Teacher Dialogue Tool

Part A

Essential Team Dialogue Prior to Planning

Purpose: Through this protocol, teachers attend to their own religious formation and professional development in dialogue. They explore possibilities in the proposed learning for students as they deepen their own understanding of concepts underpinning a unit, prior to planning a unit of learning.

Process: In the planning team, a facilitator is selected and a scribe.

The role of the facilitator is to listen closely and to guide the dialogue, selecting from the questions below, as appropriate, to probe teacher thinking about the concepts underpinning the unit of work proposed.

The role of the scribe is to take pertinent notes that may sum up the important insights coming from the dialogue. These will be referred to later in planning learning for students.

The role of the team is to engage in dialogue, seeking to explore the religious and deep learning possibilities within the proposed unit of work.

Timing: Part A should be given substantive time to engage teachers and leaders in deep dialogue. 45 minutes for the whole process would be regarded as minimum.

Consider Issues and Questions

What is provocative, thought provoking and religious about this unit of work?
- What are the concepts underpinning this unit of work?
- Why are these concepts important for students to grapple with?
- What is an issue here?
- What is at stake?
- Why does this subject evoke so much emotion? Why does the issue affect people?
- What kind of social debates and positions exist with regard to this issue?
- What assumptions are involved here? What are the conflicting principles concerning this issue?
- What questions can I ask in relation to the answers that are usually given on this subject?

In what ways is the religious dimension relevant and connected to the issue?
- How does faith interact here?
- How does this theme appear in the media, youth culture and common sense of people?
- What is taboo in this issue?
- What human images, world views or images of God could play a role here?
- How would I put in words my own position as a believing Religious Education teacher?
- Is truth a matter of concern within this issue?
- How is a deeper dimension of reality evident here?

Consider my Learners

How will we ensure students engage with the unit of work?
- What experiences of strangeness, wonder, even alienation, will students be confronted with to capture their attention, their emotions and spark interest or curiosity?
- What opportunities will be offered for students to make new connections with their own identity and self-understanding?
- What opportunities will be provided for students to put their own philosophical and/or religious position?
- How will students encounter a tradition that is not necessarily theirs?

What questions will we use to locate learners' current understanding?
- What do you think about this?
- How have you experienced…?
- What do you assume to be true about…?

Part B

Designing Learning for Encounter

Purpose: Through this protocol, teachers will design learning experiences for students and consider possibilities for learning that will progress student learning in line with achievement standards, tapping into student questions and identifying gaps in their learning.

Process: Teachers bring students' questions and assumptions to the session and the notes from the previous dialogue session. They elect a facilitator and a scribe.

The role of the scribe is to take pertinent notes that may sum up the important insights coming from the dialogue. These will be referred to later in planning learning for students.

The role of the team is to engage in dialogue, seeking to explore the religious and deep learning possibilities within the proposed unit of work.

Timing: Part B should be given substantive time to engage teachers and leaders in deep dialogue. 45 minutes for the whole process would be regarded as minimum.

Consider Pedagogical Choices

What are our students telling us about this concept?
- What do they know/wonder about this concept?
- What are the gaps in their understanding? How do we know?

What elements of the Catholic Tradition will take students to the heart of the learning?
- How do the theological underpinnings of the Religious Education curriculum documents help identify key elements of the Catholic Tradition connected to this issue?
- What other sources might we investigate to identify key elements?
- How will we invite students to engage with scripture, liturgy, prayer, Church teaching, art, music, sacramental experiences?

How will we create an environment for dialogue with, and between, learners?
How will we enable learners to:
- deepen understanding and focus on encounter?

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The following draft material is provided for your use as we renew the Religious Education Curriculum Framework.

- search for truth and seek to make progress?
- use both verbal and nonverbal communication?
- leave room for difference that is not aimed at a rapid or shallow agreement?
- disentangle hermeneutical knots/junctions, issues?
- engage trust and build trusting relationships?
- give room to personal witness, challenge and silence?
- allow the Catholic Tradition to speak for itself without sermonising?
- be inspired by the Word and be open to the great 'Other' (God)?

What opportunity will we give students to reflect on their spiritual growth in dialogue with the Catholic Tradition?
Which of the following questions might engage learners in deeper dialogue with the Catholic Tradition?
- How does this element (this text, this image, this testimony, this experience etc.) align/not align with my religious or philosophical understanding?
- How would you characterise the world view and relevance of this element?
- Why is/isn't this element entitled to appreciation?
- Can you imagine that other people would respond to this element from a different perspective?
- How would I see this element differently today, compared to a few months ago?
- How does this element address me?
- Does this element result in more faith, hope and love in my life, that of others, and that of the local and global community?

Consider Evidence of Learning
How can the learning come together and be made visible?
Which of the following might we use to enable students to highlight insights into their learning?
- What differences or connections have we discovered within the issue?
- Which aspects of the dialogue are worthwhile paying more attention to?
- What was at stake here?
- Which aspects/topics were not clarified in the dialogue?
- Which new perspective has the dialogue given concerning tradition, culture or biography?
- How does this conversation relate to conversations in other classes?
- What will you not likely forget out of this dialogue?
- Why is this element relevant?
- How does this connect with previous learning?
- How do these new insights align with the whole of our understanding of life and the Christian tradition?
- How might we follow up some ideas from this learning?
- How is your world view growing/changing?

What opportunities exist in this unit of work to identify the learning?
- What opportunities do the achievement standards offer for both learning and assessing?
- What opportunities do the achievement standards offer for peer assessment and feedback to students about future learning in Religious Education?

Resources
The use of protocols as found in *Making Thinking Visible* (Ron Ritchhart 2011) and on the HARVARD Project zero website will assist teachers to identify processes to enable dialogical learning.

The Religious Education Curriculum Framework has background information that will assist learning

communities in engaging with a pedagogy of encounter. The Religious Education Curriculum Framework also outlines content from Foundation to Level 12 and achievement standards across all levels of schooling.

The Catholic Catechism or the Catechism for Youth (YouCat) is a key resource for teacher information and further learning.

RESource is a website that houses many teacher resources and has links to *To Know, Worship and Love* student texts online and additional resources.