

# Section I: Program Overview and Rationale

## Vision Statement

The Newfoundland and Labrador religious education curriculum is shaped by a vision of enabling and encouraging students to grow religiously, spiritually and morally into informed, caring and contributing members of society, who appreciate their own beliefs and values, and the beliefs and values of others, and who understand the contribution that Christianity and other religions make to human life.

## Rationale for Religious Education

*Because religion plays significant roles in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible. (Nord and Haynes, 1998, p. 36.)*

Throughout history people have had a quest for the spiritual side of existence and the purpose of life. From early humanity up to the present age the religious realm has continued to occupy people's thoughts and influence their behaviour. In the western world our society and culture have been greatly influenced and shaped by the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Beliefs have evolved and traditions have varied but the religious component of humanity has continued to survive. It has been instrumental in determining attitudes toward God<sup>1</sup> and attitudes and approaches toward the world in which we live. Now, in the twenty-first century the majority of the world's population continues to believe in a spiritual side of humanity.

Fundamental questions about life continue to be asked. From a young age, children set out on a quest for answers, not always simple answers but answers relating to the profound questions of life and life beyond. This quest is lifelong and includes a search for answers related to questions about the purpose of life, where we fit into the scheme of things, what is the ultimate mystery which embraces our entire existence, what makes us different from other living things, what the source of suffering is, how happiness can be found, what happens after death, and other fundamental questions. These are questions addressed by all major religions<sup>2</sup> and, because of their importance, should be given attention in a K-12 curriculum. While a religious education program should provide a forum to address such questions, it must be noted that central to the faith development of the young person is the family and faith community. The religious education program should support the role of each, where appropriate. Students should be given structured and unstructured opportunities to search in their own religious heritage for the answers to these questions, and to compare these with the answers or frameworks provided in other religious traditions.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the curriculum guide, the words God, Ultimate Reality and Creator are used to describe a supreme power responsible for creation, as described by various living belief systems around the world.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the curriculum guide, the words religion, living belief systems and faith communities are used interchangeably to reflect the diverse nature of religious and spiritual groups; not all groups consider themselves to be religions by definition.

In their search for meaning students should develop an awareness of what it means to be human and the inherent responsibilities which come with this. Out of this realization should come a sense of value for humanity and all of creation. In their personal search for meaning it is important that students acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to interpret religious ideas. They need to see themselves as an integral part of creation. When this conclusion is reached, behaviour and attitudes toward all creation will be caring and affirming. The religious education curriculum should help students explore and reflect on their own worldview.

In a world that is truly multi-cultural and multi-faith it is important that each person can value and celebrate his/her own faith (religious heritage or commitment). However, with accurate information about other religions the individual should recognize that others have religious beliefs that they value and celebrate as well. Religious and denominational intolerance will be eliminated only when people are more understanding of the intrinsic worth of religious views and traditions that are not their own. An effective religious education program should give accurate information and demonstrate respect for all world faiths.

M. Stackhouse in *Creeds, Society and Human Rights* writes:

*Persons demand beliefs; societies need convictions; and civilizations require a basic social ethical vision by which to guide behavior.* (Stackhouse, 1984, p. 4.)

Many of the values and morals upheld by any society have their origins in religious teachings. Through discussion and study of various issues confronting society, students will be in a better position to develop a value system and adopt moral standards that give them principles by which to live. Students should come to understand and appreciate that most religions have sacred writings and all teach values, ethics and morals.

There are other considerations for the importance of religious education being included in the curriculum.

- Religion has been a determining factor in history and in our cultural heritage. Major decisions have been made in light of religious teachings. While it is true that at times religions have been responsible for conflicts in the world it is also true that they have served to bring about resolutions, peace, and social justice. Our students need to be aware of the role religion has played historically. An effective religious education program will enable the student to understand and appreciate the relationship between religion and history.
- Religion is also a large contributing factor in current national and international events. By coming to a realization of the importance of religion in these events the student will better understand some of the underlying causes and complexities.
- Consideration and recognition should be given to the impact and contributions made by religion in the areas of literature, architec-

According to John M. Hull:

*Religion is too important a part of history, culture, and current experience of [humankind] to be left to believers alone. There is a role for the school in preparing pupils to take an informed and thoughtful part in a pluralistic society. When the society contains not one but several religions, the need for a thoughtful study of religion becomes greater, not less. (1984, p. 48.)*

ture, art, music, film, and theatre.

