p> | <p>Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations 2 (c) Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others.</p> <p>Scripture I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go. I will counsel you with my eye upon you. <i>Psalm 32:8</i></p> <p>Virtues and Values Faith, wisdom, responsibility</p> |

Supportive Transitions/Mindful Practices

- Consider offering an opportunity to pray or engage in [Christian meditation](#)
- Many additional activities are available through [Faith and Wellness: A Daily Mental Health Resource](#) (created by School Mental Health Ontario and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association)



References:

- [Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, Synod of Bishops, October 2018](#)
- [Ontario Family Life Education Curriculum](#)
- [Ontario Religious Education Curriculum](#)
- [Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations](#)
- [Bible: New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition \(NRSVCE\)](#)