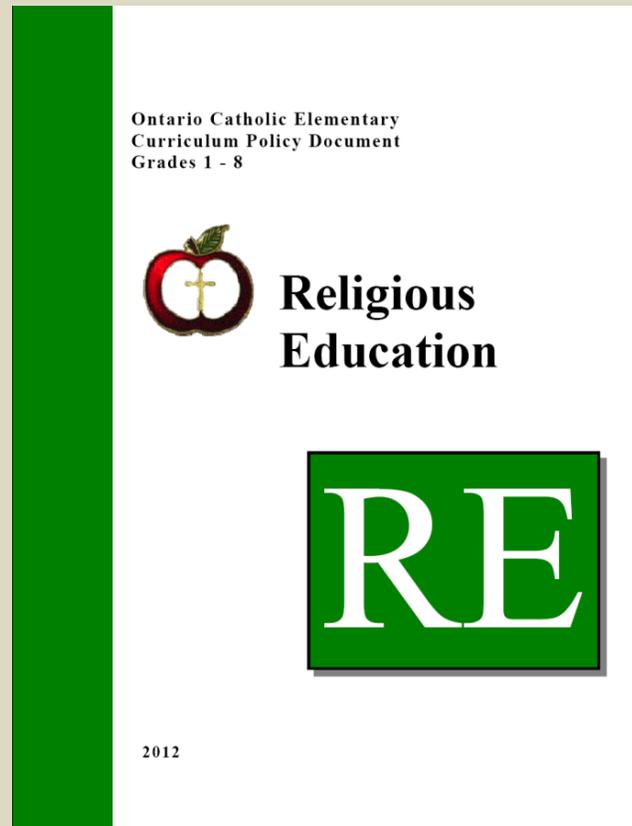


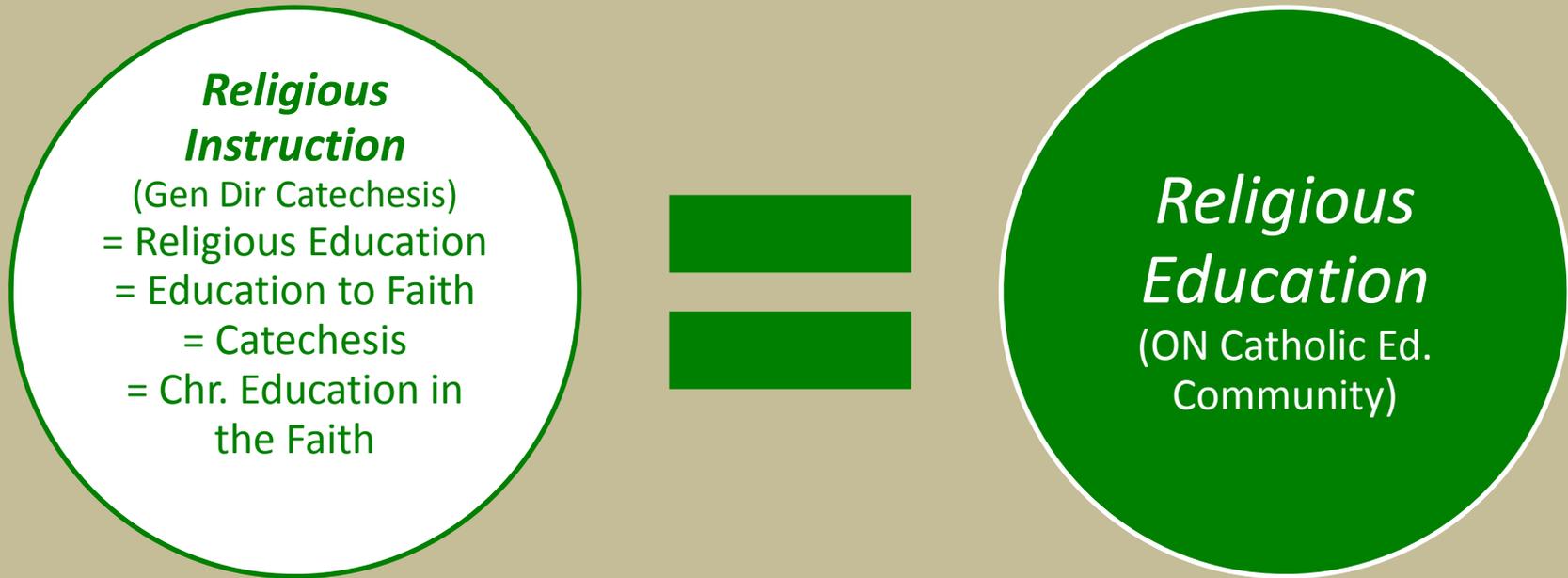
Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8 Religious Education



Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, December 2012

2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis



Religious Education

- *Context: School*
– where culture is assimilated in light of faith
- “Underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.” (GDC 222)

Catechesis

- *Context: Normally Parish*
– which celebrates sacred mysteries (of our faith) throughout liturgical year
- School can offer catechetical activities (e.g., thru chaplaincy, parish-school activities)

2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis

“Religious education in schools (must) appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and ... rigour as other disciplines.”