- Young people develop intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. It is important to have a religious education component in the school because the school addresses the development and education of the whole child.

*The Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Learnings in Schools* states that the mission of Public Education is “to enable and encourage every individual to acquire, through lifelong learning, the knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society.” In addition to the six Essential Graduation Learnings outlined elsewhere in the Framework, a specific Seventh Learning for Newfoundland and Labrador references: “*Graduates will demonstrate understanding and appreciation for the place of belief systems in shaping the development of moral values and ethical conduct.*” An effective religious education program will be a contributing factor to that mission. Also, there are aspects of the religious education curriculum that support each of the Essential Graduation Learnings.

## Key Principles Underlying the Religious Education Curriculum

Students should be aware that religion influences local and global events. It is imperative that they be educated regarding other religions and belief systems. They should acquire knowledge of the founders, beliefs, main practices, symbols and festivals of various religions. They should also understand the similarities and unique qualities among the religions studied.

Throughout the ages, religion has had an influence on, and has been expressed through the arts, including music, art, drama, literature, and architecture. As students study religious education, they also study history, music, literature, and vice versa.

This religious education curriculum acknowledges and supports the notion that young people have a spiritual dimension and grow spiritually as well as physically, emotionally, psychologically and intellectually.

This religious education curriculum acknowledges that the essence of all inter-faith dialogue is the awareness that human beings share essential truths and experiences that are much more important than those which divide them.

This religious education curriculum respects the place and role of family and faith communities as primary influences on the faith lives of young people. At the same time it acknowledges the complementary and supplementary role of partnership that the school can play in the spiritual, moral, and faith development of young people.

*(For information and theories on spiritual and moral development the following authors are recommended: Fritz Oser, James Fowler, Lawrence Kolberg and Carol Gilligan.)*

Through their study, students should come to appreciate the intrinsic worth of each religion for its adherents.

If teachers are aware of students in their class whose family is an adherent of a living belief system not included in the program, they are encouraged to include these as part of the program.

Teachers are encouraged to be inclusive of faiths, to help students appreciate the unique perspectives of religious beliefs, and to ensure that any information given about all faiths is accurate. Needless to say, any methodology used must be pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate.

In this regard, teachers are strongly encouraged to avail of community resources for materials to support these goals. Adherents of the various faith communities, if available, can be sources of information, stories and symbols. Suitable materials may be available in school resource centres, public libraries or on the Internet.

The religious education senior high program offers students the opportunity to examine a variety of issues from several religious perspectives: Ethics & Philosophy 2101, Ethics & Social Justice 2106 and World Religions 3101/06.

## Meeting the Needs of all Learners

### The Religious Education Learning Environment: A Multi-Faith Approach

*Our pedagogy is to actively engage people's whole "being" in place and time – their physical, mental and volitional capacities, their head, heart and action, their intellect, desire, and will, their reasons, memory, and imagination, and enable them to reclaim their past, embrace their present, and take responsibility for their own and other's future. (Groome, 1991, p. 430.)*

An effective learning environment will be one where sensitivity and respect is shown for all religious traditions. The learning environment should be such that it fosters in students a positive attitude towards other people and their right to hold different beliefs. It should prepare students for living in a society of diverse religions. Recognizing students' varying backgrounds and experiences, the religious education instructional environment must incorporate principles and strategies which support diversity while recognizing the varied learning styles, multiple intelligences, and abilities of the individual.

It is not enough, however, that students learn about other faiths. In addition to attending to the cognitive domain, the learning environment must be conducive to, and supportive of, the affective domain. (See Effective Assessment and Evaluation Practices)

Also, the learning environment has to be appropriate to the age and developmental needs of the student, with activities being student centered. It may include experiences through celebrations, festivals, food, drama and field trips. An opportunity for reflection is important. The learning environment, however, should be sensitive to aspects of any living belief system that can only be experienced and fully appreciated by adherents of that particular belief system. It should never be the intent to turn any of these celebrations or observances into "pretend" sessions. In many instances the teacher will have

