

Teaching and Learning Strategies and Activities

Through the units of study a range of teaching and learning strategies and activities have been used to ensure effective teaching and learning. It is through these that students will develop their religious literacy and strengthen key skills vital to understanding complex religious concepts. These in turn will result in academic confidence, equipping them for future learning.

The following offers a range of strategies and activities which can be used to develop effective teaching and learning in Religious Education. It is expected that a range of strategies and activities would be used over the course of a unit of study.

An opportunity for students to visit at least one place of worship and to meet members from local faith communities is highly recommended at least **once every year**, in each Key Stage.

5 Ws + H

Students are given an image, passage or film extract and asked to answer the questions 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?', 'Why?', and often 'How?' The full structure/wording of the question may be decided by the students themselves.

Artefacts

A range of artefacts from different faith communities should be available for students to touch, explore and research.

Articulate

Based on the board game, students are to describe key terms and vocabulary as quickly as they can, without saying the word itself.

Brainstorm

A creative thinking exercise where students are asked to plot words or phrases associated with a topic or question.

Centre of the universe activity – an alternative to Human Continuum

One student stands in the centre of the class and states what they think and why. Everyone else places themselves around the room according to how far they agree/disagree.

Chain Reaction

Students weave lollypop sticks together to build potential energy before releasing them in a flurry of kinetic energy. Giving a visual demonstration using coloured lollypop sticks that colour code key terms/concepts. Students construct a chain reaction to show how the events/beliefs/practices are linked e.g to core concepts and biblical text

Connect 4

Like the popular children's game, the purpose of this activity is to connect four key pieces of information that help to solve a key question or to explain a dilemma, image or religious concept.

Courtroom Debate

The aim of this exercise is to set up a mock court room and to debate who your students think is or may be accountable. (Another class or group may be invited to act as the deciding jury and take votes). The teacher should act as facilitator.

Divide the class into three groups – team defence, team prosecution and the jury.

Allocate roles – prosecution and defence. Prosecutors to compile a list of questions to ask and the defence to think about the case to be presented. Students need time to prepare the cases and time to present their case, a set time for questioning and a set time for the jury to make their decision. Each team to create and prepare their case for the jury and the prosecution to then do question time. Jury retires to make their decision.

Current Events – To ensure that Religious Education teaching and learning remains relevant, media coverage of events could be used, showing the impact of belief on the local, national and global stage.

De Bono's Thinking Hats

An exercise in parallel thinking; students are to think in parallel rather than laterally where different sides or points of view would be taken into account. Students use six metaphorical coloured hats (although actual hats or coloured paper may be used) as a vehicle to answering an overarching question.

Director's Chair

Students are to direct others to ensure that the key objectives of a task are shown through dramatisation/freeze frame. Director may change to take on different aspects of the learning.

Discussion carousel

Students are placed in two circles. An outer circle and an inner circle. They are given a fixed amount of time to discuss their individual response to a set of questions then the outer circle of students moves on one space clockwise. The response exchange begins again with the new inner circle partner. The discussion ends when the outer circle students have gone full circle.

Discussion graphs

Students are directed to place their opinions on a spidergram type graph; they would then join up their crosses (making a type of discussion pathway/line graph). Students may then compare their graphs with another, discussing the similarities and differences and the reasons why.

Enquiry-based learning

Learning is through enquiry-based questions, with students developing answers to the key questions throughout their study. Opportunity for students to develop questions, research and present findings should also be made.

Envoying

This strategy can be used when researching topics. Students are placed into groups and having completed research on a particular topic an 'envoy' is sent to another group to share their ideas or information.

The envoy may be chosen by the group or the teacher.

Expert in the room

This strategy can be used when using artefacts. Students are placed in pairs and develop an expert diagnosis for the item they have chosen /been given, feeding back to the class, outlining what they in their 'expert opinion' believe the item is and was used for.

Faith Detectives

This strategy can be used when digging deeper into theological concepts to answer enquiry questions. Students gather evidence on a particular topic and examine and explore the deeper meaning of religious concepts and language. Enables them to link to prior learning, cross-curricular themes and elements of faith.

Give One Get One (GOGO)

Is a Kagan strategy using a cooperative learning structure which encourages engagement from all and equal participation. This can be used to review a topic.

Guess Who?

Is a game played with a partner. Each player starts the game with a selection of images of people and their first names. Each player selects a card of their choice from a separate pile of cards. The object of the game is to guess who is pictured on the card. Players alternate asking various yes or no questions to eliminate candidates, such as "Does your person wear glasses?". Well-crafted questions allow players to guess as many people as possible in the time allowed.

Heads and Tails

Students are given two sets of cards, each with information on, one set being the 'head' the other the 'tail'. The information will need to be matched.

Hot-Seating activity

What is Hot-Seating? A character is questioned by the group about their background, behaviour and motivation. Hot-seating is a way of developing (or deepening) character. If you are in the hot seat you answer questions from others in the group while you are 'in role'.

Human Continuum

Human continuum is particularly useful as a preparation before an individual written task, as students are given the opportunity to discuss their learning with their peers in a structured format. This is in response to a posed statement or question. A line is placed on the floor with agree, disagree, marked at either end and not sure in the middle. Students decide whether they agree, disagree or are not sure and stand on the appropriate point on the line. With other students at their point on the line, students construct reasons to support their position. Each group explains their reason for their position on the line and attempts to convince those students who are not sure to move to their point on the line.

ICT – A variety of ICT should be used (for instance PCs, tablets, video conferencing, the internet) to enable students to develop links with members from faith communities, to research, to explore, to recall, to present and to produce work.