Religious education also **“must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which the other disciplines present their knowledge.** It should not be accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary interdisciplinary dialogue.”

In other words, **Religious Education has the duty to address in the light of the Church’s faith, the questions, values and issues that emerge in all subject areas.** The Directory continues by stating that **“Through interdisciplinary dialogue, *religious education* in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the education activity of the school.”**

2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis (Cont'd)

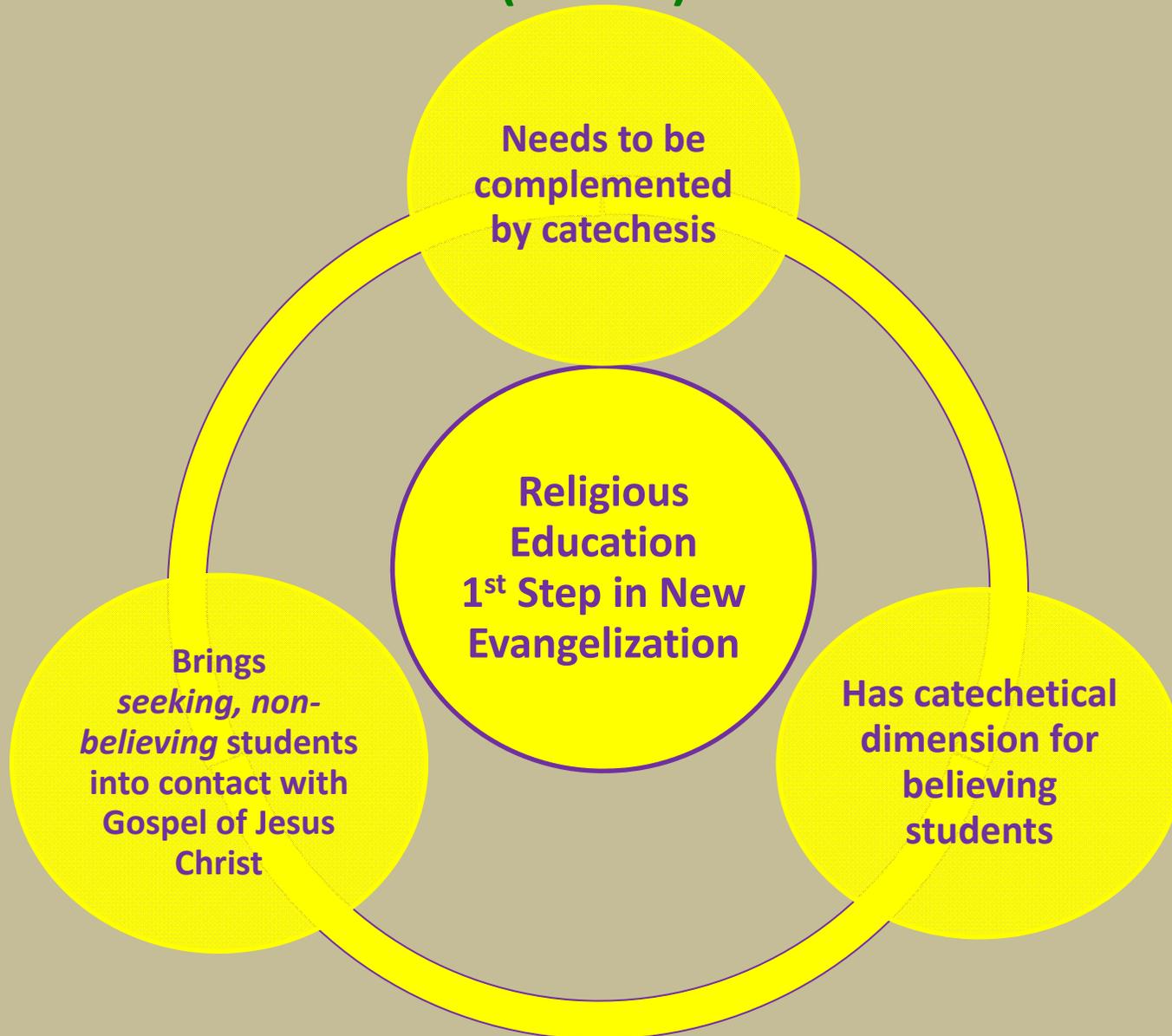
Religious Education needs to respond to all student stances

- **Truly Engaged** as disciples of Christ;
- **Seekers** trying to understand better the Gospel
- **Indifferent** to Gospel's claims, but perhaps open to understanding role of Christianity in today's culture