One view on the inquiry-based classroom: *“My students and I didn’t know the answers to all these questions ... we planned to keep searching and asking. On the way to finding answers, we knew we would find more questions.”* (Cowhey, 2006, p.12)

to decide to what degree practices or celebrations can be facilitated in the school with the sincerity, dignity, and reverence they deserve. Therefore, an effective religious education environment must be:

- student centered
- engaging and relevant
- respectful of diversity
- inviting and inclusive
- participatory, interactive and collaborative
- reflective and celebratory
- integrative
- challenging
- inquiry based

## The Adolescent Learner

Adolescent learners at the high school level are complex and sophisticated. These young adults approach their world of diversity and complexity with both enthusiasm and trepidation. They encounter clashes of values, personal conflicts and social pressures in developing their sense of social justice, fairness and recognition of diversity. The adolescent learner has built a framework which includes tolerance and respect; in senior high, students will seek out questions and answers which incorporate more sophisticated ethical and moral reflection.

*“While values such as respect, tolerance, and treating people with kindness are clearly important and always have been, young people today also need to understand the causes of, and possible solutions to, complex and global issues. Ethical reflection contributes to that understanding by helping young people see that tolerance of others is not enough; that a global, interconnected world calls for solidarity with others whose fates and futures are intertwined, and that they need to be willing to act, not just personally, but also collectively and politically.”* (Freiler, 2009, p.15)

Middle adolescence, ages 15-17, is a time of increasing autonomy and self-discovery leading to clear identity formation. There may still be some considerable differences in the characteristics of the entry-level high school adolescent and the more senior high school adolescent or young adult. Teachers will need to consider their students’ prior learning and experiences in their efforts to meet their needs and interests. Adolescent learners seek relevance and connection between life outside school and the curriculum, assert their own ideas about their learning, and value sincere relationships with adults.

Adolescent learners enjoy questioning and are less likely to accept the status quo in attempting to attain their objectives. This opens opportunities for learning through activities such as investigation, research, debate, discussion and community involvement, locally and globally.

A high degree of the students' learning occurs in a social context. The opportunity for collaborative learning promotes critical thinking and problem solving, stimulates curiosity and imagination, and improves adaptability and analytical thinking.

Adolescent learners need to know their opinions are welcomed and can be expressed without fear of ridicule. Furthermore, they need to know their beliefs and practices are respected. By providing students with a safe, inquiry-based learning environment, teachers can foster the skills of critical analysis, group interaction and decision making.

## Diverse Learners

*Religious Education should give access to the great spiritual traditions – the vocabulary and the kind of symbolism used. In so doing, any hint of attempted indoctrination, conditioning, manipulation, even influencing and persuading, is misplaced because this dimension can only be grasped in freedom, or it is not grasped at all. (Watson, 1993, p.83)*

Each student is unique. Within any group of students a range of differences in rates and ways of learning, in experiences and interests are expected and respected. Unique qualities should be celebrated and built upon. A viable goal for each individual is to have an equitable opportunity to experience success as he/she works toward the achievement of intended outcomes and a personal best. Improving performance and realizing potential is more important than competition and comparisons to others.

In recognizing the needs and strengths of their students and supporting learning for all students, teachers will:

- identify and address areas of bias in the classroom, in the curriculum, and within themselves
- respond to the needs of students
- understand that all students' experiences in the classroom occur within the framework of their own contexts
- differentiate instruction
- work to build and foster a positive learning community.

The needs of diverse learners are best met in a student-centered learning environment. Teachers are not expected to be all-knowing dispensers of knowledge. The student-centered learning environment challenges students in their areas of interest and supports their needs intellectually, emotionally and socially.

## The Role of the Teacher

It is the role of the teacher to create a supportive environment. The teacher of religious education:

- is a facilitator
- is not “all-knowing” about different religions
- uses representatives from the faith communities as resource people
- is sensitive to diverse religious beliefs
- fosters a sense of acceptance, trust and comfort in the classroom
- demonstrates a valuing of all learners
- helps each student form individual beliefs and attitudes



- allows time for reflection
- challenges students to act upon their learning
- provides time for students to ask questions

While it is understood that each teacher brings his or her own beliefs to the classroom, it should also be understood that a teacher should not make any attempt to promote or denigrate any student's beliefs. The teacher must not attempt to indoctrinate or proselytize.

