

Religious Education

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

THE BORN OF THE SPIRIT SERIES

The Born of the Spirit catechetical series builds on the essential childhood education in faith that parents provide. The series begins with *In God's Image*, a resource for four and five year olds that affirms the child in all areas of growth and celebrates the wonder of childhood as a trace of God. The metaphor "a trace of God" is used throughout the resource to express how the activities, growth and very being of the child are gifts and reminders of God.

YEAR ONE: WE BELONG TO GOD: shows how God loves us unconditionally. Here, the overall aim is to deepen the children's experience of belonging to God by growing in friendship with Jesus, who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, shows us the creative, forgiving, caring love of God.

YEAR TWO: WE BELONG TO THE LORD JESUS: makes "belonging" concrete in the person of Jesus, who invites us into personal friendship and spreads a table for us in the Eucharist. The program follows the chronological structure of the Mass and also introduces children to the sacrament of reconciliation.

YEAR THREE: IN THE SPIRIT WE BELONG: explores our belonging to the Church gathered in the Spirit. Its overall aim is to deepen the experience of belonging to God through the community of the followers of Jesus gathered in the Spirit.

YEAR FOUR: COME AND SEE: looks at the Church's experience and faith in Jesus. The overall aim of Year Four is to meet the Lord Jesus through the living experience of gospel witnesses and to explore what it means for us to be a disciple and friend of Jesus today.

YEAR FIVE: MAY WE BE ONE: seeks entry into what the Church does as it gives witness to Jesus in the Spirit. It concentrates on how the Church is a gathering, a communion of people from all nations in and through the Spirit of God.

YEAR SIX: YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES: invites exploration of the Christian moral life. It is based on the Bible and presents how God's covenant with the peoples of the earth is reflected in moral existence by the witness of love, justice and compassion.

YEAR SEVEN: BELIEVE IN ME and

YEAR EIGHT: STAND BY ME: assist young believers in nurturing their relationship with God in and through Christ in the context of a Spirit-filled community. By using the "faith summary" of the Apostles Creed, these programs encourage young believers to participate with the Church in exploring the dimensions of their relationship with God, Jesus and the community of the Holy Spirit.

YEAR NINE: BE WITH ME: assists young people in understanding both the joy and the demands of following in the way of Christ and living out the faith that our community professes in the Creed. Using the Beatitudes as a touchstone, young people are invited to examine the attitudes and actions that characterize the Christian life.

SENIOR HIGH PROGRAM: ALBERTA YOUTH SEARCH FOR MEANING

YEAR TEN: BELONGING:

The Senior High Religious Studies Program engages students in the Search for Meaning and offers to adolescents a way of realizing and fulfilling their possibilities as human beings. The course on Belonging is intended to help students understand what it means to be “fully alive” by recognizing that one of the primary needs of adolescents is to experience a sense of belonging. Here, in their quest to find meaning in belonging, there is the constant interaction between what the gospel teaches and the human experience.

YEAR ELEVEN: BELIEVING: addresses real life issues. What do I believe about myself, others, God? How am I to live my life? In the search to find answers to such questions, adolescents will make decisions. The beliefs adolescents hold will greatly influence the choices they make, and for the most part, their beliefs are solidified. They still have many discoveries to make before they settle for life-long commitments. But for now, they search.

YEAR TWELVE: RELATING: encourages students to explore the human search for meaning using the resources of personal inquiry and significant spiritual traditions.

YEARS 10, 11 AND 12 also have a compulsory component of world religions (20% at each grade level is required). The religions to be studied at each grade level are as follows:

Grade 10: Judaism, Islam, Christianity, religions with Christian and American roots

Grade 11: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism

Grade 12: Confucianism, Taoism, Sikhism (5 credits: + Primal Traditions; Shinto)

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR LEARNING IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

“Religious instruction in schools should be handled just as any other course is handled, and should not be considered a less important subject. It should have the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines.” (General Directory for Catechesis, #73)

As such, both evaluation and assessment are a part of religious instruction: assessment includes the ongoing observation and reflection on specific expectations by students and evaluation involves the demonstration of those desired expectations. While it is important to remember that evaluation measures the knowledge (cognitive) and skills (practical) expectations of learning, evaluation is *not meant to be a judgement on a student’s faith.*

As teachers in Catholic schools, as those working with parents, guardians and the faith community, and as those entrusted with imparting the faith to the next generation, we have a responsibility to understand what students need to know, do and be like to participate fully in the Catholic Christian community. The cognitive and practical outcomes provided present the key learning expectations (outcomes) for each of the units in the Born of the Spirit program.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ASSESSMENT IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

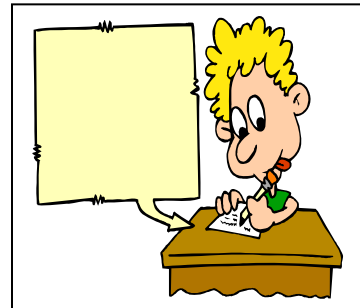
Why do we need to assess and evaluate student work in religious education?