Religious Education's response to student needs

- **For Believers:**
 - helps them better understand Christian message.
- **For Searching (& doubting):**
 - offers possibility to discover what faith in Jesus Christ is.
 - provides Church response to questions.
 - helps examine own choices more deeply
- **For Non-Believers**
 - Rel Ed takes on missionary character = missionary proclamation of Gospel ordered to decision of faith which catechesis will nurture and mature (GDC 75)

2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis (Cont'd)



2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis (Cont'd)

**Privileged
place of
dialogue
between faith
& culture**



**A place where
students come
to understand
that faith brings
meaning to all
life**



Place of Formation
- for Christian
Service
- for vocation
- for responsible
participation in
political/social
community life

2.1 Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Catechesis (Cont'd)

Through cross-curricular teaching, religious education becomes a lens through which students can understand the world and their place within it. (p. 15)



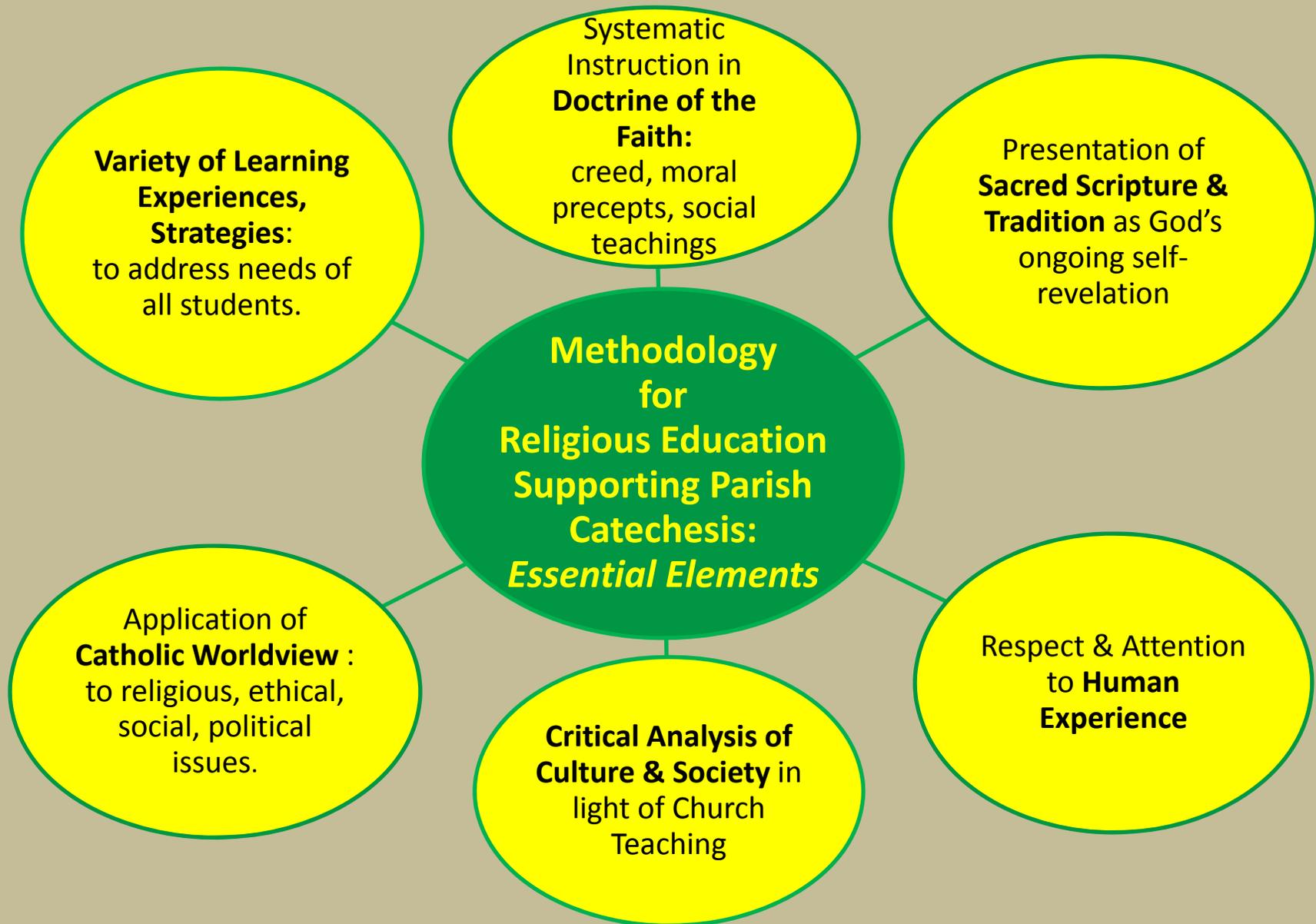
2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education



... therefore, because of its relationship to the whole process of evangelization, religious education in Catholic schools should incorporate those methods of the tradition which have proven to promote good religious formation. (p. 15)

