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.

A Rationale for Religious Education

Appreciation of the human encounter with transcendence in its multiple forms can be as important as an appreciation of literature and the other arts in helping us lay hold of the wisdom of our collective past. (Michael Warren, "Catechesis: An Enriching Category for Religious Education", *Source Book for Modern Catechetics*. Winona: St. Mary's Press, 1983, p.388.)

Since time immemorial 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 (Ultimate Reality) and attitudes and approaches toward the world in which we live. On the cusp of 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 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.

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 their role in the natural order.

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.

Persons demand beliefs; societies need convictions; and civilizations require a basic social ethical vision by which to guide behavior. (M. Stackhouse, *Creeds, Society and Human Rights.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984, p. 4.)

Most 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 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.
(John M. Hull, "Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society", *Studies in Religion and Education.* London: Falmer Press, 1984, p. 48.)

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. 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, students 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, architecture, art, music, film, and theatre.

Finally, it must be noted that 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. There will be aspects of the religious education curriculum that support each of the Essential Graduation Learnings.

Key Principles Underlying Religious Education

This religious education curriculum is non-confessional. In such a program it is essential that faith, beliefs, doctrines, practices and history of Christianity and other religions be covered with sensitivity and respect. No attempt to indoctrinate, proselytize or present a biased view would be appropriate.

In *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education*, it is recognized that in addition to studying Christianity and other religions, students will be enabled to reflect on and make personal decisions about their own spirituality and religious traditions.

Recognition must be given to the fact that students are living in a global society and in a country that is multi-cultural and multi-faith. Newfoundland and Labrador, along with the other provinces and territories, is also witnessing the emergence of various faith communities. Therefore, it is desirable for the citizens of the province to understand and respect many living belief systems.

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

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

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 interfaith dialogue is the awareness that human beings share essential truths and experiences.

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.

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

Meeting the Needs of all Learners

The Adolescent Learner

The adolescent learner in the intermediate grades is involved in a period of rapid and significant change with respect to physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and moral development. Because the nature of these changes is often intense and varied, they need to be acknowledged by the religious education teacher.

While some general characteristics for adolescents have been identified, there is a need to recognize that changing characteristics are on a continuum with many variations at each grade and for different ages. Each young person is unique and any attempt to classify must be regarded as extremely general.

For this curriculum guide, which deals with the adolescent learner in the intermediate grades, adolescence can be subdivided into early adolescence for the 10-14 year old, encompassing the biological changes that come with puberty and a new interest in sexuality, and middle adolescence, ages 15-17, a time of increasing autonomy and self-discovery leading to clear identity formation. There are considerable differences in the characteristics of the early grade seven adolescent and the late grade nine adolescent.

The characteristics of the intermediate learner should be considered within the instructional environment. The intermediate learner:

- perceives peer relationships as more important than family relationships

- attempts to define self independent of the family

- may become more involved in risk taking behaviours

- appears to fluctuate between independence and dependence

- displays a multitude of emotions in varying degrees

- grows physically and cognitively at varying rates

- moves from morality based on convention to morality based on personal values

- is refining his/her sense of humour

- uses diverse communication skills

- is enthusiastic about sharing ideas and experiences

- continues to develop reasoning skills

- reflects on feelings, emotions, and responsibilities

- is developing the ability to handle abstract and hypothetical concepts

- applies problem solving approaches to complex issues

- is self-conscious

- is learning to interact co-operatively
- asks questions and questions answers
- responds best when expectations are clear
- has fairly rigid standards for right and wrong

The Religious Education Learning Environment

An effective learning environment will be one where sensitivity and respect is shown for all living belief systems. The learning environment should be such that it fosters in students a positive attitude towards other people and their right to hold different beliefs from their own. It should prepare students for living in a society of diverse living belief systems. 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.

"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." (Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith, A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*, Harper, San Francisco 1991, p. 430)

Also, the learning environment has to be appropriate to the age and developmental needs of the student, with activities being student centred. 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 to decide to what degree practices of celebrations can be facilitated in the school with the sincerity, dignity, and reverence they deserve.

Therefore, an effective religious education environment must be:

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

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 living belief systems
- uses people 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 to form individual beliefs and attitudes
- helps students understand what 'reflection' is and 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.

