

POLICY

POLICY

A

FRAMEWORK
FOR

DEVELOPMENT
OF A

CHRISTIAN STUDIES
POLICY

POLICY

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This framework provides side-by-side pages, one page identifies policy considerations; the other page provides space for workshopping the school's policy in light of these considerations.

The School Policy pages can be removed for photocopying, leaving the Policy Considerations pages intact.

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INTRODUCTION TO GUIDELINES FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT *CHRISTIAN STUDIES*

This document is provided for leaders in Lutheran schools to assist in the development of school-based policies and procedures which support the effective implementation of Christian Studies.

Each section of the policy framework provides some ideas and questions which schools may look at in developing their own Christian Studies policies.

The framework can assist school leaders to

- appreciate the emphasis the Lutheran Church of Australia places on Christian Studies within its schools
- become aware of the ongoing professional discussion about the most appropriate and effective delivery of Christian Studies in the context of a Christian school
- formulate a policy on Christian Studies for the school
- implement a sound Christian Studies program in the school
- communicate the school's Christian Studies policy and program to supporting congregations, parents and other interested people.

Please note that this policy framework relates specifically to Christian Studies as defined in the previous section of this folder.

There are many vital issues in the wider realm of Christian Education which are not addressed in this document.

1. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Two key policy documents define and outline the purpose of Christian Studies:

- ***The Lutheran Church of Australia and its Schools***
(page 4 of the *Christian Studies* section)

and

- ***Christian Studies in the Lutheran School***
(page 6 of the *Christian Studies* section).

These two documents are foundational to the Christian Studies policy of each Lutheran school.

1. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

<i>SCHOOL POLICY</i>

What is our school's mission statement?

What name does our school give the curriculum area described in these documents as 'Christian Studies'?

How does our school's mission statement relate to Christian Studies?

2. FAITH AND CHRISTIAN STUDIES

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Christian Studies has a major role to play in the achievement of the ultimate aim of Christian Education, which is that the students come to know and have faith in the Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This saving faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

In response to God's command, Christian Studies teachers share his word with students.

Knowing that they cannot predict or measure the faith response of individual students, Christian Studies teachers will not pressure students to express faith which they have not received.

Christian Studies teachers will, however, support the development and nurture of students' faith by seeking to create a classroom environment in which students

- witness faith in action
- form relationships with people who communicate their faith
- enjoy trusting relationships
- experience a sense of belonging within a caring Christian community
- have the opportunity to question and be given appropriate, sensitive responses
- experience love, forgiveness and faithfulness.

2. FAITH AND CHRISTIAN STUDIES

<i>SCHOOL POLICY</i>

How does our school relate faith to Christian Studies?

How does our school attempt to support the development and nurture of students' faith within Christian Studies?

How does our school address the challenge of presenting Christian Studies in classes which consist of both believing Christians and non-Christians?

3. STAFFING

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

QUALIFICATIONS

Teachers of Christian Studies in a Lutheran school are to be selected in accordance with the Board for Lutheran Schools guidelines.

School leaders and teachers of Christian Studies should

- be committed to Jesus Christ and the mission and ministry of the church
- be willing to disclose and bear witness to their own faith as they interact with students
- have a sound knowledge of the basics of the Christian faith
- be committed to ongoing personal professional and spiritual development.

These expectations should be clearly communicated at the time of employment.

PASTORAL SUPPORT

Christian Studies teachers need to be supported in their own spiritual life and growth through

- pastoral care and counselling on a day-to-day basis and in times of difficulty and crisis
- regular staff devotions and Bible study
- provision of devotional and study materials.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers of Christian Studies need ongoing professional development. The purpose of this professional development is to

- assist teachers to develop their theological understandings in accordance with the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions
- equip teachers to develop quality Christian Studies programs appropriate to the needs of the school and students
- heighten teacher awareness of issues, research and methodologies relevant to the teaching of Christian Studies
- assist teachers to recognise the role of Christian Studies within the context of the ministry of Lutheran schools
- lead teachers to identify their own needs and subsequently to develop supporting networks and resources from which to gain ongoing assistance.

Professional development opportunities should be provided on both a school level and through wider (zone, district, national) initiatives. Teachers should be encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. Schools need to provide the time, finance and resources necessary for successful professional development in Christian Studies.

KEY TEACHERS

A key teacher for Christian Studies in a school should

- take responsibility for developing and facilitating the school's overall Christian Studies program
- generate a positive attitude towards Christian Studies within the school
- identify the needs of Christian Studies teachers in the school and coordinate professional development programs
- coordinate the selection, purchase, and distribution of materials to support the Christian Studies curriculum
- liaise with Christian Studies key teachers in other schools and with state/district and national support personnel.

3. STAFFING

<i>SCHOOL POLICY</i>

What are our school's criteria for choosing Christian Studies teachers?

How does our school support teachers of Christian Studies?

What is the role of the Key Teacher for Christian Studies in our school?

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

There is no single best method of teaching Christian Studies, but an educationally sound program of Christian Studies employs the same 'best teaching practices' which apply to other subject areas.

In Christian Studies, as in other curriculum areas, students construct meaning through the ideas, relationships and events they experience.