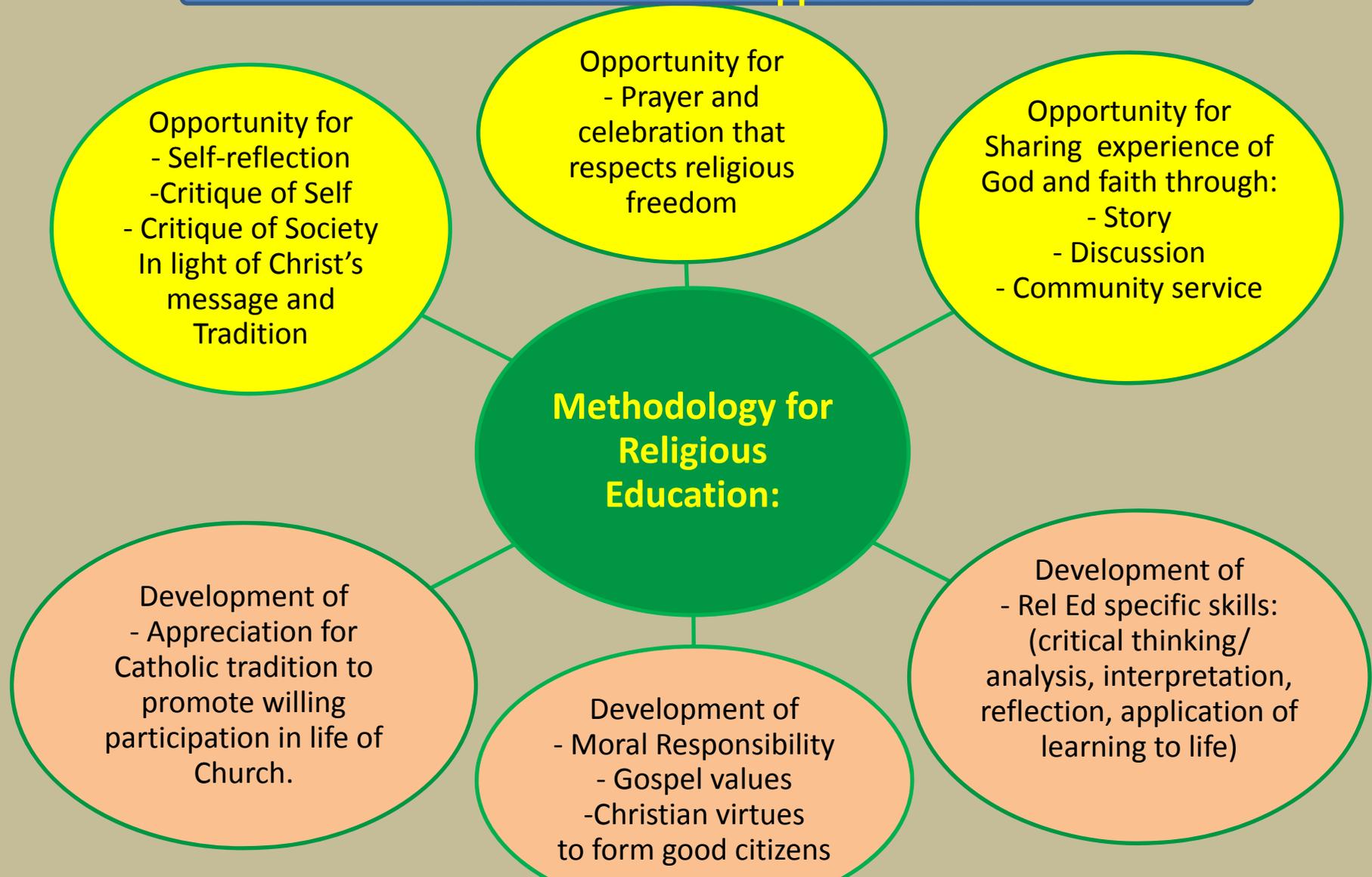
Religious Education must ...
- involve systematic instruction
- support parish catechetical programs

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)



