

## **A Collaborative Learning Community: Service Learning at Holy Cross Academy at Our Lady of Peace Campus.**

Building bridges between our Catholic schools and the wider community becomes an immense task in the education and formation of the whole child. The goal of creating learning communities that support a culture of learning while taking seriously the creation of relevant and meaningful learning experiences becomes essential to our commitment as a Catholic community in developing the whole child. Likewise the learning environment of the Catholic school and the cooperation of our parishes and parish religious education programs require a planned and conscious grounding in Catholic teaching and tradition; ensuring the formation of a Catholic moral vision and worldview.

The diversity within our culture demands that our children become lifelong learners. Catholic schools are intended to assist students in constructing a knowledge base that will provide each child with a voice enabling them to be connected globally and contribute to this world as a responsible and conscientious Catholic Christian. As future leaders engaging the problems of the world, our schools must assist our students in thinking abstractly and critically, in accessing the expertise of the wider community, and in using technology conscientiously in connecting with the world's knowledge base.

This collaboration of our students in becoming active contributors of their education and formation while accepting responsibility for their own learning requires the commitment of our schools to a learning environment in which information is not merely given and expected to be assimilated, but where the learning goals call for and result in a depth of understanding that is meaningful. The task of enabling a more transparent and significant connection with the community becomes both about knowing and doing, creating experiences for our students that are intentional, integrated and relevant in aligning curriculum and community.

An integrated and designed service learning component seeks a collaborative learning community in which student interaction and integration enable our students to learn from the inside out. Catholic education's legacy and future is in providing learning with a purpose, stimulating multiple learning styles, and allowing the common learning base and common voice of our students to link the classroom curriculum with the community in a Gospel way of life. Classrooms become socially and emotionally healthier for all students when children recognize that they are part of something larger than themselves and when the learning community's focus and reference is God, empowering their relationship and encounter with Jesus Christ. Each project within a service learning curriculum contributes to a collaborative learning style and building of those relationships that engage our children in a process of understanding a Beatitude way of life.

Visit [www.olopcanton.com/service-projects](http://www.olopcanton.com/service-projects) to view a video of the students' latest project. The presentation, created by the students at Holy Cross Academy - Our Lady of Peace Campus, reflects a collaborative learning model in the education and formation of a more competent, confident, and compassionate experience in a Catholic school.