

Christian Studies and worship

What's the difference?



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Christian Studies in the Lutheran School

Context

Christian Studies is a Key Learning Area (KLA) in the curriculum structure of a Lutheran school. Christian Studies belongs to the formal curricular program of the school and as such should operate within the same parameters as other KLAs, with appropriate timetabling, budget, staffing and resourcing. As for other KLAs, it must be taught by teachers who are trained in this broad field and who have a personal commitment to it as a learning area. Likewise, it is assessed and reported on in ways that give it a similar status to other curriculum areas, given all KLA's platform of goals and learning outcomes-based learning.

The students who participate in Christian Studies have different faith and spiritual backgrounds ranging from active Christian life, to students who have had little or no prior experience of religion, to students who are active in non-Christian religions to those who are anti-Christian. This diversity has implications for the construction of programs and what can and cannot be taken for granted in levels of biblical literacy, motivation or interest. Faith responses or commitment to Christ cannot be a general expectation in the formal curriculum, though there will be areas of the broader framework of Christian education where these can be actively nurtured and expressed.

Rationale

Christian Studies provides a safe and supportive context in which students can reflect on their experiences of the world and on their own beliefs and spirituality as they attempt to make sense of their rapidly changing and complex global environment, and as they develop their identity as individuals. They do this on the basis of their study of Christianity and their increasing awareness of how the Christian faith relates to all aspects of existence.

BLEA policy Appendix 1 CSCF

WORSHIP

What is Christian worship?

'The word worship is related to 'worth-ship'. Worship deals with the question: What is of worth? In worship God's worth is proclaimed or revealed and God's worth is acknowledged...' (LIFE curriculum God gathers Christians to worship him, Background notes for teachers)

'Worship begins in God's actions towards his people. In worship God comes to his people and serves them by what he says to them (the word) and by what he does (in the sacraments). The focus of Christian worship is the Lord Jesus Christ, because through Jesus God most clearly shows himself as the God who loves us, accepts us, forgives us and cares for us.

The second aspect of Christian worship is our response to God's words and actions. We recognise and acknowledge that God serves us, and we show by our words and actions that we believe that God is worthy of praise, honour, loving obedience and willing service.' (p 29 CSCF)

In Lutheran schools they set aside special times to worship through:

- Daily staff devotions, staff prayer, Bible study, staff retreats, staff worship
- Classroom worship - class devotions, grace prior to lunch, blessing at the end of the school day
- School worship
- School and congregational worship - some schools have special worship services where school families are invited to attend the congregation(s) connected to the school. Often staff and students can be involved in these worship services.

Appropriate Elements for School Worship

- Bible reading
- Telling Bible stories
- Relevant Gospel message based on the biblical narrative
- Prayers of request and thanks - for students, school and the world
- Blessing
- Singing - in a context of optional involvement
- Group silence for meditation and contemplation
- Appropriate ritual acts (eg candles, signing of the cross for blessing etc)

It may be inappropriate to include the following elements due to situations where a conflict of conscience may arise. We can invite them to be involved in the following elements but students cannot be compelled to participate.

- Confession of sins
- Confession of faith
- Responsive prayers
- Calls for commitment
- Celebration of Holy Communion

Worship in the school context needs to:

- be accessible to students
- be conducted in a language and style which communicates both the relevance of the gospel to the lives of students, as well as the sublime mystery of the Christian faith.
- provide for a variety of expressions of worship as God works differently in different people at different times.

Class or home group devotions

Class devotions will vary in format from teacher to teacher, but plays an integral part in class life. It is expected that students in primary schools will be involved in worship each day, whether this be a whole school worship, year level devotion or class devotion. Teachers are encouraged to create a worship space and altar for classroom devotions. On the altar may be a cross, candles, a Bible (appropriate for the year level). The candles can be lit and extinguished to show the beginning and closing of class devotion time. Class worship should take 10-15 mins.

Your school will have a number of resources for class devotions including devotion books appropriate for different year levels, a range of bibles from picture story Bibles to teenage study Bibles, song books and CDs, prayer books.

Criteria for planning:

- How is God kept the subject?
- How does worship nurture participant's character?
- How does it deepen the community?

