CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Integral Human Development

FRAMING PAPER



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> “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”
>
> John 10:10

Integral human development is about the formation of the whole person and of every person, it is human centred. Integral human development invites the hope of human flourishing, of promoting the virtue of charity in the service of humanity and God. Development is for people, made by God out of love and called to develop their God-given gifts, to grow as persons, and to seek fulfilment.

Integral Human Development is Christ-centred, grounded in Scripture and the Catholic Tradition. This enables each member of a school community to flourish in all dimensions of life: spiritual, religious, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and cultural[1] – in harmony with God, self, others and all creation.

Rooted in the truth that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28), Integral Human Development recognises that each person is made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) and called to a life of communion with God and with all of creation. This development is not limited to material progress but seeks the fullness of life which is shared in the message of the Gospel that gives every person’s life meaning, beauty and purpose.[2]

As Pope Leo XIV affirms, “Authentic human flourishing stems from what the Church calls integral human development, or the full development of a person in all dimensions: physical, social, cultural, moral, and spiritual. This vision for the human person is rooted in natural law, the moral order that God has written on the human heart, whose deeper truths are illuminated by the Gospel of Christ.[3]” This vision aligns seamlessly with the mission of Catholic education, which seeks to nurture individuals who live virtuously, participate in healthy communities, and recognise their identity as children of God. Flourishing, in this context, is not merely about what one possesses, but about who one is.

Grounded in Catholic tradition and articulated through Church teachings such as *Populorum Progressio*, *Laudato Si’*, and *Fratelli Tutti*, the call to integral human development emphasises nurturing a Christ-centred spirituality, fostering moral growth and formation, and discerning one’s vocation by:

- Upholding the dignity of every human person.
- Advancing the common good.
- Promoting solidarity, subsidiarity, and care for creation.

Integral human development cultivates spiritual nourishment, a love for learning and a deep understanding of faith, recognising God as the source of wisdom. It includes care, tailored to support individual growth and acknowledging each person’s uniqueness created by God. Catholic education instills personal responsibility, emphasising accountability and positive contribution to society and to the environment as stewards of God’s creation.

Catholic schools help individuals to strive for excellence, to discover their vocation and purpose, guiding them to understand their unique gifts at the service of others. Catholic school communities accompany each person on their journey of spiritual growth, recognising God within. This presence transforms them into more whole and loving

persons, confident in the knowledge that each one is valued and loved by God. All schools desire the wellbeing of their students, Catholic schools have a particular orientation to wellbeing. Illuminated by faith and the words of Jesus who said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Integral Human Development reminds us that we are all people of God, for God[4], and that our true wellness flows from living in relationship with God, one another, and the world.

Rationale

The Mission of Catholic schools is centred on the development of each person and the whole person.[5] Pope Francis reminded us that Catholic education is a work of evangelisation, providing strength and wisdom to face the challenges of our time[6] and contributing to the advancement of God's kingdom of truth, holiness, justice, and peace. Catholic schools, in partnership with the parish, are called to accompany students, staff and families to discern "the signs of the times in light of the Gospel[7]" and to bear witness to the joy, hope and renewal offered by a relationship with Christ.

The spiritual dimension of the human person must therefore be nurtured and developed so that it imbues all dimensions of human life, including physical, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural. Catholic education has a particular understanding of wellbeing as human flourishing. Human development is often misunderstood or misrepresented, therefore Catholic education must resist the reduction of spirituality to a vague or optional "add-on." In a world where individualism and corporatisation is prioritised over meaningful and joy-filled work, the relentless focus on measurable efficiency can sacrifice Christ in a search for meaning. Instead, in a Catholic education context the spiritual dimension must be placed at the heart of school and work life, informing all decision-making, programs and policies, with the understanding that integral human development is inseparable from wellness, as taught in Scripture and Tradition. This includes accompanying all in Catholic education in developing a relationship with Christ, exploring their identity and purpose in faith. Without spiritual formation, human development remains incomplete, leaving the deepest human longings unfulfilled.

