

Research/Professional Learning Project - Online Religious Education (RE) Assessment

*Well, we know where we're goin'
But we don't know where we've been
And we know what we're knowin'
But we can't say what we've seen*

*We're on a ride to nowhere
Come on inside
Takin' that ride to nowhere
We'll take that ride*

from *Road To Nowhere* (*Talking Heads* - David Byrne)

Benchmarks: complementing our question writing process by attempting to define what a year's progress might look like – the seventh in a series of articles outlining our research/learning project

Preamble

The New Zealand Bishop Conference, in their statement [Catholic Education of School Age Children](#)¹, 2014, confirms that, "Religious education belongs to the stage of "growth in knowledge" #59.

It is also acknowledged that religious education (RE) must be planned for, delivered, assessed and evaluated in the same robust manner as any other curriculum delivered in our schools.

Bearing this in mind, in 2014 we embarked on a [teacher inquiry research project](#)² in relation to online assessment in RE, in the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch.

Groups of Directors of Religious Studies (DRSs), in three areas (Christchurch City, South Canterbury and the West Coast) gathered together, to work with Cushla O'Connor (Primary Schools Religious Education Adviser) in order to write multiple-choice questions to measure '*growth in knowledge*' of the content covered in Years 0 to 4 of the Primary RE curriculum.

The starting point for our research project writing parties was to reach agreement on the key components for Years 0-4 of the mandated Primary RE Curriculum. Only after this was agreed could we begin the question writing process for these key components.

Professor John Hattie's research confirms the importance of such an approach. Hattie argues that:

[The measure of progress needs to be framed as 'at least a year's growth for a year's input' or 'every child deserves a year's growth for a year's input'](#)³.

It goes without saying that there needs to be debate and agreement among teachers about what a year's progress looks like. Hattie notes:

¹ <http://www.nzceo.catholic.org.nz/media/resources/Catholic-education-of-school-age-children.pdf>

² <http://www.chchceo.org.nz/?sid=289>

³ <https://www.pearson.com/hattie/solutions.html> (p.5)

[In subjects such as arts, music and physical education \(where there is a history of fewer standardised measures calibrated over time\), it is worth conducting standards-setting sessions with teachers as this can lead to decisions about expected yearly growth.](#)⁴

Of course, we would add RE to the above quote from Professor Hattie!

In summary, as a result of our work together, one of the greatest professional insights for the writing parties was the importance of defining, “What should students know and what should student show” in relation to their Catholic faith at the end of given years or curriculum levels (e.g. Level 1, Level 2 etc., as per the New Zealand Curriculum).

As noted above, such benchmarks provided our starting point for our research project.

(1) Making the writing party’s thinking visible

Ongoing discussion with members of the writing parties and other DRSs and RE teachers has turned to the desirability of developing and publishing such benchmarks.

The aim of such benchmarks would be to make visible for all teachers of RE in Years 0–4 the required syllabus coverage in a format that is readily understandable.

Such benchmarks would, hopefully, assist RE teachers in ensuring all the relevant material has been covered throughout Years 0–4 and our students are well prepared for the online RE assessment research project process.

(2) Who was on the benchmark writing party?

The following people generously gathered at the Catholic Education Office on Thursday 19th May and Friday 20th May, 2016:

- Kath Clark (DRS, Sacred Heart School, Christchurch)
- Catherine Quinn Clark (DRS, St Albans Catholic School)
- Sandra Shamy (DRS, St Peter’s School, Beckenham)
- Liz McDowell Clark (DRS, Our Lady of the Assumption School, Hoon hay)
- Trish McCambridge (DRS, St Joseph’s School, Timaru)
- Carmel Brosnahan-Pye (Principal, St Joseph’s School, Timaru)
- Maria McDonald (DRS, St Mary’s School, Christchurch)

(3) What process did the writing party follow?

We split into two groups and for each of the four year levels and:

- each group in the first instance read over the theological focus for the strands;
- we then looked at the Achievement Objectives and Learning Outcomes for each strand at a particular level (e.g. God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Church, Sacrament, Communion of Saints at Year 1) to determine the ‘**know**’ part of the benchmark;
- then looking at the content of the knowledge being taught each group determined the ‘**show**’ part of the benchmark based on the attitudes being developed within each strand;
- the ‘**prayer**’ part of the benchmark was determined using the Family Whanau page from each strand’s teacher manual and again by reflecting on the knowledge being taught;
- once each group had worked through this process the two groups came together and discussed and thrashed out what would be included in each section (**know, show, pray**)

This process was repeated for each of the four levels

(4) So what did the writing party come up with as their first draft benchmarks?