2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

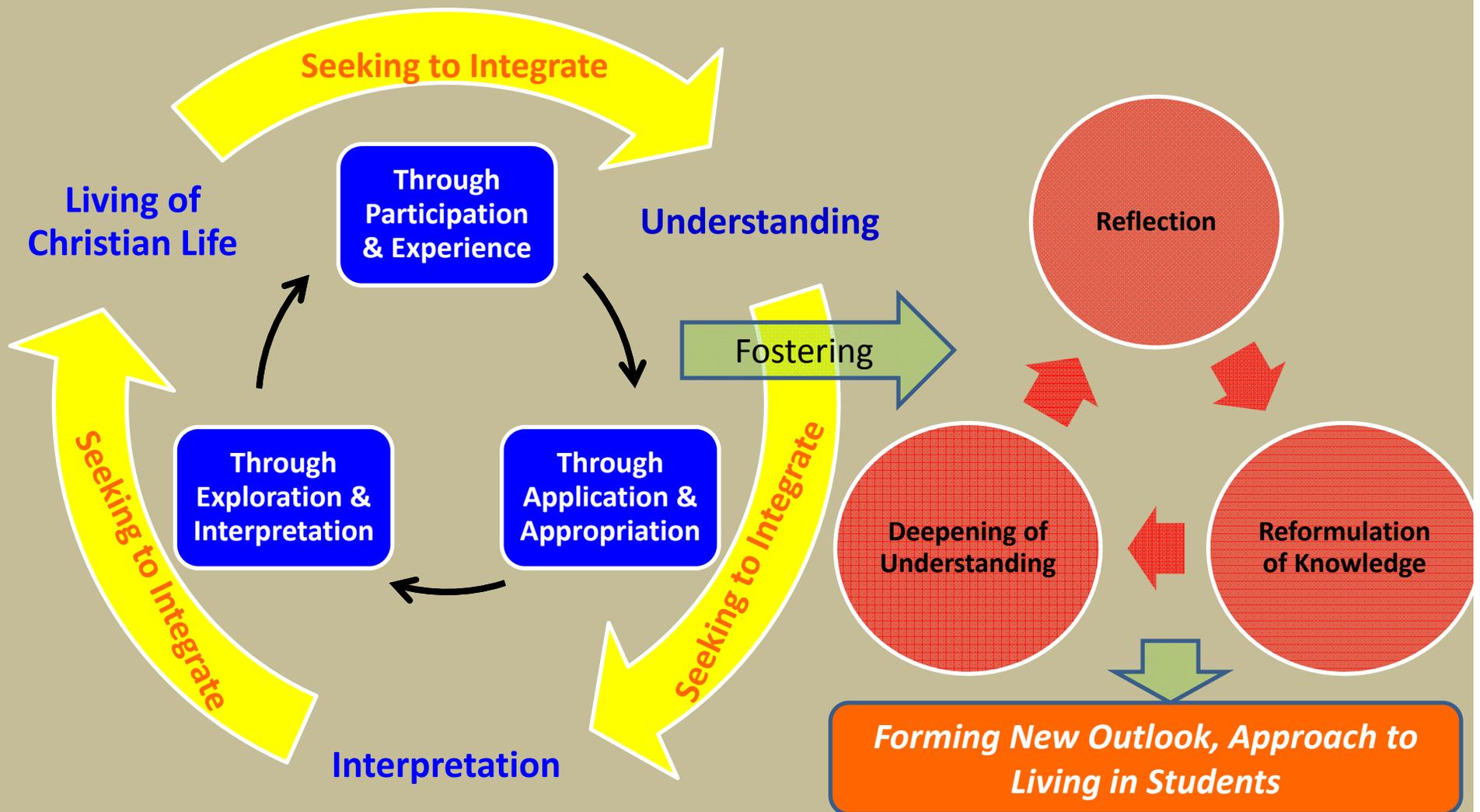
Essential Student Opportunities



Important Areas to Develop

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

Program's Interpretive ("Hermeneutical") Approach to Teaching/Learning
Required Elements & Opportunities

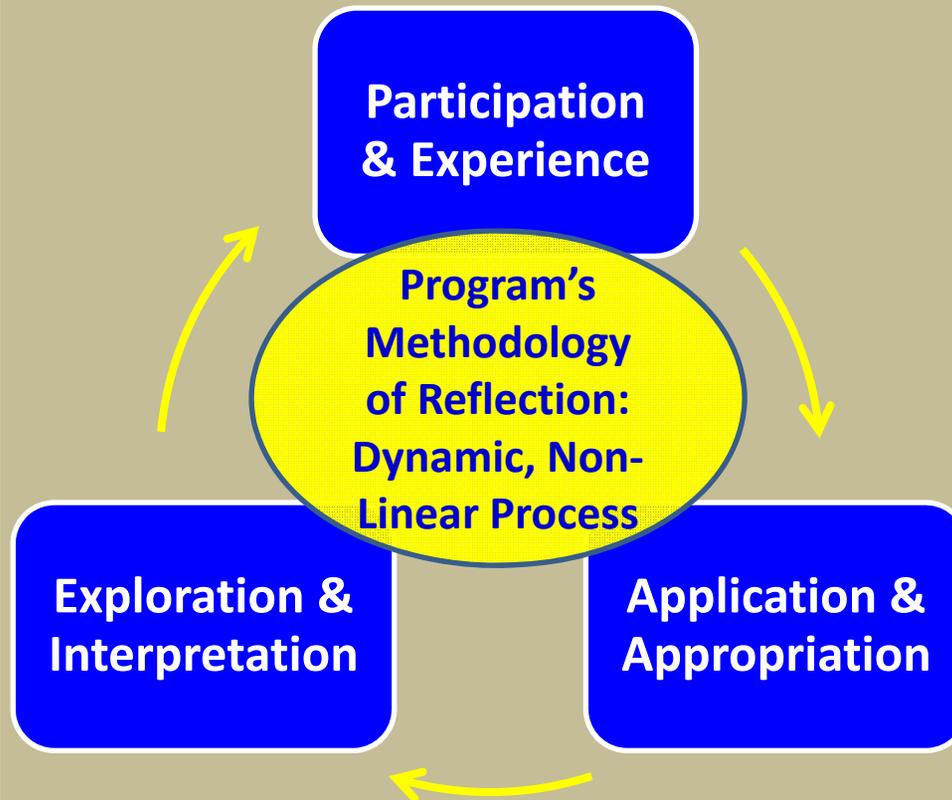


2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

At any point in the process, students may be asked to reflect on their:

- life experience
- attitudes
- personal beliefs
- cultural myths

to identify how the learning experience might alter their understanding of truth, or challenge their values and/or actions.



Through this methodology of reflection, students grow in their appreciation and understanding of:

- the Catholic faith
- the Church that seeks to form them in that experience and the Christian values which they are called to receive and witness in their lives. (P. 16)

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

Component 1: Participation and Experience

1. Participation & Experience (family, parish, culture, society)

Prior Experience = starting point for new learning
(GDC 117)

Prior experience named/examined in light new knowledge of
Gospels, Church Teaching helps students :

- + identify meaning of living the Christian faith
- + appreciate what faith offers our human life
- + develop a framework for growth in religious faith.
- + reconstruct present mind-set
- + develop changes in attitude
- + assimilate new values for living

Exploration &
Interpretation

Application &
Appropriation

Suggested Strategies (to explore lived experience):

- Story
- Video
- Brainstorming
- Interviews
- Music critique
- Sharing personal stories
- Review of previous learning

“Experience is a necessary medium for exploring & assimilating the truths ...of Revelation.”

(GDC 152)

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

Component 2: Exploration and Interpretation

Participation & Experience

2. Exploration & Interpretation

“...offers a new way of understanding to the student in light of their participation and experience of life in terms of faith. We cannot grow in self-understanding unless we are willing to consider the Truth, an objective perspective, a fuller explanation and a more comprehensive view of the dignity of the human person and society. (p. 18)

Exploring and Interpreting Program Content

- Greatest portion of unit time, largest share of assessment & evaluation
- New information challenges students to identify actions, beliefs, values consistent with truth in Scripture and Tradition to deepen understanding and commitment to faith in Christ.

Sources of New Information:

- RE Texts, CCC, sciences, cultural studies, philosophy, media
- Learning Strategies to Capture Student Interest
- role play, reading to comprehend, direct instruction, problem solving, group discussion, media analysis, case studies, research project, etc.

Application & Appropriation

Suggested Strategies:

Memorization

Once at heart of RE's pedagogical method

**Needed emphasis:
Principal formulae of the faith:**

- Major Bible Texts
 - Dogma,
 - Liturgical Responses (Mass)
 - Common Prayers
- Incorporation into daily prayer, seasonal classroom celebrations.

The Church, in transmitting the faith, discerns contemporary methods in the light of the pedagogy of God and uses with liberty “everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we live and honour and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise.” (Phil 4:8) (GDC 148)

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)

Component 3: Appropriation and Application

3. Appropriation & Application

Faith development requires making new learning one's own.

Key: Practice, application of new learning to real life

Strategies:

journals, group discussion, projects, role play, the arts, portfolios...

+ Helping students imagine:

- new possibilities for own lives
- new ways of being
- new choices based on Gospel principles and Church teaching.

Participation & Experience

Our Hope:

students' faith will deepen and mature through...

- grace of Holy Spirit
- support of parents
- parish catechesis

Students' Role:

to come to know and humbly cooperate with God, who will transform them in relationship, bringing them to fullness of life.

Prayer and Experiences of Service :

essential parts of religious education supporting parish catechetical activity.