## Learning Environments and Instructional Strategies

On Constructivism: "... *meaning is intimately connected with experience. Students come into a classroom with their own experiences and a cognitive structure based on those experiences. These preconceived structures are valid, invalid or incomplete. The learner will reformulate his/her existing structures only if new information or experiences are connected to knowledge already in memory. Inferences, elaborations and relationships between old perceptions and new ideas must be personally drawn by the student in order for the new idea to become an integrated, useful part of his/her memory. Memorized facts or information that has not been connected with the learner's prior experiences will be quickly forgotten. In short, the learner must actively construct new information onto his/her existing mental framework for meaningful learning to occur.*" (Hanley, 1994)

There is no one best way to teach. Effective instruction encompasses a variety and combination of approaches – within a program, within a course, within a unit, within a lesson.

Effective instruction facilitates, promotes and results in student learning. Effective teachers know how to adapt their strategies to meet a wide variety of student needs. Effective teachers make decisions about curriculum selection, organization and implementation based on sound research and a wide range of practical and theoretical knowledge. They engage the student in the learning process. Effective instruction begins with the assessment of student learning needs, interests and abilities, continues with planning and delivering instruction in an appropriate manner. It includes monitoring student growth and understanding, and concludes with evaluating student progress and achievement in preparation for the next learning experience.

Instructional strategies should vary so that there is opportunity for direct instruction, reflection, assessment, cooperative small group work, and learning beyond a prescribed text. No matter what the instructional strategy, evaluation, especially formative evaluation, should be ongoing. The learning activities and instructional strategies occurring in classrooms should promote a school climate where teachers and learners collaborate about learning. The climate teachers create in any class should foster a sense of acceptance by teachers and peers, as well as a sense of comfort and order. Such a climate is enhanced when teachers provide time for students to ask and answer questions; when teachers restate/rephrase questions for a student; when teachers guide a student in finding solutions to problems assigned; when teachers acknowledge the worth and dignity of a particular response.

It is important that general and specific curriculum outcomes be used as reference points for planning learning experiences. There are many options for instructional strategies that teachers may select and combine in planning learning experiences for whole class, small group and independent learning. These activities should create learning communities that foster complex, creative, critical and ethical thought.

Evaluation instruments should complement instructional strategies by encouraging critical thinking as well as the acquisition of information.

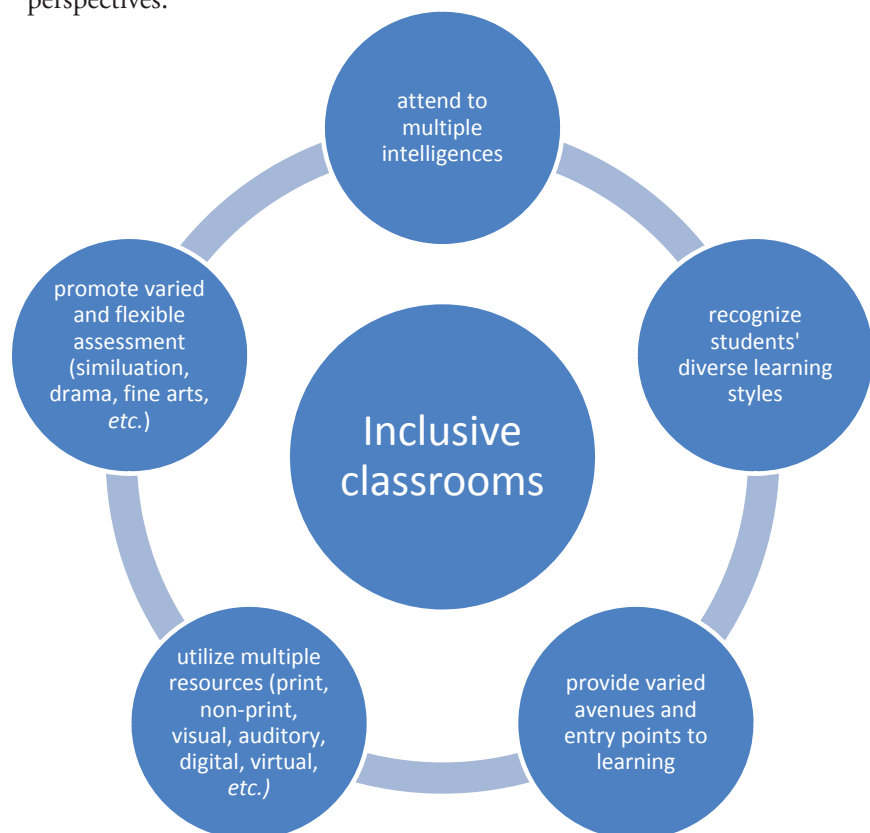
The religious education curriculum can support teaching and learning in an inclusive classroom. By fostering and celebrating the contributions of individuals, teachers can provide a variety of opportunities for students to engage in discussions about assumptions, stereotypes, labels and perceptions.