Here are the first draft benchmarks and we very much welcome receiving your critique and comment on our first draft:

⁴ [Ibid \(p.7\)](#)

These benchmarks will be your formative assessment tools

AFTER ONE YEAR AT SCHOOL:

(these benchmarks relate to the Year 1 RE programme)

KNOW	SHOW	PRAY Students need experience of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God is Creator. ● Jesus is God the Son and a real person, our friend. ● The Holy Spirit is God the third person of the Holy Trinity. ● The symbols of the Holy Spirit are fire, wind and water. ● We belong to a family/whanau, school and parish. ● As members of the Church we follow Jesus and try to be like him. ● We are reminded of the holiness of God through people, things, times and places. ● Sunday is Tapu. ● Mary is the Mother of Jesus. ● Mary's holiness is increased by her relationship with the holiness/power. Tapu and Mana of God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reverence, respect and care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in Church, ○ at prayer time ○ and towards God's creation. ● Gestures such <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ as genuflecting and blessing of self. ● Love and kindness like Jesus. ● Stillness, calm and quietness around prayer and prayer rituals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sign of the Cross in <i>English and Maori</i>. ● <i>Grace before and after meals</i> ● Hail Mary. ● Glory Be. ● Prayers of Thanks and praise of God. ● Own prayers of Thanks.

AFTER TWO YEARS AT SCHOOL:

(these benchmarks relate to the Year 2 RE programme)

KNOW	SHOW	PRAY Students need experience of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God is our loving and forgiving Father. ● God's gift to us are a sign of his love. ● God's greatest gift is Jesus. ● Jesus showed love and respect in different ways (<i>Does this need to be more specific...see questions</i>). ● People are called to follow Jesus' example of love and respect. ● The Bible is the Word of God which teaches us about Jesus. ● Believing in God affects how people live. ● Jesus is present in the Eucharist through the power of the Holy Spirit. ● The Holy Spirit is present in the prayer of the Church. ● People gather, celebrate, live and pray in parishes as a sign of God's love and presence. ● Belonging to a parishes a privilege and a responsibility. ● Baptism is a special meeting with Jesus where people are welcomed into the people of the Church. ● Baptism has special symbols and rituals. ● Baptism makes us holy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respect for the Bible as a holy book. ● Reflect the message of the Scripture in their lives. ● Demonstrate love, joy and peace in their daily lives. ● Reverence, respect and some participation in Eucharist. ● A welcoming, friendly inclusive attitude. ● An understanding of holiness in action. ● Be positive role models. ● To name and share their God given gifts. ● Show respect and thankfulness for God's gifts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gospel crosses. ● Our Father. ● Responses to the Scriptures.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism helps us to share in the life of the Trinity. • Certain qualities make people holy. • That we are all saints in the making because we follow the teachings of Jesus. • Saintliness in people can inspire others and lead them to God. • Ways of celebrating the lives of Saints. 		
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AFTER THREE YEARS AT SCHOOL:

(these benchmarks relate to the Year 3 RE programme)

KNOW	SHOW	PRAY Students need experience of
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is everywhere and ever present in creation. • We are co creators with God. • God speaks to us in the Scriptures. • God works through people who accept God's gift of Grace by using the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. • That the Bible consists of two testaments. • The Last Supper is the first Eucharist. • Jesus gift. • Jesus is present in the Eucharist in four ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Priest. ○ The Word. ○ The Eucharist. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By listening respectfully to the Scriptures and responding to the Word of God. • Reflect and show interest in other cultures. • Demonstrate respect and reverence for the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. • Demonstrate in words and actions that they bear the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. • Able to accept and receive forgiveness. • An awareness and sensitivity towards people of need. • Members of the Church are called 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prayers of praise (psalms), peace prayer and the Holy Spirit prayer. • Write and pray the Prayers of the faithful. • Prayer of Sorrow. • Sign of the Peace. • Traditional Prayer of the Dead (Eternal Rest).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The people gathered. ● Jesus is really present in the Eucharist in special ways. ● The Sacrament of Eucharist is mystery. ● Eucharist is the best way we can give thanks to God. ● The fruits of the Holy Spirit shows God's love. ● Sin is the opposite of the Fruits of the Spirit. ● The Holy Spirit helps us to forgive and be forgiven. ● Jesus calls his Apostles and members of the Church. ● The Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church are Baptism, Eucharist and Penance. ● The Sacrament of Penance restore friendship with God others and self. ● Through the Sacrament of Penance people accept responsibility for personal choices. ● During Eucharist we ask for forgiveness. ● Sad times are part of people's live, te wa and Christians believes in life after death and this give us hope. ● All cultures have rituals to farewell, pray for and remember the dead. ● God supports and strengthens people who are experiencing sad times. 	<p>and respond to carry on the mission of Jesus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show forgiveness by demonstrating a Sign of Peace. ● Show compassion and respect for people who are experiencing sad times. 	
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AT THE END OF YEAR FOUR:

(these benchmarks relate to the Year 4 RE programme)

KNOW	SHOW	PRAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God is the mystery of the Father Son and Holy Spirit. ● The Holy Trinity is a model of a loving community/ whanau. ● God people respect the gift of God's creation because it is Tapu. ● God love is expressed through the Ten Commandments. ● Jesus came to show people how to live and lead them to God. ● Jesus invites people to grow in holiness by sharing in his life through grace. ● People share in Jesus' mission of worshipping God and bringing about the Kingdom or Reign of God "on earth as it is heaven". ● Jesus showed us how to live and love - tika, pono and aroha. ● Understand that Jesus was sent to reveal the love of God and bring forgiveness of sin and healing so that people can be reconciled with God. ● Pentecost is an important event. ● The Holy Spirit helps the children then and now. ● Through Baptism we are called to holiness lived out in various vocations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrate love and respect for the tapu of whenua. ● Demonstrate reverent use of God's name. ● Demonstrate tika, pono and aroha. ● Carry out acts of service for others, including the parish. ● Be true to good promises. ● Share/Receive the Sacrament of Eucharist with reverence. ● Show reflective practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Sign of the Cross in English and Maori. ● Glory Be. ● Our Father. ● Prayer of Thanks, Praise and Petition about the Reign of God (things outside of themselves). ● Words of Jesus at the Last Supper. ● Prayers for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. <p>Meditation?</p> <p>Students need experience of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Creed

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The greatest signs of God's presence are the Sacraments whose symbols, rituals and celebrations parallel those of daily life.• The Eucharist is a Sacred Meal - Hakari Tapu.• The bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit.• Eucharist increases God's Tapu and Mana.• Our life journey, te wa, is a journey of life toward God.• The choices people make everyday influence their life and the lives of others.• The relationship between the choices in life and what happens after death.		
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(5) What process did we follow to self-critique our draft benchmarks?

We used the questions we generated for our Year 4 RE assessment research/professional learning project as a final critique of our draft benchmarks; in that way we believe we have ensured that we have covered all the knowledge across the levels we assess towards the end of Year 4.

(4) Feedback

We would very much value receiving your comments on the first draft of our benchmarks ☺

Would you be so kind as to meet in your Year 0-4 school groupings and provide one combined school feedback/comment on the first draft of our benchmarks?

The feedback form can be found at this link ...

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rJrKDqzr25QmuWE_CufV6MhAnI_oOxvt-ryuwN84nZ8/edit

Would you be so kind as to complete your school's **feedback by Friday 5 August 2016?**

Thanks (in anticipation) ☺

(4) Conclusion

In providing these draft benchmarks we are seeking to make visible for teachers of RE in Years 0–4 the required syllabus coverage in a format that is succinct and readily understandable.

Such benchmarks will, hopefully, assist RE teachers in ensuring all the relevant material has been covered throughout Years 0–4 and therefore our students will be well prepared for the online RE assessment research project process.

We seek to use the collective power and wisdom of teacher expertise to refine our draft benchmarks.

We look forward to receiving, and reflecting upon, your feedback.

Cushla O'Connor (RE Adviser)
Kath Clark (DRS)
Sandra Shamy (DRS)
Trish McCambridge (DRS)
Mike Nolan (Manager)

Maria McDonald (DRS)
Catherine Quinn (DRS)
Liz McDowell (DRS)
Carmel Brosnahan (Principal)

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