Because religious education is a core subject, it makes sense to have its assessment similar to that of other core subjects. This not only gives credence to the importance of religious education, but highlights the knowledge and skills found within the program. Assessment is an essential part of the entire teaching and learning process, including religious education: assessment includes the ongoing observation and reflection on specific expectations by students and evaluation involves the demonstration of those desired expectations. *“Religious instruction in schools should be handled just as any other course is handled, and should not be considered a less important subject. It should have the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines”* (General Directory for Catechesis, #73)

A good assessment framework raises the expectations of teachers and makes us aware of the potentially high standards which our students can achieve. It helps us to sharpen our focus on what is being taught and why. It enables us to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' attainments and to plan the next steps in their learning. It provides the means to chart progress, and enables us to make students and their parents clear about particular achievements and targets for improvement.

Effective assessment requires:

- identification of a clear focus for a unit or lesson
- clear planning of objectives
- careful consideration of learning experiences
- opportunities to demonstrate achievement
- regular evaluation



Why is religious education assessment so challenging?

RE enables students to consider and respond to a range of important questions related to their own spiritual development, the development of values and attitudes and fundamental questions concerning the meaning and purpose of life.

One reason that assessment is challenging is that the religious education teacher is not only responsible for the instruction of the curriculum. The teacher is also called to take on a catechetical role. The first role focuses essentially on the content and skills of the program; the second focuses on the faith formation of the students, or their relationship with God. At times, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two.

When I'm assessing learning in religious education, am I assessing a student's faith?

While it is important to remember that evaluation measures the knowledge (cognitive) and skills (practical) expectations of learning, evaluation is not meant to be a judgment on a student's faith. Assessment should enable student and teacher to recognize and celebrate achievement and should motivate the learner.

"There is really no form of evaluation by which we can assess a student's growth in faith, for this would be making judgments about a person's relationship with God." (Born of the Spirit Program)

A person's relationship with God is a matter of conscience, the internal forum of the soul. God alone is the arbiter of souls (and then again, who can plumb the depths of Divine Mercy?). It is important, therefore, that we **avoid the grading or evaluation of a student's faith.**

What specifically, is appropriate to grade?

First, it is the work of the student that we are evaluating. We **grade the knowledge** the student has acquired based on the program of studies **and the skills** the student is able to show in articulating his/her knowledge.

A variety of assessment strategies may be used in religious education as in other curriculum areas (e.g., portfolios, checklists, journals, participation, formal testing, creative writing, drama, projects, interviews, self and peer evaluations).

If we understand assessment as an identification of essential understandings, then the faith journey of a student is perhaps best shared with the parents through the use of portfolios. These, of course, would contain only material the student is comfortable in sharing. It would be inappropriate to grade the faith journey of any individual.

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

The Introductory Booklet which accompanies each grade of the religious education program from grades 1 to 9 should be read in its entirety. Teachers should be familiar with the scope and sequence pages which highlight the key aims, concepts and skills as well as experience, church teaching, prayer and celebration (liturgy) for each theme.

As Unit One at each grade is foundational in creating the welcoming and caring environment that invites sharing of faith in the classroom, teachers must be faithful to exploring and experiencing this unit. As teachers in Catholic schools, the engagement in daily prayer and in classroom celebration (liturgy) is expected in accord with the liturgical year and the guidelines suggested throughout the religious education program.

When planning for instruction, consider the following:

- Select options within each theme/unit that offer a variety of strategies and activities and that reflect a diversity of learning styles.

- Initiate use of student portfolios and friendship books at the beginning of the year as a way of gathering student work samples.
- Utilise a variety of assessment tools and strategies including rubrics, observation surveys, check-lists, art work, and role plays.
- Be clear about the purpose of assessment – formative (i.e., to monitor and guide a process/product in progress) or summative (i.e., to judge the success of a process/product that has been completed).
- Track student progress using an outcomes-based gradebook.

Criteria for Assessment

Once students understand what is expected of them, teachers and students should together identify **what the learning looks like and sounds like for success**. For example, if students are creating contemporary interpretations of a favourite parable, how will they be assessed? Are they writing, representing or performing? Will students know how to self-assess while preparing for the assignment? When using a rubric to assess learning/understanding, be sure to choose criteria that can show the *four levels* of achievement.