Integral Human Development forms individuals with dignity, who are oriented toward the common good, committed to social justice, respectful of human rights, and deeply rooted in solidarity with others. It encourages each person to discover and embrace their vocation – their unique calling from God – and provides space for rest, reflection, and leisure, echoing St Augustine's insight that "our hearts are restless till they rest in You.[8]"

1 NCEC (November 2017). *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, p. 1.

2 Pope Francis (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 34.

3 Pope Leo XIV (2025). *Address of His Holiness Pope Leo XVI to Participants in the 16th Annual Meeting of the International Catholic Legislators Network, 23 August 2025.*

4 Catechism of the Catholic Church (1997), n. 27.

5 Pope Paul VI (1967). *Populorum Progressio*, n.14.

6 Pope Francis (2022). *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to members of the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education Project.*

7 Pope Paul VI (1967). *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4.

8 Augustine, S., & Chadwick, H. (1991). *Confessions*. Oxford University Press.

Essential Elements of Integral Human Development

Integral Human Development addresses all dimensions of life through a focus on the essential elements of Upholding the *Dignity of every Human Person; Advancing the Common Good;* and *Promoting Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Care for Creation.*

Element	Description	Scripture for Contemplation	Application to Catholic education
Upholding the Dignity of every Human Person	**Upholding the Dignity of Every Human Person** flows from the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God (*imago Dei*).[9] This dignity is not earned or granted by society - it is inherent and inviolable. Every person is "unique and unrepeatable", possessing a transcendent value that must be respected in all social, political and economic structures.[10] Recognising this dignity means promoting human rights, protecting life at all stages and ensuring that each person can flourish. It calls for a commitment to justice, peace and solidarity, as these are essential to safeguarding the dignity of all.	Matthew 25:35-40 *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."*	Understanding the Dignity of the Human Person encourages those involved in Catholic education to focus on the formation of character, heart, and conscience. It shapes a culture of inclusion, kindness, and justice where everyone's unique worth is honoured. This foundation guides these communities to nurture each person's gifts and support their growth in Christ with love and fairness, echoing the words of Jesus: *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."*
Advancing the Common Good	The Common Good is rooted in the dignity, unity, and equality of all people. It refers to the total set of social conditions that enable individuals and groups to reach their fulfilment more fully and easily.[11] Everyone shares responsibility for promoting these conditions, which includes caring for one another and for creation. Working for the common good means striving for a just society where all people - especially the vulnerable and marginalised - can flourish and have their basic needs met.	Romans 12:4–5 *"For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another."*	Those involved with Catholic education are called to form students who are committed to contributing to a fairer and more compassionate society: *"For as in one body we have many members."* It calls the community to care for creation and ensure that everyone's needs are met, especially the vulnerable. It fosters a spirit of justice, unity, and shared responsibility, creating an inclusive environment where all can flourish.

9 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §108.*
10 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §131-133.*
11 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §164.*

St Anthony's School (Wanneroo), Our Lady of Mercy College (Australind) and Our Lady of Mercy Primary School (Girrawheen)





Element	Description	Scripture for Contemplation	Application to Catholic education
Promoting Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Care for Creation	**Solidarity** highlights the intrinsic social nature of the human person, affirming the equal dignity and rights of all. It calls individuals and communities to journey together toward deeper unity, especially with those who are vulnerable or marginalised. In our interconnected world, solidarity is both a moral principle and a lived reality, reflecting the Church's teaching that "never before has there been such a widespread awareness of the bond of interdependence between individuals and peoples.[12]" It is a principle that "must be present whenever the social question is involved" and is rooted in the life and message of Jesus Christ.[13] **Subsidiarity** is a core principle of Catholic social teaching that upholds the dignity of individuals and communities by affirming that decisions should be made at the most local level possible. It is "an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do.[14]" Subsidiarity promotes participation, protects human dignity, and strengthens civil society through the "creative subjectivity of the citizen.[15]" **Care for Creation** reflects our responsibility to safeguard the environment as stewards of God's creation. The Church teaches that "the environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.[16]" This principle calls for ecological justice, sustainable living and a renewed commitment to the common good through "new lifestyles" that respect the integrity of creation.[17]	1 Corinthians 12:26 *"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."* 1 Corinthians 12:14 *"For the body does not consist of one member but of many."* Genesis 2:15 *"God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it."*	As lived through the Eucharist, solidarity builds a culture where the "we" matters more than the "me", strengthening community and social responsibility. Solidarity motivates Catholic educational communities to stand together in unity, especially with those who are vulnerable and marginalised: *"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it."* By living in solidarity, the community nurtures a caring and just environment where no one is left behind. Subsidiarity empowers schools and individuals to take responsibility for their actions and decisions. It encourages leadership, participation, and respect for diverse voices, fostering collaborative environments where everyone contributes to the common good. Catholic education promotes environmental awareness and action. Ecological responsibility forms an integral part of curriculum and practice, encouraging all to live sustainably, appreciate the natural world, and advocate for ecological justice.