## The Inclusive Classroom

*Effective inclusive schools have the following characteristics: supportive environment, positive relationships, feelings of competence and opportunities to participate. (The Centre for Inclusive Education, 2009)*

An inclusive classroom values the social and ethno-cultural backgrounds of all students while creating opportunities for community building. Diverse family customs, history, traditions, values, beliefs and unique ways of seeing and making sense of the world are important contexts for enriched learning through religious education.

Religious education activities can provide opportunities in a safe and caring environment for students to express feelings, to think critically about problem solving, or to simply reflect on current issues. All students need to see their lives and experiences reflected in their school community. All students need opportunities to share in their own and others' cultures by examining local, regional, and global belief systems. The promotion of these attitudes builds respect for one another, creates positive interdependence and allows for varied perspectives.





## Whole Class Learning

Whole class learning often focuses on an individual (teacher or student) or on a specific group. It may be used effectively to present strategies, provide information, or communicate directions. This approach is often used to introduce and support other methods of instruction. For example, instructions and explanations can be given to the whole class before they begin to work in smaller groups. Whole-class learning can also be used when the entire class is involved in a common process, for example, in sharing group or individual experiences, or in planning and making decisions about a class project or other shared learning experience.

Whole-class learning activities include the following:

- questioning and discussion
- demonstrations and presentations
- modelling
- mini-lessons
- overviews and outlines
- planning, reflecting on, and evaluating learning

Whole class learning often involves direct communication between a speaker or speakers and an audience by making statements, giving information and directions, or explaining procedures. The information and directions presented in a whole class setting can provide students with necessary support as they become self-directed learners. Demonstrations, for example, provide students with both verbal and non-verbal information.

Although large amounts of information transmitted through direct instruction may not always be retained, mini-lessons (short periods of whole class instruction) provided as the need or opportunity arises, can challenge the imagination, stimulate reflection, and develop a sense of inquiry. They can provide a forum for critical thinking and challenge students to revise and extend their own knowledge base as they encounter the practices and beliefs of others. Teachers should match their level of questioning (*i.e.*, Q Matrix, Bloom) to the needs and interests of their students.

## Small Group Learning

Small group experiences should be planned to help students learn how to interact effectively and productively as members of a group or team. Group work will decrease students' dependence on the teacher and increase positive interdependence. As groups take on various learning tasks, students will develop and consolidate the skills, abilities, and attitudes involved in group processes. Group processes require students to:

- participate, collaborate, co-operate, and negotiate

- consider different ways of going about a task
- discuss, brainstorm, react, and respond
- build on their own ideas and extend the ideas of others
- share their own expertise and employ the expertise of others
- establish group goals
- identify and manage tasks
- identify and solve problems
- make decisions
- pace projects, and establish and meet deadlines
- respect varying leadership and learning styles
- be sensitive to non-verbal communication — their own and others
- recognize the responsibilities and dynamics of working in groups and make use of their understanding
- assess their own contributions and use feedback from the group to improve their performance

Small group learning experiences demonstrate to students how their patterns of learning, experience, and expertise are different from and similar to those of others. As students become more aware of their individual strengths as learners, they will become better equipped to deal with the demands placed on them by independent learning tasks.

## **Independent Learning**

Learning is both personal and social. Religious education recognizes the diverse interests, learning styles, prior knowledge, experiences and beliefs students bring to the classroom. Independent learning is one of many strategies teachers can use to help students learn. Through the study of various religious beliefs and practices, students will be in a better position to make informed decisions and choices.