DESCRIPTOR *The student exhibits an understanding of the Bible through research skills and explanation of Scripture passages.*

Explains and represents the structure of the Bible	The student requires assistance to locate and explains specific Scripture passages, as taught, and can articulate these in a limited manner.	The student, with limited assistance, locates and explains some Scripture passages, as taught, and can sometimes articulate how Bible stories relate to our life experiences.	The student independently locates and explains Scripture passages, as taught, and often articulates how Bible stories relate to life experiences.	The student can consistently and independently locate and explain Scripture passages, as taught, and through creative expression displays a thorough understanding of Bible stories and how they apply to life situations.
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DESCRIPTOR *The student memorizes traditional prayer forms and creates personal prayers in written form.*

Oral and written prayer	The student recites traditional prayer forms with major errors and omissions. With assistance, he/she is able to create simple personal prayers in written form.	The student memorizes traditional prayer forms with several minor errors and sometimes creates personal prayers in written form	The student successfully memorizes traditional prayer forms and independently creates personal prayers in written form.	The student confidently memorizes traditional prayer forms and consistently creates complex personal prayers in written form.
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Tools to assess student learning in Religious Education

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal checklists • Portfolios • Dialogue • Quiz or Exam • Writing Prompt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self assessment • Performance Task • Projects • Presentations • Rubrics |
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Based upon the evidence of learning in your classroom, select specific **bulleted statements** to support each of the KLOs you choose to highlight for the term.

Choosing Key Learner Outcomes and Comments

Forms of assessment for each KLO must clearly reflect a **SUMMATIVE** evaluation of what students **KNOW** and can **DO** (NOT student behaviour).

<p>FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, THE REPORT CARD KEY LEARNER OUTCOMES AND SPECIFIC LEARNER OUTCOMES ARE LOCATED IN PUBLIC FOLDERS.</p> <p>TO ACCESS THEM FROM YOUR ECSD WEBMAIL: CLICK PUBLIC FOLDERS, CLICK ALL PUBLIC FOLDERS, CLICK RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SERVICES, CLICK KEY LEARNER OUTCOMES. **PLEASE NOTE: choose a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 KLOs per reporting period.</p>

Be sure **that the following criteria are met:**

C R I T E R I A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The report card targets religious education learning (e.g., student is able to correctly locate passages in the Bible when provided a reference; student is able to explain that Advent is a season of preparation for Christmas; student can outline and explain a decision-making model that reflects Catholic understanding of social justice principles) ➤ All <i>key learner outcomes</i> are tied <i>directly</i> to the religious education programs: Born of the Spirit (K-9) or Alberta Youth Search for Meaning (10-12). ➤ Forms of assessment for each KLO must clearly reflect a SUMMATIVE evaluation of what students KNOW and can DO (NOT student behaviour). ➤ The knowledge and skills described in the key learner outcome can be clearly described in four distinct levels of achievement
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COMMENTS: You should begin your comment by providing a context for the learning:

Example for General Category: This term we have been learning about the Bible as God’s word.

Possible Comments:

- Demonstrates *Excellent* achievement:
(Student) can perceptively explain why the Bible is God’s word for Christians and Catholics
- Demonstrates *Proficient* Achievement:
(Student) can accurately explain why the Bible is God’s word for Christians and Catholics.
- Demonstrates *Basic* Achievement:
(Student) can partially explain why the Bible is God’s word for Christians and Catholics.
- Demonstrates *Insufficient* Achievement:
(Student) inaccurately explains why the Bible is God’s word for Christians and Catholics.

Teachers need to:

- Plan the unit with the end in mind.
- Determine key learner outcomes (KLOs) before planning for the unit.
- Choose two or three KLOs that focus specifically on the knowledge and skills that you will be addressing in your classroom during the term.
- Discuss with students BEFORE THE TASK what the criteria for success are and post this information as a visible reminder for them.

Examples of comments that address religious education knowledge/skills component:

GRADE	SUBJECT	CATEGORY	OUTCOME	DESCRIPTOR
9	Religious Education	Unit 1 Be With Me	Theme 1.1 Who do I want to be with?	Repeats and explains the Beatitudes.

Comment:

Student is able to give a comprehensive description of the Beatitudes. Student can give insightful explanations of the material we have covered. Student’s reflections regarding the eight Beatitudes show an impressive depth and grasp of their meaning.

8	Religious Education	Unit 1 We believe in the Holy Spirit	Theme 3 How do I know I’m on the right track?	Names and describes the fruits of the Spirit and identifies them in daily life.
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Comment:

Student has a satisfactory understanding of the fruits of the Spirit’ and describes some ways in which they are evident in her daily life.

7	Religious Education	Unit 3 We believe in God the Father Almighty	Theme 3 Who’s in control?	Explains and uses the ‘observe, judge, act’ model for moral decision making.
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During this term, Student's work has revealed a limited understanding of moral decision making. Student was not able to apply the "observe, act, model" to case examples.

Statements Not Appropriate to Use as Key Learner Outcomes:

- Is very welcoming and helpful to others
- Actively participates in sharing friendship stories
- Enthusiastically contributes to classroom celebrations
- Shows reverence to the Word of God through active listening
- Is quiet during prayers and liturgies
- Engages with the symbols of the Church in appropriate ways
- Respectfully participates in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word
- Applies scripture to daily life

Reporting on Growth as a Learner

In the report card, a student's social growth and work habits are reported in the 'Growth as a Learner' section along with the teacher's comment that provides additional information. Growth as a Learner is assessed based on three levels of frequency: Consistently, Sometimes and Rarely.