



Light of Christ Catholic Schools Becomes a Strengths Based Organization

- Submitted to the SCSBA for January Edition of the Prairie Messenger
- Written by Andrea Sparrow & Ramona Stillar

“There is no more effective way to empower people than to see each person in terms of his or her strengths.”

– Don Clifton

What happens when we focus on what’s strong and stop worrying about what’s wrong? That’s what Director of Light of Christ Catholic Schools, Cory Rideout, asked himself when the Light of Christ Catholic Schools Strategic Plan set becoming the school division of choice and employer of choice as a primary goal. Mr. Rideout recognized that student and employee engagement would be key to achieving this goal and so he turned to Gallup’s Strengths Center and the StrengthsFinder assessment to help. Our students thrive because teachers and leaders know and use their strengths, appreciate individual differences, and develop an exceptional environment for learning.

Our overall goal as a Catholic school division is to permeate our faith in everything we do; our goal of becoming a strengths based organization is no different. We want everyone in the organization to work towards identifying and maximizing their individual talents and strengths within our Catholic faith. Once this is achieved, we can then use the knowledge, skills and abilities learned through the process to focus on how best to improve relationships and culture throughout the division.

– Cory Rideout, May 28, 2018

The Clifton StrengthsFinder program developed by Dr. Donald O. Clifton of Gallup focuses on what’s strong not on what’s wrong. People who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged on the job (Gallup). When we are engaged, we are happier, more energetic, more productive in all that we do, and more ready to fully serve God and the world. Furthermore, we are more likely to have close relationships and greater social connection. These conditions, create a desire to go to work or school in employees and students. Schools that value trust and meaningful connections among teachers enjoy higher teacher retention rates, lower absenteeism and higher levels of student success. (Hodges, Gallup, 2018)

Throughout the 2017-18 school year, the Light of Christ Catholic Schools leadership team and Board of Education learned about their natural strengths by working with Clifton StrengthsFinder coach, Cory Rideout. How we naturally think, feel, and behave, and how we use these natural talents has been proven to create engaged and thriving schools. Now, in the 2018-19 school year, all LOCCS staff and high school students will learn to claim, name, and aim their strengths for the benefit of our peers, colleagues, schools, and community!

LOCCS Student Services teacher, Andrea Sparrow wrote the following reflection to remind students everywhere that they are strong, that there is hope, and that they matter:

God doesn’t make junk. It is as simple as that. Strength, gifts, talents... these are the things that God has given each and everyone of us. A strength, attributes that you have that allow you to do well in something. A gift is something that you give to others or something that is given to you. A talent is something you are good at or excel in. Each one of these words we use interchangeably.

In the Gospel of Mark, John tells Jesus that someone is performing miracles in your name and we tried to stop him! Jesus said do not stop them because anyone that does



something good in my name is with us and not against us. Jesus goes on to tell the apostles to use their strengths for love and they will be rewarded.

At school you are asked to think about your strengths, in job interviews you are asked what your strengths are. We as society look at a person's strengths but also their challenges or sometimes people call them their weaknesses or drawbacks. I actually feel that society focuses on a person's challenges more so than a person's strengths.

I often hear from students, "I can't, I'm not good at that, I suck, or I have no talents" Focused in the negative. Even in the media it brings peoples challenges to the fore front. However, like I said before God doesn't make junk. God knew our name and us before we were an idea or a yearning. God molded, shaped and sculpt each and every one of us in his image. He spent time developing each and every one of us and our STRENGTHS. God knew your story and gave you strengths to use in your life journey to be a witness and messenger of love, peace and God's will. When God gave us life he did not make challenges or weaknesses. God gave us strengths, we all have different ones. Some people are empathetic, some are communicative, some people are analytical or harmonious and some people are full of woo.

God made us all different and gave certain people certain strengths because he knew that there would be someone in our life that will compliment us, work with us and for us in areas that we are not as strong in. God didn't make junk, he has a very detailed and deliberate plan on what we are strong in and who in our life is strong in other areas. God wants us to share our strengths with others, to celebrate them and honor them. It is when we do this we are spreading God's love and message. Even if you feel you do not believe in God or maybe are not sure God loves you and is waiting. He fills with pride and joy each time we use our strengths for good. Even if you do not believe you cannot go wrong in life by using your strengths, God works in mysterious ways. God believes in us, believe in yourself, use your strengths and believe in Him. Remember Jesus loves you.

To learn more about how LOCCS is using and applying the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment please see our #LOCCStrengths Blog at <http://stellarlearning.ca/> and follow our hashtag on social media.

To learn more about Gallup's StrengthsFinder, other Gallup products, and Gallup's research please see the Gallup Strengths Centre website at <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/>.