Instructional Strategies

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. It continues with planning and delivering instruction in an appropriate manner, including monitoring student growth and understanding. This process 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, seatwork, 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 time is provided 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 thinking as well as the acquisition of information.

Whole Class Learning

Whole class learning experiences often focus 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
- lectures
- 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 progress toward becoming self-directed learners. Demonstrations, for example, provide students with both verbal and non-verbal information.

Although large amounts of information transmitted by lecture may not always be retained, mini-lessons, which are 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.

Small Group Learning

Small group experiences in grades 7-9 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

Independent Learning

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.

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.

Indirect Instruction

Indirect Instruction is generally student-centered and involves inquiry, discovery, 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 learning 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*
- *decision making*
- *concept formation*
- *concept attainment*
- *guided inquiry*
- *case study*
- *reflective discussion and questions*

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 and will promote their progress toward becoming independent learners.

Problem Solving
- involves application of knowledge, skills, ideas, resources and processes to generate one or many solutions to a problem
- may follow the scientific method
- can be a practical skill
- may include strategies such as "trial and error", "brainstorming", "what if/I suppose", "attribute listing", "forced relationships", "idea check list" and "imaging"

Concept Attainment
- provides students with data about a particular concept generated by themselves or their teacher, students are encouraged to classify or group the information and to give descriptive labels to their groupings
- has students link the examples to the labels through their own reasoning or form their own understanding of the concept
- has students participate actively in their own learning
- has students organize and manipulate information
- has students create new and expanded meaning of their information

Inquiry
- includes 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
- allows for a high level of interaction among the learner, teacher, the area of study, available resources and the learning environment
- allows students to act upon their curiosity and interests
- encourages students to formulate questions and analyse situations/problems/information
- calls upon prior learning
- encourages hypothesis development and testing (new questions and hypotheses often emerge as the inquiry continues)
- has students make inferences and propose solutions
- has students realize that there is often more than one answer to a question; more than one solution to a problem

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:

- *lectures*
- *comparison and contrast*
- *explicit teaching*
- *drill and practice*
- *demonstrations*
- *guided practice*
- *guides or templates (outlines)*
- *structured overview*
- *questioning*

Questioning
- can be used to diagnose recall and comprehension skills
- can be convergent and/or factual
- may draw on prior learning experience
- can determine the extent to which lesson outcomes are being achieved
- provides practice
- aids retention of information or processes
- stimulates thinking
- encourages expression
- can be empirical
- can be conceptual

Explicit Teaching
- direct telling
- making statements
- giving information or directions
- explaining procedures
- is largely teacher-centred
- can be large group or small group
- can be used to motivate the learner
- may stimulate reflection
- can challenge the imagination
- may develop curiosity and a sense of inquiry
- may include teacher talk; lecture approach; mini-lessons; instruction giving

Cautions:

- not all students learn well with this technique
- lectured content is often rapidly forgotten

Demonstrations
- can provide verbal and non-verbal information, techniques and procedures
- can illustrate the end product of a process
- can provide a model for reproducing a procedure or creating a product
- can involve the collection and organization of materials
- allow students to receive information through tactile and visual means

Guided Practice
- can be individual, student centred and needs based
- may be small group
- can be used to monitor student performance and practices (e.g., signs of respect, appropriate behaviour)

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, reproduction of religious symbols with clay and/or vicarious experiences such as exploring art through the Internet. Current technology permits numerous simulations to be shared through various media such as DVD, videos, cassettes, and computer programs. 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 play*
- *simulation*
- *experimentation*
- *working model*
- *mock-up*
- *field trips*
- *surveys*
- *games*
- *learning centres*

Simulation
- allows for types of experiments/activities that cannot take place in the real environment
- presents an artificial problem situation or event which represents some aspect of reality
- removes risk and reduces safety considerations
- involves a level of complexity that is purposefully reduced so that students may become directly involved with underlying concepts
- may involve the use of models, game formats, structured role play or an interactive video or computer program

Authentic Experiences
- are real life learning experiences that require careful planning
- factors such as safety, liability, weather, transportation costs, time and availability have to be considered
- may include field trips, school visitations by outside resource people, surveys, and field observations