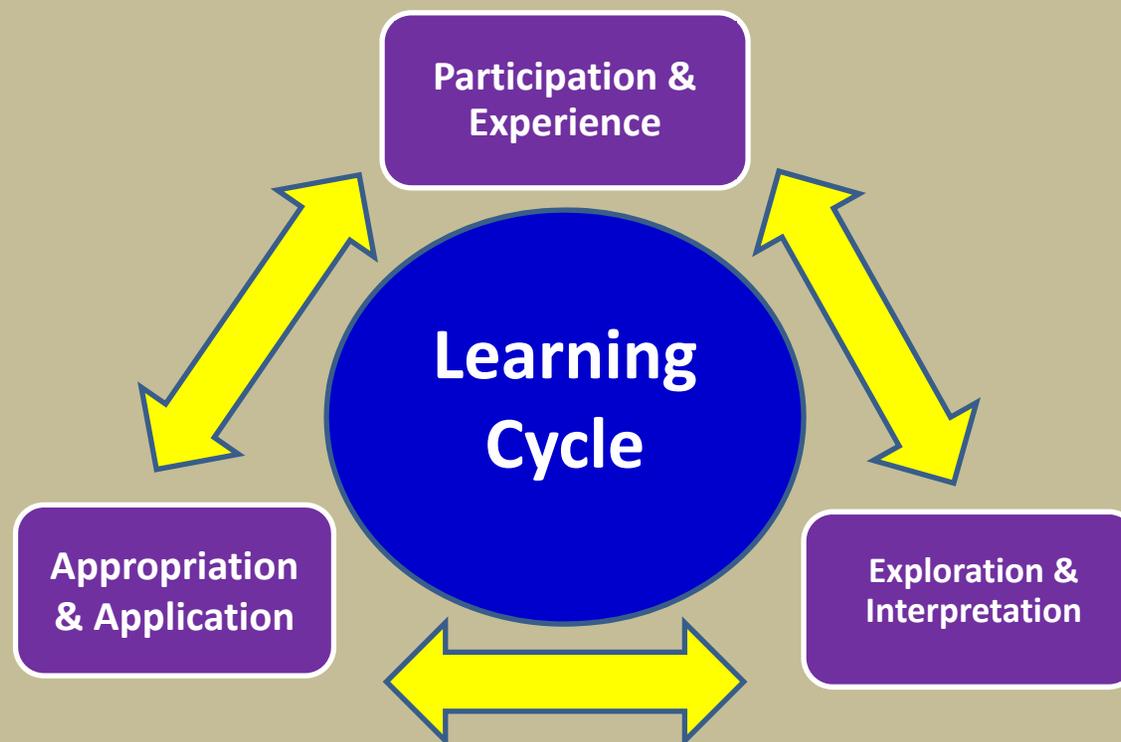
Exploration & Interpretation

Learning cycle activities help students understand and know what it means to live their faith in the 21st century.

God transforms events in the life of his people into lessons of wisdom, adapting himself to the diverse ages and life situations. Thus he entrusts words of instruction and catechesis which are transmitted from generation to generation.

(GDC 139)

2.2 Methodology Appropriate to Religious Education (cont'd)



“Together, the activities that comprise the learning cycle help students acquire a better understanding of what it means to be Catholic, not only in what they know about their faith, but in how they are called to live their faith in the pluralistic world of the 21st century.

It is important therefore that students come to know that God has called them into this relationship and it is God who will affect the transformation. Their role is to cooperate out of a humble heart and loving will to be one with God, allowing God to bring them to the fullness of life. “ (p. 20)

2.3 Teaching Strategies

Reflection

- on new experience to record, summarize, deepen understanding of our relationship with God

Examples:

journaling, Biblical reflection, silent or guided meditation, contemplative prayer, peer discussion, meta-cognitive reflection through self-assessment.

Prayer & Liturgical Celebration

- vital to Christian formation and school's participation in Church's mission to evangelize children we teach.

Catholic Church has rich history of prayer. Forms introduced to students on invitational basis, respecting freedom and dignity (esp. of non-Catholics).

Includes forms arising from encounter with other traditions e.g., guided meditation, contemplative prayer.

Also, Lectio Divina, Rosary.

Teaching Strategies for Religious Education

Making Connections with the Life of the Church

Link to life of Church/parish helps keep faith from being reduced to *only* a personal encounter with God.

Encouraged Activities:

Sacraments , prayer visits, retreats, education about sacred objects in the local parish
- visits to shrines, churches of other rites to build sense of wonder & awe, belonging and encourage participation in the life of local Church.

The Arts

-an indispensable strategy which breaks open the mysteries of faith at a depth words fail to convey.

Examples:

- Roublev's *Trinity* icon,
- Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son*,
- Great liturgical music expressing our belief in...

...presence of God in the Eucharist,
...our roots in Judaism,

...our trust in God,
...our responsibility to participate in life and mission of Church

...and more.
(p. 21)

2.3 Teaching Strategies (Cont'd)

Exploration of Issues, Research and Inquiry

*Not enough to know and understand
Jesus' teachings and those of the
Church.*

Students must be given
opportunities for critique:

- of their own actions
- of culture and society

Students should have
opportunities to compare:
- secular society & culture's
values/ideals with those of Christian
tradition.

Examples:

Research projects, compare &
contrast activities, case studies,
discussion, debate to explore issues,
dilemmas, options available and
consequences of human action;

Applying Church teaching to identify
options for and make good choices;

Research into lives of historical and
contemporary persons, saints –
people of faith who serve as models
for their own lives.

Teaching Strategies for Religious Education (cont'd)

Use of Primary Sources

*When age appropriate and at first
through selected passage, students
should be given the opportunity to
read and interpret primary sources*

*. ... The use of primary sources
helps to develop religious literacy
while exposing students to the
beauty and truth of Sacred
Scripture and Sacred Tradition.*

Examples:

- The Bible
- The Catechism of the Catholic
Church
- Vatican documents
- Letters from the Canadian
Conference of Catholic Bishops and
the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of
Ontario

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education
Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary**

Religious Education in school supports parish catechesis, reaches out to:

- *Believers* To help them better understand Christian message
- *Seekers* Offering deeper discovery of meaning of faith in Jesus Christ
- *Indifferent* Proclaiming the Gospel with missionary character.

