

Religion Grade Level Standards for Catholic Schools Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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“...religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel and seeks to ‘keep in touch with the other elements of the student’s knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the students in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith.’...It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness with which other disciplines present their knowledge.” (From the General Directory for Catechesis 73)

Introduction

The intent of the Religion Grade Level Standards for Catholic Schools is to identify core concepts at each level, grades K-8. These concepts are introduced using outcomes-based language, allowing for students to articulate and/or demonstrate understanding in measurable ways. While these standards in no way cover all of what a student might learn about the faith at a particular age, they highlight the important elements that mark our faith. The Grade Level Standards therefore provide teachers with a blueprint for instruction in religious education, and students with learning objectives that will contribute to their Spiritual growth.

Structure

The structure of these grade level summaries is informed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Each grade level has been divided into four topics: Scripture/Christian Life; Sacraments/Worship; Morality/Social Justice; Christian Faith and Practice. Although there is no direct correlation between the four parts of the CCC, there is some relationship. Similar topic areas also appear in the Religion Guidelines (1996), a compilation of 22 school-wide learning outcomes.

The Scripture/Christian Life section refers to our Life in Christ and cites appropriate Scriptural passages. The section on Sacraments/Worship refers to the Sacraments and offers prayers for each grade level. The Morality/Social Justice section describes the social teachings and moral

values which guide the lives of Christians. The section on Christian Faith and Practice refers primarily to doctrines, dogmas and creeds.

Each grade level also contains a section on vocabulary, prayers and religious practices, which serve as areas of focus. The vocabulary section contains names, terms and locations appropriate for that grade level. The section on prayer offers a list of appropriate prayers. The section entitled religious practices contains additional terms pertaining to ways in which our faith is expressed in the Liturgy, Seasons and Feasts, and other traditions.

Together, the standards at each grade level form a comprehensive body of key concepts, terms, prayers and practices, which are central to growing in the Catholic faith.

Process for Implementation

The Grade Level Standards are the centerpiece of a curriculum for religion in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. A copy of the entire curriculum (K-8) should be presented to each teacher in the school. Appropriate faculty-wide in-service should include review of the concepts, articulation between grades, discussion and planning both at the beginning and periodically throughout the year. Teachers should be made thoroughly familiar with the concepts to be taught, and should identify the appropriate resources (textbook, handouts, articles, etc.) to assist them in the instructional process. Articulation between grades will ensure continuity of the program.

Relation to the Religion Guidelines (1996)

These Standards are complimented by the Religion Guidelines (1996), which provide a list of overarching concepts. The 1996 Guidelines (Outcomes) can be viewed as the “umbrella”, covering the whole of the schools’ religion program goals. As a school community, selecting one or two topics from the twenty-two outcomes each year addresses a need and assures understanding throughout the grades. On the other hand, the Grade Level Standards assist teachers by identifying the core concepts to be covered at a particular stage. These standards are added upon and developed gradually through the grades.

Catechesis and Formation

The Grade Level Standards can also be viewed as an aide in the catechetical process, whose goal is to “put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.” (CCC 426) The utilization of Religion Grade Level Standards is therefore most effective in the guiding hands of the dedicated Catholic educator, whose modeling and witness to the faith are critical to the formational process. As well, students must be active participants, willing not only to pursue knowledge but also to internalize the Gospel message of love and service.

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