

## **Identity and Curriculum in Catholic Education: Catholic Social Teaching**

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### **Context**

Year 6, English, 10 weeks

Students, you will create a visual representation of your ideas in a manner that evokes an emotional response in your audience. This image should reflect your understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, specifically the principle of stewardship of creation, and how authors use images to persuade their audience.

### **Selected aspects of Catholic Social Teaching and rationale**

Stewardship of Creation is the CST that provides the foundational framework for a Christian ethical response to the environmental challenges the world faces. Stewardship proposes that human beings are entrusted with the earth to cultivate it and, at the same time, to care for it. Human beings are endowed with the capacities of intelligence and creativity which enable them to address issues of both the task of development and the oversight of sustainability (Porteous, 2010).

In previous terms this year the students of Year 6 have undertaken extensive study as part of their roles as leaders of the school into ‘Just Leadership’ and the meaning of justice. They have undertaken a term of study as part of a Religious Education unit into the actions of just leaders and social justice issues affecting the world today.

In English the students have commenced an in depth study into how authors and illustrators convey a socio-political message in picture books. They will specifically study the work of authors, Jackie French and Jeannie Baker. Jeannie Baker focuses on creating messages of environmental awareness and action, which ties in well with the concept of stewardship of creation. Similarly, Jackie French’s books have a message of caring for the creatures of the earth and how natural disasters affect the planet.

### **Intended outcomes (Catholic Social Teaching)**

Students will create a collage that demonstrates their understanding of stewardship of their school environment. They will specifically focus on how they want the school environment to be in the future and the consequences on the environment if humans do not take action to protect

this. They also need to demonstrate an understanding that honouring creation is also acknowledgement of the Creator. Through a written review.

### **Australian Curriculum capabilities and cross-curricular themes**

When addressing Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in English lessons the students demonstrate a range of general capabilities outlined in the Australian Curriculum. Students are developing their critical literacy skills when they explore the CST messages of a range of authors in the author study.

In Religious Education, Health and Geography students apply CST to a range of real-life scenarios. This means they are gaining an awareness of social and personal capabilities as they make decisions about courses of action to take when responding to these environmental issues. In this unit of work students are required to engage in ethical decision making which relates neatly to the ethical understanding general capacity. A cross curricula priority that was continually addressed when exploring the CST of stewardship of creation is sustainability.

### **Integration strategies**

- Infused: 1:1 discussions, small group debates, whole class discussions
- Image response tasks
- Teachable Moments: daily news discussion, spontaneous events occurring throughout the term
- Bolt-On: Geography and Religious Education lessons.

### **Links with RE**

CST consistent theme of the leadership studies being conducted across Religious Education throughout the year. As student leaders the Year Six students have been responding to the “what is just leadership?” throughout this year. In addition when studying the Gospels as part of RE curriculum, students are able to make links with CST and the teachings and stories in the Gospels.

**Resources used:** Caritas – video clips and posters that explain the elements of CST.

### **Problems encountered**

Initially the resources employed to explain the CST elements were too challenging for the students to grasp the concepts. I needed to find a way of presenting this teaching that was pedagogically appropriate.

Students needed a solid grounding in CST before they could make comments, inference or make judgments about events in relation to CST. I didn't do enough background before I was asking them to make evaluative statements about how events related to CST. I had to return to providing the students with more basic understandings about what the CST's were before they could do high order thinking tasks.

### **Student outcomes**

CST has provided a great framework for discussing and analyzing news items and events in the media. It provided me with the confidence to address more controversial issues (e.g. asylum seekers) as there was a framework to base our discussions on.

Students became more informed about CST and were able to apply this to personal dilemmas and world issues.

It provided a standpoint for me to address social problems in the classroom among students.

There were many unplanned teachable moments across the term that occurred that allowed myself or students to relate a class event or learning to CST.

Many of the children spontaneously linked a Geography topic with CST. For example, we were studying images of urban development in Asia, the students commented about the lack of care of the environment in some of these nations . This demonstrated also some intercultural understanding.

### **Evaluation of student learning**

Students undertook a pre-post open ended response about their understanding of Stewardship of the Earth. After in the post-test it is observed that the children provided more detailed with responses, they provided examples of CST in real life and were also able to relate this to their own life experiences. While the students' responses were very documented in the pre-test e.g. "we need to help the poor", the majority of students were also able to respond to the CST of stewardship in the post-test, explaining that these teachings provided them with "guidance" and "structure" for making decisions and "knowing what is right". Students were able to provided concrete examples of injustices in the world (e.g. e-waste) and specific actions they could take to remedy these.

### **Reflections on planning and implementation**

- Planning needs to incorporate explicit resources for teaching CSTs
- Many unplanned opportunities to incorporate CST into classroom discussions and other educational activities

- Students need time to grow their understanding of CST (not 1 or 2 lessons). They need a development of knowledge over time.
- Students need opportunities to discuss and view examples of CST in different contexts – this deepens their understanding.

### **Teacher outcomes**

- Expansion of own understanding about CST and how this applies to many areas of the curriculum

### **Lessons learned**

- Resources need to be sourced in advance
- Visual displays of CST need to be visible and accessible in the classroom to allow for unplanned teachable moments
- Planned moments can lead to spontaneous consolidation of knowledge in other areas of curriculum, when the students cross reference their learning.

In future I would:

- Spend time on a solid grounding in CST
- Find more activities that explicitly ask students to respond to relevant CST (more practice examples)
- Expand my collection of resources/create my own resources relating to CST to include some hands on materials / interactive resources like apps / games
- Find an alternative way to document learning that is practical for the classroom, rather than a pre-post test system.

### **Implications for school community**

- Standardised set of resources to be created for implementing CST principles across the school e.g. posters
- Teacher education and professional development about CST and how to implement this into daily planning and pedagogical practice.
- Whole school approach to the integration of CST across specific curriculum areas e.g. commence with Geography as a trial for Term 1 or 2016

### **Reference**

Porteous (2010). [https://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/features/2010/2010319\\_1468.shtml](https://www.sydneycatholic.org/news/features/2010/2010319_1468.shtml)