Classroom time must be given to allow students to conduct research, confer with peers and with the teacher, prepare reports and presentations, present the results, and evaluate their progress and achievement in independent learning. Such learning experiences will help students to reflect on their own learning strategies, promote their progress in becoming independent learners and allow them to make connections to their everyday lives and see the relevance of what they are learning.

Independent learning includes:

- journal reflection
- projects
- investigation and research
- assigned questions
- learning centres
- learning contracts
- computer assisted instruction

## Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is inductive, student centred, activity rich and multi-sensory. Experiential learning may require the application and consolidation of previous knowledge, skills and values to a new situation and/or may emphasize the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and ideas. Experiential learning can occur both inside and outside the regular classroom setting. It can involve first hand experiences, such as going whale watching, hands-on experiences, reproducing religious symbols with clay or vicarious experiences such as exploring art through the Internet. Current technology permits numerous simulations to be shared through various media such as DVDs, videos, cassettes, computer programs and online collaborations. School visitations by outside resource people can also provide excellent opportunities for learners to connect learned information to real life situations. Students are more motivated to learn when they actively participate. Experiential learning increases student understanding and retention.

Experiential learning includes:

- role playing
- simulation
- experimenting
- field trips
- learning centres

## Multiple Levels in the Learning Environment

*Multiage classrooms are based on a student-centered, subject-integrated approach to learning. (Independent Together: Supporting the Multilevel Learning Community, 2009)*

Teachers with multiple levels in their classroom are challenged to create learning opportunities that span a variety of outcomes in a variety of subject areas. The classroom setting can be an opportunity for unique collaborative curriculum planning, perhaps through team teaching. Integration can be achieved by reviewing learning resources and outcomes, taking advantage of emergent themes and fostering a student-centered learning environment. The religious education curriculum can support community building among students as they explore their unique contributions to their classroom.

## Indirect Instruction

Indirect instruction is generally student-centered and involves inquiry, discovery and induction. It seeks a high level of student involvement in observing, investigating, forming hypotheses and drawing inferences from data. Indirect instruction encourages students to generate alternatives and/or solve problems. It frees students to explore diverse possibilities and reduces the fear associated with giving incorrect answers. Indirect instruction fosters creativity, and develops research skills. Learners, because of their explicit contact with subject matter, are better able to understand the material, concepts and ideas under study, and to apply previous learning to new situations. The teacher facilitates the activities, acts as a resource person, arranges the learn-

ing environment, provides opportunities for student involvement, and gives feedback to students during the course of their inquiries. Indirect instruction relies on a variety of resources. In order to get optimum results from the indirect method, direct instruction may need to be used to teach requisite skills/processes/procedures.

Indirect instruction includes:

- problem solving
- guided inquiry
- case study
- reflective discussion and questions

## **Direct Instruction**

Direct instruction is teacher centred and is commonly used to describe a process, present strategies, provide information and to communicate directions. Direct instruction is deductive. It presents the rule or generalization first and then illustrates with examples. Direct instruction can be used to introduce and support other methods and strategies of instruction.

Direct instruction includes:

- mini-lessons or lectures
- questioning
- explicit teaching
- guided practice

## **Interactive Instruction**

Interactive instruction relies on discussion and sharing among participants, and allows students to react to the views, ideas and experiences of others. It permits the generation of alternate ideas and insights, and provides opportunities for students to develop social and interpersonal skills with peers, teachers and others. Interactive instruction encourages the organization of thoughts and the development of rational arguments. It allows students to learn to refine their observation, listening, interpersonal and intervention skills. The success of interactive learning depends on the skills of the teacher in structuring and facilitating the activity and responding appropriately to the characteristics and dynamics of the group(s). Interactive learning permits a range of groupings.