Students learn best when they

- are respected as unique individuals
- are comfortable and secure
- see the relevance and purpose of what they are learning
- investigate concepts appropriate to their ability and developmental stage
- build on previous knowledge and understandings
- are actively involved in acquiring knowledge, developing skills and reflecting on their learning
- experience success in learning and receive regular feedback about what they are doing
- have opportunities to use a range of learning styles
- are able to work both individually and collaboratively
- have opportunity to share their developing understandings
- are challenged to use their learning in a meaningful way.

Christian Studies teachers should be provided with clear curriculum guidelines from which to develop their program.

5. TIMETABLING

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

In primary schools: Christian Studies should receive at least the same timetable considerations as other curriculum areas. This means that at least 100 minutes per week are scheduled for Christian Studies. This is beyond the time allocated for class and school worship.

Opportunities for integration of Christian Studies with other curriculum areas are to be explored continually.

In secondary schools: The time allocation for Christian Studies should reflect the high status of the subject and the nature of the subject as an academic study.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

<p><i>SCHOOL POLICY</i></p>

How do we believe students learn?

What teaching practices will our school endorse for use in Christian Studies?

5. TIMETABLLING

<p><i>SCHOOL POLICY</i></p>

How does our school schedule time for Christian Studies?

6. RESOURCING

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Schools will use as their principal resource for teaching Christian Studies the curriculum recommended by the Board for Lutheran Schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

In order to provide a high quality Christian Studies program, the classrooms and the library also need a range of printed and electronic resources. Schools must allocate adequate budget for the ongoing provision and upgrading of teacher and student materials and facilities.

The Key Teacher in Christian Studies, along with the librarian, will monitor the school's requirements in this area.

6. RESOURCING

SCHOOL POLICY

What is our school's chief curriculum resource for teaching Christian Studies?

How does our school select other printed and electronic resources for Christian Studies?

How does our school provide and allocate the finances needed to implement its Christian Studies program?

7. ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment in Christian Studies, as in other subject areas, is to

- enable teachers to judge the extent to which individual students have achieved the learning unit objectives
- encourage student self-reflection
- motivate students to take responsibility for their learning
- enable reporting about student progress to students and their care-givers
- provide teachers with the information needed to aid evaluation of their teaching and assist decision-making about future learning experiences
- convey to students and parents the importance of Christian Studies within the total curriculum.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

In Christian Studies, as in all areas of the curriculum, effective assessment strategies

- target the objectives of the program
- are appropriate for the age, culture and level of ability of the students
- utilise a variety of methods
- acknowledge different intelligences
- include the students as knowledgeable participants in the process
- are valid, reliable, fair and equitable
- are supported by a whole-school approach
- are devised at the planning stage.

WHAT IS ASSESSED IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

In Christian Studies, as in other curriculum areas, students' knowledge, skills and understandings are assessed according to defined learning objectives.

Students' attitudes towards Christian Studies may be assessed in a way that is consistent with the assessment of student attitudes towards other key learning areas.

It may not be possible to observe or assess the development of students' personal values in relation to the values within the Christian Studies program.

It is not possible to assess students' faith.

REPORTING

Christian Studies reporting is to be in a style and format consistent with that of other curriculum areas.

7. ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

<p><i>SCHOOL POLICY</i></p>

Why does our school use assessment in Christian Studies?

What strategies for assessment of Christian Studies are used in our school?

What does our school assess in Christian Studies?

How does our school report student achievement in Christian Studies?

8. PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Lutheran schools acknowledge that parents* have the first responsibility for the general and spiritual education of their children.

Prior to the enrolment of students at a school, parents should be informed about the school's Christian Studies policy and program. The possible impact of the program on their child and family should also be explained at this time.

Whether or not parents personally embrace the Christian faith, they should be expected to support the Christian Studies program as they support other academic areas: by showing an interest in what their child is doing and by encouraging the child's active, enthusiastic participation in all aspects of the program.

Parents should receive regular information about the Christian Studies program through class and school newsletters.

Parents should have the ongoing opportunity to learn more about the Christian faith via a variety of group information sessions/courses run by the school and/or supporting congregation/s.

** The term 'parent' is used here for any adult legally responsible for the care of the child.*

9. SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The pastor of the supporting congregation (or the school chaplain, or the school pastor) can support the Christian Studies program by

- acting as resource persons for teachers, students and parents
- providing pastoral care for staff, students and their families
- being involved actively in the spiritual life of the school and its' community
- praying for the success of the program.

Members of the supporting congregation/s may also be invited to participate in these ways.

Members of the supporting congregation/s should be informed about the school's Christian Studies policy and program by the most appropriate means (newsletters/school council representation/annual report, etc).

8. PARENTS AND CARE-GIVERS

SCHOOL POLICY

How does our school differentiate its role from the role of parents and care-givers in relation to students' instruction in the Christian faith?

How does our school communicate its Christian Studies policy to parents?

How does our school involve parents in the Christian Studies program?

9. SUPPORTING CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

SCHOOL POLICY

How does our school communicate its Christian Studies policy and program to the supporting congregation/s and pastor/s?

How does our school involve the supporting congregation/s and pastor/s in the Christian Studies program?

10. OTHER ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

<i>SCHOOL POLICY</i>

What other issues in relation to Christian Studies does our school need to include in its policy?