

'Sharing Our Story'

- *Student Characteristics*
- *Teaching and Learning*
- *Curriculum Integration*



Stage Three

Documentation

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Stage Three

Introduction

As with all NSW curricula, *Sharing Our Story* is structured around six stages of schooling.

Individual students differ considerably in their backgrounds, abilities and general characteristics. However, students in any particular stage share a developmental pattern and have much in common. One of the great challenges confronting the teacher is to provide learning experiences that are *developmentally appropriate*, responding to the emerging capacities of the students themselves.

This section provides a description of students in one particular stage of schooling. The descriptions it offers are, of necessity, quite general and should be used with some caution. Teachers would readily recognise that the stages overlap and that not all the observations made here would apply to every student in this stage.

For this reason, a synopsis of the stage on either side of the one being addressed has been provided.

Teachers are invited to reflect on the content of this section in the light of their observations and knowledge of their own students. This reflection can form an essential basis for the selection of appropriate teaching and learning activities.

The Stage 3 Student (Years 5-6)

By Stage 3, children see themselves as members of a community that extends well beyond their family and immediate surroundings. They have some understanding of the notions of other times, other places and other kinds of societies. Their social skills are developing and they can manage increasing responsibility. Value judgements are increasingly influenced by peers.

The children gradually become more capable of logical and abstract thinking which brings with it a greater understanding of consequences and an increased ability to justify assertions and opinions.

All of this has major implications for Religious Education.

Social and Emotional Aspects

The influence of their peers provides the Stage 3 students with a stepping stone into a wider world of friendship groups, teams, clubs and 'collectives' of various kinds. They become increasingly less dependent on adults and come to rely more on peers for support and for the sharing of interests.

Teachers may expect Stage 3 students to exhibit some of the following characteristics:

- looking for adults, other than (and as well as) their parents, with whom they can identify;
- being more self-motivated but tending to lose interest if blamed or discouraged; self-esteem enhanced by the mastery of tasks;
- enjoying stories of past and present events;
- some of them developing characteristics of puberty; Stage 3 teachers need to recognise these, when and if they occur, as predictable and normal:
 - significant physical, emotional, social and intellectual changes;
 - concerns with own identity;
 - mood swings;
 - conflict with authority figures.



(For a further development of this, see Stage 4 Student Characteristics.)

Intellectual Aspects

This stage witnesses noteworthy developments in skills of reasoning and analysis. These are observable in the following characteristics:

1. being able to deal with conflicting concepts at the one time (e.g. students may be able to explain an event scientifically as well as understanding and using a poetic or allegorical interpretation);
2. generalising beyond specific details and understanding the links between cause and effect;
3. questioning the validity of opinions offered by adults;
4. having some sense of history without this capacity being fully developed.

Faith/Moral Judgement Aspects

Developing intellectual skills and social awareness lead to more sophisticated understanding in the areas of faith and moral reasoning.

Teachers may observe some of the following characteristics:



1. using the underlying motive or intention as a basis for judging the rightness or wrongness of an action;
2. adopting and defending the codes of behaviour of the immediate family or social group rather than trying to apply universal principles;
3. questioning inconsistencies in the beliefs and behaviour of adults;
4. having a strong sense of 'fairness' which may give rise to argument and resentment;
5. developing a more profound empathy with others.

Implications for Teaching and Learning in Religious Education

1. Students should be able to use the processes of inquiry with more precision as they observe, predict, establish and test hypotheses, and reflect on what they have learnt. In practical terms, they can plan questions for interviews, make systematic observations during excursions, gather and organise evidence from print materials, summarise and present conclusions.
2. The capacity to understand different points of view and see situations from different angles can be capitalised upon. Students can explore local issues and questions of responsibility, consider prejudice and its effects, and examine certain social structures and the effects of laws and customs.

3. The interdependence of people, what human beings have in common as well as the rich diversity of individuals and cultures, can be fruitfully studied.



4. By careful attention to group processes in R.E. lessons, students can be helped to communicate their feelings constructively, to manage their interactions with others, and to be open to different points of view and means of expression.

5. This is a very appropriate stage for the communal nature of Catholic life and worship to be explored. Students can appropriately study how their parish functions, the different backgrounds and stories of people in the local Church community, and the international character of the Church.
6. Students can be helped develop skills in decision-making: clarifying intention, reviewing evidence, considering short and long-term consequences and setting goals. This can be accompanied by increased responsibility in managing time.
7. The integration of Religious Education with other learning areas is particularly appropriate. This can focus on key concepts, processes, skills or values that cut across subject divisions.

8. Teaching strategies that are effective in other learning areas are also appropriate in R.E. These include strategies which develop skills in researching, communicating according to purpose and audience, solving problems, making judgements and informed choices, responding creatively, working independently and working cooperatively.
9. Particularly towards the end of this stage, teachers should be sensitive to the early onset of puberty in some of the children. The Stage 4 Student Characteristics deals with the educational implications of this and may be useful to some Stage 3 teachers.

The Classroom of a Stage 3 Teacher

My Year 6 students are working on an integrated RE and HSIE unit titled Think Justly, Act Globally, Serve Others. This unit investigates the issue of Third World poverty and the work of Global Aid Agencies.

At the unit's core is the scriptural story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. By studying the work of people who try to alleviate the plight of the poor in other countries, the children come to realise that 'helping others' goes well beyond helping a friend who has fallen over in the playground.

We use many kinds of teaching/learning strategies, including research, cooperative group work and employing the resources of technology and the media.

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Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School, Greystanes

Stage 3 in Context

Because individual differences amongst students are so great and stage descriptions must, of necessity, overlap, the following summaries are provided. Teachers may wish to consult the expanded description of students provided for these stages.

Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)

The dominant form of learning is hands-on experience: collecting, matching, contrasting, grouping, predicting, drawing conclusions. Language, a great tool of learning, now displays greater variation in vocabulary and syntax. There is growing interest in what is literally true (as distinct from 'just a story'). While some children see rules as unchangeable and established at the whim of adults, a growing proportion sees reciprocal fairness as a core moral principle.

Stage 4 (Years 7 and 8)

During these early years of secondary school, students move into the challenging period of adolescence. The physical and emotional changes of puberty create new opportunities for growth. New intellectual capacities become obvious with students being more capable of formal, logical thinking in which they interpret data, predict, generalise and draw conclusions. They begin to experiment with a range of roles as they seek to clarify personal identity. The conventions of the peer group provide a powerful framework for interpreting the world and making meaning.

Consider Your Own Students

1. Which of these *characteristics* listed for this stage are most obvious amongst the children you are teaching?
2. Which characteristics do you consider most significant *in relation to teaching and learning in Religious Education*?
3. What particular *implications* seem to you to be most valid and useful?
4. What *specific teaching practices* or arrangements flow naturally from the implications you have identified?