Role Play
- is the spontaneous or practiced response to a given situation or theme where the learners attempt to speak, feel, behave like the character they portray
- is designed to illustrate situations in which the behaviour of individuals is the critical factor
- can be part of a game or simulation activity
- is an approach to addressing interpersonal problems and practicing social and communication skills
- allows for high level of student engagement
- promotes independent and self-determined behaviour
- promotes increased understanding of the views, positions and feelings of others
- facilitates attitudinal and behavioural change
- encourages cooperation and sharing
- can be used to resolve decision-making dilemmas, resolve conflict, determine appropriate behavioural responses
- requires that teachers define the problem situation and problem clearly as well as give very clear instructions

Cautions

In role play situations:

- some students may feel self conscious or threatened
- may not be appropriate for large groups
- may not be appropriate for all learners

Independent Learning

Independent learning fosters the development of individual student initiative, responsible decision making, self reliance and independence. It encourages learners to effectively organize and pace their learning. Independent learning may be individual or it may include learning in partnership with others. The teacher and/or the student (under the teacher's guidance), may determine the description and conditions of the task(s). Independent learning allows students to explore in depth personal interests related to educational outcomes. It motivates learners to make connections and see the relevance of what they are learning to their everyday lives. Independent learning can be used in conjunction with other methods. It requires careful monitoring and regular feedback to the learner(s) to be effective.

Independent learning includes:

- *homework*
- *projects*
- *reports*
- *essays*
- *assigned questions*
- *learning contracts*
- *learning centres*
- *computer assisted instruction*

Field Trips
- involve teaching/learning activities at a site other than the classroom
- require careful planning in order to make the link to learning outcomes
- should spark student interest, discussion, questioning,
- may provide "hands on" experience
- may involve application of previous knowledge or acquisition of new knowledge
- should involve follow-up, i.e., reports, discussions, and/or evaluation
- reflect the real world and put learning in the context of the community
- broaden the student's view

Assigned Questions
- are related to new or previously learned material
- may be a component of problem solving
- may be a component of critical thinking
- may be used for reflection and self-evaluation
- may be an element of programmed instruction
- may be used in guided inquiry
- may be used as the starting point for cooperative group learning
- may be used to guide/direct learning, exploration, experimentation, and/or observation

Projects
- should be introduced by teachers such that all expectations and guidelines are clearly stated
- include assigned tasks that provide an opportunity for all learners to consolidate/synthesize learning from a number of disciplines or experiences
- usually involve learners, alone or in small groups, working on a task for an extended time period (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
- may be used to relate knowledge to their own experiences and/or to the broader community
- may involve research guided by the teacher to reduce bias in the gathering of data
- usually involves extending/enriching/reinforcing learning
- should be focused (e.g., subject matter concept, interdisciplinary theme, action projects)
- should include a criteria for planning and evaluation
- should include clear time lines, and ongoing progress reports

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*
- *cooperative learning groups*
- *laboratory groups*
- *computer partners*
- *buddy reading*
- *interviewing*
- *peer practice*

Computer-Assisted Instruction
- includes an instructional mode which incorporates the computer into the lesson plan
- can include word processing, drill and practice, tutorials, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, simulations
- may be an independent or cooperative small group learning
- may be appropriate for individualizing instruction
- fosters active involvement
- allows for independent and collaborative decision making
- is appropriate for programmed instruction

Learning Contracts
- are designed by teachers to initially provide terms and conditions, identify resources and set basic timelines
- involve students, parents and other professionals in designing the contract (such as expectations, conditions, evaluation criteria, time frame, consequences)
- provide a method of individualizing instruction
- can be designed so that students operate at the academic level and pace most suited for them
- can help students make reasoned choices, become increasingly independent learners and take responsibility for their own learning.

Conferencing
- occurs when teachers meet with an individual or small groups of students to discuss learning tasks or concerns
- encourages students to talk about their work in a non-threatening low-risk environment where points of view are shared and respected
- allows for an open exchange of ideas between the teacher and the learner
- allows teachers to guide students and provide feedback
- encourages students to reflect on their learning, engage in self-assessment and make decisions on how to approach tasks
- is an appropriate setting for encouraging independence and promoting self-confidence

"*Links to Other Disciplines*". Students should be encouraged to find strategies to link their learning in these courses to their studies in other courses. This might be accomplished, for example, through interdisciplinary research and presentations that are developed and presented in collaboration with teachers in other courses for which students are registered. For specifics regarding these links to other discipines refer to the notes in the two page spreads.

