

# Teacher Dialogue Tool

## Part A: Team Dialogue

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

**Process:** The planning team elects a facilitator 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 designing 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:** Substantive time is needed with this process to engage teachers and leaders in deep dialogue (45 minutes would be regarded as a 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?
- Do they relate to the big questions of life / culture?
- What is an issue here? What is at stake?

### How do I encounter this?

- What experiences of this issue have I had?
- How has this issue affected me? What emotions come to the fore?
- What do I think about this issue?
- Do I have any blind spots or biases? Do I need to deepen my understanding of some elements of this issue?

### 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 in people's common understanding?
- 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?

### How do others encounter this?

- 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?

### How is this encountered in the Catholic faith?

- Are there different perspectives within the Catholic Tradition?
- What stories, experiences and information from Catholic teaching and practice may be explored?
- Are there particular principles, ways of thinking and acting that are unique to / important within the Catholic Tradition?

## Consider my Learners

### How will we ensure students engage with the unit of work?

- What experiences of strangeness, wonder, even alienation, will be offered to students to capture their attention, draw on 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 forward their own philosophical and/or religious position?
- How will we find out what matters most in the minds and hearts of students with regard to this issue?
- How will students encounter a tradition that is not necessarily theirs?

### What questions will we use to locate learners' current understanding?

- How have you experienced...?
- What feelings do you have about...?
- What do you think about...?
- What do you assume to be true about...?

# Teacher Dialogue Tool

## Part B: Designing Learning for Encounter

**Purpose:** Through this process, 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 inform the design of 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:** Substantive time is needed with this process to engage teachers and leaders in deep dialogue (45 minutes would be regarded as a minimum).

## Consider Pedagogical Choices

### What are our students telling us about this concept/issue?

- What do they feel/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 understandings* of the Religious Education Curriculum 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?

How will we enable learners to:

- deepen understanding and focus on encounter?
- search for truth and seek to make progress?
- use both verbal and nonverbal communication?
- enter into a space where they may embrace differing perspectives/worldviews and not seek rapid or shallow agreement?
- disentangle hermeneutical knots/junctions, issues?
- build trusting relationships?
- respect personal witness, challenge and silence?
- critically engage with the Catholic Tradition?
- be inspired by the Word of God 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 text/image/testimony/experience align/not align with my religious or philosophical understanding?
- How would you characterise the world view and relevance of this?

- Why is/isn't this element entitled to appreciation?
- How might people with different perspectives respond to this?
- How do I see this differently today?
- What aspects of this resonate with me?
- Does this result in more faith, hope and love in my life, in the lives of others, and in the life of the local and global communities?

## 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 the Catholic Tradition, culture or the students' self-understanding?
- How does this dialogue relate to learning in other classes?
- What are you unlikely to forget out of this dialogue? Why is this element relevant?
- How does this connect with / extend previous learning?
- How do these new insights align with your understanding of life and the Catholic Tradition?
- How might we follow up some ideas from this learning?
- How is your world view growing/changing?

### How does this unit of work link the content descriptors with the achievement standards?

- What opportunities do the achievement standards offer to assist with the design of learning and assessment?
- What opportunities do the achievement standards offer for formative assessment, including peer assessment and feedback to students about future learning?