Starting points

Bible verse or a Bible story

- ❖ Select stories that will develop the concepts being developed in your Christian Studies units. The *LIFE curriculum* has an abundance of Bible references in each menu.
- ❖ Read different versions of the same story on different days to compare what can be learnt from the different ways the story is told, compare the illustrations, from whose perspective is the story retold...
- ❖ Tell the story using figures or pictures
- ❖ Dramatise the story or use reader's theatre to share the story
- ❖ View the story in film, the Visual Bible, You tube clips of Bible stories, DVDs

Ritual

Students will find rituals around the class devotion time helpful and ritual can give meaning to the devotion time, eg a special space for devotions, the lighting of candles, music to create a worshipful atmosphere, opening of the Bible praying with hand folded and eyes closed)

Artwork

Google images, <http://www.artcyclopedia.com/> This site allows you to search by entering a name or key word from a Bible story. Google images also has a wealth of religious or secular artwork or images.)

Conduct an 'I see, I think, I wonder...' Explore the artist's description of the artwork.

Students develop movies or slideshows for meditation, deep thinking or wondering about the mystery of God and our relationship with him.

Picture books (secular and Christian) to further develop Biblical and Christian concepts such as *Old Turtle*, *Love you forever* or to assist students to wonder about God, such as *God's names*, *God in the quiet things*.

Devotion books Please choose carefully so that the devotions help students to connect Christianity to their lives without reducing it to moralising, eg *Christians don't....*

You tube or God tube clips of songs, stories, church year celebrations eg http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nEtq28x5EQ&feature=related (Hillsong for kids, has many clips such as *Every move I make*)

<http://www.max7.org> Is a great website with excellent clips of Bible stories such as The good Samaritan, the Bible for gamers

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgH8ZIz9jQ&feature=related> Christmas in a nutshell

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4E76AuMPRGM&feature=related> Birth of Jesus Facebook style

Multisensory experiences

<http://ilc.org.au/ilc-2012-prayer-stations/> This Easter meditation provides a starting point for considering other themes that could be developed in multi-sensory ways.

Australian Lutheran World Service

This is the aid organisation of the Lutheran church. Each year they develop a pack of resources that has devotional material in it.

Stillness and silence

All students will benefit from the opportunity to be still and silent. These are skills that will need to be taught. You will need to establish class guidelines for these times and start with small amounts of time, eg 2 mins and gradually build up the time. In these times you can conduct guided meditations or personal reflection and prayer time. You will need to suggest words or prayers that can be used in these times.

<http://www.cominghome.org.au/> This website provides a range of ideas and resources for teaching children Christian meditation.

<http://www.meditationwithchildren.com/> Another excellent website to teach children Christian meditation.

Labyrinth

<http://www.rejesus.co.uk/site/module/labyrinth/> An online Labyrinth experience for teachers or students

<http://www.labyrinth.org.uk/index.html> Information about Labyrinths and how they have been used.

<http://labyrinthsociety.org/labyrinths-in-places/3257-taking-the-labyrinth-experience-to-school-children> Experiences of ways schools have used Labyrinths.

Student involvement in class devotions

You will need to model for students what is important in class devotions through your teacher lead class devotions. It is helpful to provide some structure and access to appropriate resources for students to develop meaningful and stimulating worship for each other. You may consider:

- Develop worship orders appropriate for the year level which may be as simple as a song and prayer in the early years to a devotion proforma with different parts and elements in the older years. (example attached)
- Make available a range of Bibles, prayer books, song books, devotion books, worship orders
- Develop a worship box with a range of resources on different themes, pictures, artwork, stories, prayer forms (such as meditative prayer reflection to responsive prayers), different signs and symbols

Please discuss with your principal or mentor expectations in relation to school, class and staff worship.

Your spiritual nurture

www.churchresources.info/pray/

This is a site that provides a daily reflection on the gospel for the day a quiet space for meditation and a thought for the day. It also provides links to other websites with spiritual resources for adults and students.

<http://sacredspace.ie/>

Spend ten minutes praying as you sit at your computer, with the help of on-screen guidance and scripture chosen especially every day. I think this is a great way to start each day.

Rob Bell's Nooma DVDs and books

<http://www.philipyancey.com/>

The website of an inspirational Christian writer

<http://www.maxlucado.com/>

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