Interactive instruction includes:

- whole group discussion
- small group discussion
- conferencing
- mentoring
- dialogue
- brainstorming
- interviewing

## Selected Instructional Strategies

Teachers may employ a variety of instructional strategies to help students meet the specific curriculum outcomes. Students should be provided with opportunities to explore connections among curriculum areas. Specific links can be found in Column 4 of the *two-page spreads* of this curriculum guide. The following selected strategies are addressed more fully in Appendix F:

<b>Assigned Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are provided with <i>a set of questions</i> related to new or previously learned material; usually employed in conjunction with other strategies</li> </ul>
<b>Authentic Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are <i>real life learning experiences</i> that require careful planning</li> </ul>
<b>Brainstorming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a process of <i>rapidly generating</i> ideas or responses</li> </ul>
<b>Computer-Assisted Instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an instructional mode which <i>incorporates the computer</i> into the lesson plan; can include word processing, tutorial, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and simulation</li> </ul>
<b>Concept Attainment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students are provided with data about a particular <i>concept</i> generated by themselves or their teacher and are encouraged to classify or group the information and to give descriptive labels to their groupings.</li> </ul>
<b>Conferencing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>occurs when teachers meet with individual or small groups of students to <i>discuss learning tasks or concerns</i></li> </ul>
<b>Cooperative Small Group Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an approach to organizing classroom activity so that <i>students can work collaboratively</i> and build on one another's strengths and ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Demonstrations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>allow students to receive verbal and non-verbal information through <i>tactile and visual</i> means; may illustrate a model or end product of a process</li> </ul>
<b>Explicit Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <i>teacher-centered</i> strategy that may involve giving information or directions and explaining procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Field Trips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involve teaching/learning activities at <i>a site</i> other than the classroom</li> </ul>
<b>Guided Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can be individual, student centred and needs based to monitor <i>student performance and practices</i> (e.g., signs of respect, appropriate behaviour)</li> </ul>
<b>Inquiry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>elements of inquiry</i> include thinking, reflecting, developing relevant questions and planning appropriate strategies for generating answers and explanations; allows students to experience and acquire processes through which they can gather information about the world in a variety of ways from a variety of sources</li> </ul>
<b>Interviewing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involves individuals, pairs or small groups <i>collecting information</i> from peers, younger students, older students or adults</li> </ul>

<b>Learning Contracts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the teacher may initially provide terms and conditions, identify resources and set basic timelines as <i>a method of individualizing instruction</i></li></ul>
<b>Personal or Self-reflection Journaling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>allows individuals to <i>think about and reflect on</i> their level of knowledge, their beliefs and values</li></ul>
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>application of knowledge, skills, ideas, resources and processes to generate one or many <i>solutions to a problem</i> using strategies such as trial and error, brainstorming, What if/I suppose, attribute listing, forced relationships, idea check list and imaging</li></ul>
<b>Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>usually involves learners, alone or in small groups, <i>working on a task for an extended time period</i> (the actual time frame may depend to some degree on the ages of the learners involved), usually to produce a tangible product such as a model, a demonstration, a report or a presentation</li></ul>
<b>Questioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>various <i>levels of questioning</i> can be used to diagnose recall and comprehension skills, determine the extent to which lesson outcomes are being achieved and aid in the retention of information or processes</li></ul>
<b>Role Play</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>is the spontaneous or practiced response to a given situation or theme where the learner attempts to speak, feel, behave like the <i>character they portray</i></li></ul>
<b>Simulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>an <i>artificial problem situation or event</i> is presented which represents some aspect of reality; allows for types of experiments/activities that cannot take place in the real environment</li></ul>

## Effective Assessment and Evaluation Practices

### Defining Assessment and Evaluation

Although assessment and evaluation are terms often used interchangeably, they are not the same. *Assessment* refers to the broader activity of gathering information on the full range of student learning in a variety of ways, so that a clear and valid picture emerges of what students know and are able to do in religious education. This assessment process should provide a rich collection of information that reflects students' progress in working toward achievement of learning outcomes and guides future instruction, where data from a variety of sources is collected. *Evaluation* involves reflecting on what students have learned for the purpose of sharing this information with them and with parents, caregivers, and school administration.

Student evaluation is a process basic to teaching. Evaluation is not an add-on feature of instruction but an integral part of it, since the information it provides allows teachers to make adjustments to instruction and teaching methodologies.



Evaluation must be student-centered where the process and subsequent decisions reflect a genuine concern for each student.