Jigsawing

The jigsaw technique is a strategy that relies on others to succeed. The classes are placed into 'home' groups and then the topic is broken into sub-categories. The 'home' groups are split into expert groups; the experts then gather together (each group having their own sub-category as a focus) and once research is complete, the home groups re-form. Home groups then produce a piece of work based on the expertise of all group members on the given topic.

Kenning Phrases

A Kenning is a two-word phrase used to describe something.

Living Library Experience

This is an opportunity for students to interact with members of the local faith communities. Students should use investigation questions to interview visitors to gauge a greater understanding of the faith communities through a face to faith encounter.

Market place activity

In this activity students are asked to visit different sites around the classroom where they can find new information to then feedback to their partners/group. This may be done similarly to the envoying activity.

Mind Map

A mind map is a diagram used to visually outline information. A mind map is often created around a single word or text, placed in the centre, to which ideas, words and concepts are added. Major categories radiate from a core branch and lesser categories are sub-branches of larger branches. Categories can represent words, ideas, tasks or other items related to a central key word or idea. Images can be used and links made between branches.

Mysteries

In a mystery, students are given between 15 and 20 items of data on slips of paper about a situation where there is a single open question or problem for them to resolve. The statements can be general or background information, specific details and sometimes red herrings (irrelevant information), but always there is an element of uncertainty or ambiguity. Students work in groups to read and sort the statements, link information on different cards and come up with a solution to the mystery question. Students must then fully explain their answers.

Odd one Out

Students are given three images or objects and must decide which one is the odd one out. However, there should not be a definite odd one. Using the odd one out template students will need to consider the similarities and differences between each of the images or objects. Students must then fully explain their choices.

Online platforms

Online resources and discussion platforms are available from the Religious Resources Centre
<http://www.resourcescentreonline.co.uk/>

Oxford-Style Debate

The class is divided into two teams to debate the statement which begins “This house believes....” Each team has to present their argument either for or against, using research and counter argument.

Pass the Buck

Students are to write an answer to a question and then, after a time limit, pass on the work to a partner. Students are then to add to, amend and correct the work that has been passed to them. This can be repeated two or three times and then handed back to the original author.

PEE (L)

Meaning ‘**P**oint, **E**vidence, **E**xplain’. This strategy encourages students to answer questions and/or respond to statements, ensuring that answers are linked to evidence and fully explained. It could be that students are asked to do PEEL; Point Evidence, Explain and Link. Here students would link their responses back to the original questions/statements.

Philosophy for Children

This strategy aims to build 'communities of enquiry', where students – over time – develop the 4C's: creative thinking, critical thinking, care for others and collaborative working. There are 10 stages to P4C, but sessions can vary depending on the time allowed, the students' ability and whether or not the students devise the philosophical question (in 'true' P4C students themselves devise the philosophical questions in small groups).

Pinterest

Numerous boards are available, linking to each unit and core Christian concept. These resources can be found online at BDBE schools (http://pin.it/w_nTZQi)

Pointless

Based on the quiz show; students are to try and guess the key term or question and answer which is the least well known (but they must know the meaning or answer). The idea is that students shall know the answer that very few people do or that they can second guess that which no one else (in the room) knows.

Reading Images

Students are given an image (or images) and asked to 'read' the information that the picture offers. To make this process more effective students should use the 5Ws – Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Silent debate

A key question or statement is placed on the table and students are encouraged to respond in writing rather than verbally. At different points, there may be layers added to the discussion, such as additional questions or responding to another's comments. This may also be known as a Talmudic Discussion/debate.

Snowballing

Students work individually to gather thoughts, then 'snowball' up to make a pair, continue discussion and then snowballing can be repeated if required. Alternatively this can be done using paper, where responses can be written down and students then make their notes into 'snowballs' and have an organised 'snowball' fight. Each student then picks up the paper closest to them, finds the author and discusses their thoughts/ideas/opinions/beliefs.

Spidergram

Students to organise their thinking and responses to questions around a central section (within which there is a statement or question). Thoughts are recorded at the end of branches (the diagram should eventually look like a spider with many legs!)

Thinking skills

A range of strategies to engage students in enquiry, exploration, evaluation and reflection. Strategies may include: living graphs, odd one out, classification, storytelling and mysteries.

Thumball (multi-faith)

The multi-faith thumball is a fun way to stimulate discussions about faith and religious education topics, covering all the major faiths of the world. It can be used in class with small groups to revise prior learning.

Venn Diagram

Using the Venn Diagram form – two overlapping circles – students are to compare and contrast characteristics of two concepts, ideas or words. This provides a visual display of similar and different attributes that can be used to launch discussion, writing or further research.

Visitors

At least one visitor per year is recommended; the visitor could be a member of a faith community being studied, or from a religious organisation that has been linked to a unit of study. It is also recommended to hold 'Living Library' events so that students can experience a range of faith responses on particular topics.

Visits

At least one visit a year is recommended: this could be to a place of worship, a place of pilgrimage, sacred spaces, an art gallery or museum.

Washing line

This is a continuum activity where students can organise materials and ideas into manageable information. A line is placed across the class and upon it information is placed; depending on the task this could be in chronological order or in order of importance/value. Additional information could be attached either to the line or to the 'washing' already on it.

Writing – Students should be required to produce different types of writing, for example extended, creative writing, report, booklets, presentations, newspaper articles, journals. Writing frames should be provided for those students who are less confident in their writing.

'You say we pay'

Students work in pairs, one with their back to the board/teacher, the other facing. The teacher or Interactive Whiteboard displays a series of key images and/or keywords for a specific length of time. The student facing the board has to tell their partner what is being displayed without using the key terms. The student facing the board will indicate when their partner has the correct answer.