Catholic School, where faith dialogues with culture

- bringing faith's meaning to all of life
- forming students for *vocation, service, responsible citizenship*

Religious Education as a "Lens"

- influencing students' entire world view and self-understanding

Questions for Discussion:

- *Consider with your colleagues how you preach the Gospel to students who are indifferent, how you help seekers more deeply discover the faith, or help believers better understand the Catholic Christian message.*
- *Can you recall a time when something you said became a kind of "lens" to help students stop and think about a message they received from secular culture?*

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education
Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary (cont'd)**

Methodology in RE

Key focus areas:

- **Knowledge & understanding of faith**
- **Gift of conversion** (change of heart)
- **Acquired skills of Christian witness**

Must include:

- Systematic instruction in doctrine (Creeds, moral precepts, CST)
- Scripture, Tradition (God's ongoing self-revelation)
- Respect/attention to human experience
- Cultural/Social analysis in light of Church teaching
- Applying Catholic worldview to issues (rel., ethical, social, pol.)

Opportunities for:

- Reflection, critique of self & society in light of Gospel and Tradition
- Prayer & celebration, sharing experience of faith, of God in story, discussion, community service.

Development of:

- appreciation for Catholic tradition to promote willing participation in Church life
- Moral responsibility, Gospel values, Christian virtues for good citizenship
- Rel Ed specific skills (critical thinking, interpretation, reflection, application etc.)

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education
Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary (cont'd)**

Questions for Discussion:

- *What are some key aspects of doctrine – that is, of Church teaching - that your program focuses on?*
- *What are some of the key Scripture stories or passages that come up in your program?*
- *What kinds of issues most often come up in your Religion classes, and how does discussion about them help students develop a Catholic vision and commitment in life?*

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education**

**Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary (cont'd)**

Methodology in RE (cont'd)

Program seeks to integrate: *Christian Living – Understanding - Interpretation*

- Through ***Learning Cycle*** framework for transformation, growth in religious faith, assimilating truths of revelation.

Component 1: Name/Examine Life Participation & Experience

(Starting point for new learning – GDC 117)

- in light of new knowledge of Gospels, Church teaching
- through a variety of strategies
- * to grow in faith, rel. knowledge, assimilate new values for living

Component 2: Exploration & Interpretation (greatest portion of unit time, assessment)

Key Areas: - *Sacred Scripture, Church Teaching, Prayer*

Through: - *variety of learning strategies e.g., role play, direct instruction, group discussion, research projects. Priority to memorization of key biblical texts, prayers, formulae of faith, liturgical responses; reinforced through daily and seasonal classroom prayer.*

Strategies designed to help students identify more closely with truth of the faith and commit themselves more deeply to Christ.

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education
Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary (cont'd)**

Methodology in RE (cont'd)

Component 3: Appropriation & Application

Making new learning one's own, via practice, real life application

- journaling, discussion, projects, role play, arts, portfolios, Prayer, service
- applying new learning to life for new possibilities, choices based on Gospel, Church teaching in cooperation with God's transformative grace.

We must rely on the Holy Spirit to transform students' hearts.

Learning cycle process fosters New Outlook, Approach to Living in students

- via:**
- Reflection
 - Reformulation of Knowledge
 - Deepening of Understanding of beliefs & values students are called to witness.

Learning cycle supports catechetical activities of parish and helps students to learn to live Gospel in 21st century.

Questions for Discussion

- *What are some common elements in the lived experience of students you serve?*
- *What are some of the ways you help them explore and interpret Scripture, Church teaching and prayer?*
- *What are some of the things you hope your students will take away from Religion class for living in today's world?*

**Ontario Catholic Elementary
Curriculum Policy Document Grades 1-8
Religious Education
Part 2: Instructional Approach and Strategies
Summary (cont'd)**

2.3 Teaching Strategies: As important in Religious Education as in other subject areas.

- **Prayer, Liturgical Celebration** (vital to student formation, school participation in Church's evangelizing mission)
- **Reflection** (to record, summarize, deepen relationship with God)
- **The Arts** (breaking open mysteries of faith beyond level of words)
- **Making Connections with Life of Church/parish** (to reinforce communal dimension of our faith)
- **Prayer & Liturgical Celebration** (to introduce students to Church's rich, varied prayer forms)
- **Exploration, Research, Inquiry** (for self, cultural, societal critique to arrive at good choices)
- **Use of Primary Sources** (to develop religious literacy, appreciation for beauty, truth of Scripture & Tradition)

Questions for Reflection

- Looking back on your experience as a religious educator, can you share an example of a time when students became truly engaged through one or more of these strategies?
- Which strategies do you find come easiest to you, and which ones would you hope other teachers might share with you?