Brainstorming
- is a process of rapidly generating ideas or responses
- is a method of student input by which all contributions are accepted without judgement or comment (this includes nods of agreement) and without editing the words of the contributor (this includes "you mean to say....., or this is the same as....)
- is a means of extending boundaries and encouraging creative ideas
- is a means of quickly getting a wide range of ideas on a topic or issue
- can be used as a precursor to refining or categorizing ideas/ responses
- is intended to capitalize on the varied experiences, knowledge, and ideas of the group
- can be playful with zany ideas encouraged and accepted

Cooperative Small Group Learning
- is an approach to organizing classroom activity so that students can work collaboratively and build on one another's strengths and ideas
- involves group members sharing clearly defined roles and are interdependent in achieving the main goal
- enables students to learn the importance of respecting individual views and maintaining group harmony
- has students working towards a common goal
- is such that achieving the goal depends on the individual learning of all group members
- has the teacher's role as primarily that of facilitator in guiding students as social groups and learning teams as they engage in activities such as identifying problems, generating solutions and practicing skills
- requires professional development and practice

Interviewing
- involves individuals, pairs or small groups collecting information from peers, younger students, older students, and adults
- involves focused thought and active thinking to develop questions and explore ideas
- requires interpersonal and listening skills; the student must listen respectfully, react to, and interpret the views and experiences of others
- uses language to articulate and clarify one's thoughts, feelings, and ideas
- allows exchange of ideas, increased understanding and new awareness of a previous knowledge
- involves follow up activities

Effective Assessment Evaluation Practices

Defining Assessment and Evaluation

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.

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 are collected. Evaluating involves reflecting on what students have learned for the purpose of sharing this information with them and with their parent(s), caregiver(s), 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.

Understanding Process and Product

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.

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.

Diverse Learners

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

Identifying the Activity

In planning for assessment the key questions are: "What is the process and what are the students expected to accomplish?" The answer to this question enables the teacher to choose or design appropriate means that allow the student to demonstrate these. The student will be expected to demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities. The means can be multiple and varied: presentations; producing videos; writing essays or plays; charting or graphing information; locating and displaying information; demonstrating a skill, designing a product or a plan; drawing or graphing 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-centred 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.

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
- videotapes
- 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. There is little doubt, this is a more difficult area to evaluate than either the cognitive or psychomotor domains. For this reason, it is generally inappropriate and undesirable to attach percentage values to affective outcomes. This does not, however, diminish the importance of the affective domain, since values and value systems are central to the learning and evaluation process (Eiss and Harbeck, 1969). It is important to keep the three domains separate for evaluation purposes. This is important since it is possible for progress to be uneven across the different domains. Even though a student might have a negative attitude toward school, it is possible for that student to achieve at a high level in the cognitive domain.

A question that arises is why so little attention has been given to assessing student progress in such a crucial area of child development as the affective domain. Perhaps the home and church are expected to provide instruction in those areas. Perhaps it is because schools tend to place most emphasis on the cognitive aspects of education. Undoubtedly, a major reason is the difficulty associated with measuring progress toward affective outcomes.

One of the most effective sources of data for use in evaluating outcomes in the affective domain is observation. This method, utilizing appropriate recording devices such as rating scales, checklists and anecdotal records, enables the teacher to focus upon and record achievement in the affective domain. 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. Student reports or term papers can be evaluated from an affective point of view if they are designed so the student is required to take a stand on a certain issue. Personal interviews and discussions can also be used to evaluate affective growth if care is taken to use indirect questions so that students cannot guess which answer the teacher would like to hear.

To become lifelong learners, students need to develop internal motivation. They are more likely to perceive learning as its own reward when they are empowered to assess their own progress. Rather than asking teachers, "What do you want?", students should be encouraged to ask themselves questions such as, What have I learned? "What can I do now that I couldn't do before?" "What do I need to learn next?" Assessment must provide opportunities for students to reflect on their progress, evaluate their learning, and set goals for future learning.

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 and multi grade/age groups
- 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
- offer multiple and varied avenues to learning
- celebrate the accomplishment of learning tasks that learners believed were too challenging for them