Teachers have a responsibility to provide accurate, reliable and justifiable evaluations which do not undermine the integrity, self-confidence, or enthusiasm of students. Comprehensive evaluation involves the use of a variety of sources, is referenced to specific learning outcomes and ensures that the total growth of every student is recognized. (Adapted from *The Evaluation of Students in the Classroom: A Handbook and Policy Guide*)

***Guiding Principles for Assessment and Evaluation:***

- Assessment and evaluation processes and techniques should:
  - determine whether the outcomes have been achieved.
  - reflect the stated outcomes for the course.
  - be an integral part of the teaching and learning process and of each component of the course.
  - give all students the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.
  - provide positive, instructive, and supportive feedback to students.
  - invite and encourage student self-assessment and active participation.
  - allow for a range of options to accommodate students' abilities to demonstrate the achievement of outcomes.

## **Understanding Process and Product**

Evaluation deals with both process and product. Religious education places emphasis on the affective domain and the process is as important as the product.

Product can be thought of as the *what* of learning. *What* is it students should know? *What* is it they should be able to do? These whats are typically spelled out in outcomes, whether they are based on a program, a course, a unit or a lesson. In a teaching episode which is focused on product, the ends may be evaluated without reference to the means.

Process refers to the procedure which students go through as they come to know, to value, and to be able to do. The emphasis in teaching shifts from a passing on of "*the what*" to the methods by which it is acquired and utilized. Students are taught to find information, to become autonomous thinkers, and to use knowledge to solve new problems and make decisions for themselves.

In the *two-page spreads* section of this curriculum guide there are specific suggestions for teaching and learning as well as suggestions for assessment. Many of these suggestions can be interchanged and used

either as learning activities or assessment activities or both.

## Identifying the Activity

In planning for assessment the key question is: “What is the student expected to accomplish?” The answer to this question enables the teacher to choose or design appropriate means that allow the student to demonstrate this. The student will be expected to demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities. The means can be multiple and varied: presentations, art work, dramatizing, charting or graphing information, locating and displaying information, demonstrating a skill, designing a product or a plan, drawing or representing a concept a process, or an idea. The choice of means will depend on available resources including time and the type of learners and their strengths.

## Assessment Strategies

Teachers are encouraged to use assessment and evaluation practices that are consistent with student-centered instructional practices:

- negotiating and making explicit the criteria by which performance will be evaluated
- designing assessment tasks that help students make judgements about their own learning and performance
- designing assessment tasks that incorporate varying learning styles
- individualizing assessment tasks as appropriate to accommodate students’ particular learning needs
- providing feedback on student learning and performance on a regular basis.

*There may be times when, through summative testing, teachers will want to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate growth in knowledge and understanding. Summative testing, however, must reflect the intention of the SCOs and must not be the only means of evaluation.*

Assessment activities, tasks, and strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- anecdotal records
- audiotapes
- checklists
- conferences
- demonstrations
- exhibitions
- interviews (structured and informal)
- inventories
- investigations
- learning logs/journals
- media products
- observation (formal and informal)
- peer assessments
- performance tasks
- portfolios

- projects
- questioning
- questionnaires
- self-assessments
- seminar presentations
- surveys
- tests
- work samples
- written assignments

Evaluation in religious education is concerned with the development of the whole person in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. The affective domain deals with feelings and emotions and is exemplified through students' attitudes, interests, value systems and appreciations.

One of the most effective sources of data for use in evaluating outcomes in the affective domain is observation. Teachers can focus upon and record achievement in the affective domain using rating scales, checklists and anecdotal records. Other sources of evaluation data for the affective domain include self-reporting devices such as an attitude scale, where students respond on a continuum ranging from favourable to unfavourable, and individual inventories where students check their preference for, or attitude toward, an idea or activity.

In recognizing and valuing the diversity of students, teachers might consider ways to:

- **provide** a climate and design learning experiences to affirm the dignity and worth of all learners in the classroom community
- **redress** educational disadvantage – for example, as it relates to students living in poverty
- **model** the use of inclusive language, attitudes, and actions supportive of all learners
- **adapt** classroom organization, teaching strategies, assessment strategies, time, and learning resources to address learners' needs and build on their strengths
- **provide** opportunities for learners to work in a variety of learning contexts, including mixed-ability groupings
- **identify** and **respond** to diversity in students' learning styles
- **build on** students' individual levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- **design** learning and assessment tasks that draw on learners' strengths

- **ensure** that learners use strengths as a means of tackling areas of difficulty
- **use** students' strengths and abilities to motivate and support learning in multiple and varied tasks
- **celebrate** the accomplishment of learning tasks that learners believed were too challenging for them