12 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §192.*
13 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §193-196.*
14 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §186.*
15 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §185-187.*
16 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §466.*
17 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, §486.*

Discernment Tool

Purpose of the Tool

This tool has been developed to support Catholic Education Western Australia – across both schools and offices – in discerning the suitability and alignment of initiatives, programs or innovations through the Catholic lens of integral human development.

Using the Tool

The reflective questions included offer a structured approach to help interrogate and evaluate proposed programs or initiatives. Each section of the tool includes space for discernment, inviting thoughtful reflection on how the initiative addresses key elements of Integral Human Development.

The questions should be considered within the specific context in which the initiative is being applied. While each question should be contemplated, not all questions may be relevant for further discernment.



Our Lady of Fatima School (Palmyra)

Christ-centred Spirituality, Moral Growth, Formation and Discernment of Vocation

Purpose

- What is the identified need?
- How has the need been identified?
- What are the desired outcomes or benefits?
- Is there any data to support the need?
- Does it align with, duplicate or replace other initiatives or programs?

Discernment:

Aligned and Informed by Catholic Identity

- How will it be Christ-centred, grounded in Scripture and Catholic Tradition?
- How will it promote the Christian vision of the person?
- How will it contribute to students and staff flourishing in all dimensions: spiritual, religious, physical, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural?
- How will it align to CECWA Strategic Initiatives or CEWA Key Initiatives?
- How will it comply with CEWA key documents and policies?
- Who has the capacity to link the initiative or program to Catholic Identity and Church documents?
- What support or advice will be sought from the Religious Education Directorate?
- Is it intended to address the needs of the system or local school context?

Discernment:

Formation and Training

- What formation is required at school and system level for leaders/staff/students for its successful implementation?
- How will it link to the missionary vocation of service?
- How will it be a form of pastoral activity, formation and spirituality?

Discernment:

Upholding the Dignity of Every Human Person

- How will it promote the dignity of all involved?
- How will it be inclusive for all members of the community (e.g. equity cohorts)?
- How will it be holistic, covering the dimensions of life (spiritual, religious, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural)?
- How will it be sensitive to local contexts?
- How will it promote the inherent human rights of community members?
- How will it address the requirements of child safety (CEWA framework)?

Discernment:

Advancing the Common Good

- What collaboration will exist for planning, coordination and resourcing?
- How will it be fair and just for all in the community?
- How will it empower those that have the identified need? (e.g. student agency)
- What additional resources will be required?
- What is the commitment to long-term engagement and sustainability?

Discernment:

Promoting Solidarity, Subsidiarity and Care for Creation

- How will it be transformative? (e.g. for community, students, staff, system)
- What process of consultation, implementation, review and evaluation with relevant stakeholders will occur?
- How will it consider care for creation? (e.g. Stewardship, Laudato Si)
- Will there be any unintended consequences (e.g. environment, financial, cultural, educational, community, time)?
- How will it use funding and resources so that change is sustained over time? How will it be just and equitable in its use of resources?
- *(If a system initiative or programme)* How would it be accessible to all school contexts and support the spirit of co-responsibility?

Discernment:

Implementation and Accountability

Estimated cost and budget area/s:	
Timeline for implementation:	
Process of ongoing reflection and review:	
Submitted by:	**Date:**
Approvals required:	



St Luke's College (Karratha)

Catholic Education Western Australia is a Christ-centred and child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel.

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