

Catholic Resource Subcommittee

Discernment Guide for Selecting Supplementary Texts/Resources/Digital Media

Guide Rationale

Catholic education is all about teaching students in a faith-filled, thoughtful, and organized way. This involves exploring literature, music, art, drama, and all other forms of multimedia, which help shape our values and understanding of the world. The permeation of the Catholic Worldview occurs with the selection of resources through the school environment in varied ways.

Please note: The Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories have approved resources (see appendix) for use in religious studies classes that are mandatory for classroom use. The purpose of this document is to guide discernment for all other supplementary resources/texts/digital media used in the Catholic school environment.

Seeking Guidance on Resources/Text/Digital Media and other materials-

The Religion Consultant/Lead Teacher/etc. In your division is:

What is a Catholic Worldview?

A Catholic worldview is the way of understanding the world and life based on the teachings and principles of the Catholic faith. It centers around the belief in one God, encountering Jesus Christ the Savior, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom and Tradition of the Catholic Church, such as:

- Catholic Social Teaching
- Scripture
- The lives of the saints
- Sacraments
- The Holy Mass
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catholic worldview highlights the dignity of the human person, the pursuit of truth, and the call to love God and others. It includes an understanding of the world as created by God, with everything having a purpose and a moral order that reflects God's will.

The Catholic worldview also emphasizes virtues such as faith, hope, charity, justice, and mercy, and it encourages believers to live in a way that aligns with these values, promoting the common good and working toward salvation: the universal call to holiness.

Purpose of this discernment tool is to support teachers and school staff with the selection of supplementary resources within the school by:

- Supporting the meaningful selection of resources to permeate all aspects of the school environment.
- Supporting teachers and school staff in choosing resources that align with a Catholic worldview, and the permeation of the Catholic worldview across all resources.
- Supporting the professional judgment and discretion in selecting classroom resources with which to permeate the curricular outcomes.
- Offering support to discern how to best approach a selected resource.
- Fostering meaningful conversations about resource choice and selection across content areas with grade-level teams, administrators, and religious education consultants.

When choosing material, careful consideration must be given to:

- the alignment of the material with curricular standards, as well as division administrative procedures or policies,
- the developmental level of the student(s),
- the alignment of the material with Catholic teaching and the permeation of the faith into all aspects of the school environment,
- the ability to connect the material to the unity and interconnectedness of all life, allowing for the recognition that everything ultimately comes from God,
- the attention the material gives to the holistic formation of the human person (mind, body, spirit),
- and the depth of moral development and ethical understanding within the material.

In Catholic schools, all of this is done through the lens of faith. Educators¹ should not select books, art, or music randomly or based on personal preference. They have the responsibility to make sure the materials chosen are purposeful and support the students' spiritual growth, rather than choosing materials based on popularity or secular trends.

What is the difference between a Catholic and Non-Catholic resource/text?

The difference between Catholic and Christian resources comes down to the specific beliefs, practices, and traditions that make Catholicism unique within the wider Christian faith. While all Catholics are Christians, not all Christians are Catholics, and this impacts the materials used for education, worship, and spiritual growth. Catholic resources are shaped by Catholic teachings, practices, and values, which guide how Catholics learn about and practice their faith, even though they share a common foundation in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term **educator** means everyone responsible for the discernment and selection of resources for use in the classroom, libraries/learning commons, etc.

Examples:

- The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops recommend we use “The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the bible while many other Christian denominations use the King James (KJV) or New International Version (NIV).
- The Eucharist is central to Catholic worship and is the source and summit of our faith. It is not merely a ritual; it is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery (the life, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus), in which Catholics believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the sacrament. This understanding of the Eucharist distinguishes Catholicism from many other Christian denominations, which may interpret the act of communion differently.
- The Catholic Church teaches that every person is created in God's image and possesses inherent human dignity, as affirmed in Scripture, which reveals that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This understanding highlights the immeasurable value of every human being and calls all to love as God loves. The Catholic view of the sanctity of the human body and dignity of life distinguishes it from some other Christian viewpoints.

What does it mean to “permeate” curriculum, outcomes, and experiences within a school?

To "permeate the faith" means to deeply integrate or infuse the teachings, values, and principles of the Catholic faith into all areas of life—whether in curriculum, discipline, extracurricular activities, or everyday interactions. It allows faith to shape and guide every part of one’s thoughts, actions, and interactions, so that the message of the Gospel influences every aspect of one’s life. We do this by looking through the “lens” of faith, that is, allowing our Catholic worldview to guide how we view curriculum and all aspects of the school environment.

The importance of selecting resources for use in Catholic schools

The selection of resources is the responsibility of everyone within the Catholic school. To support faith permeation, all educators must carefully choose resources from thousands of options, always keeping the Catholic worldview in mind. The goal is to ensure resources align with Catholic values, knowing that students can choose to access other materials outside of the school. Regardless of the topics and materials students choose to engage in outside of the school environment, Catholic education aims to help students develop a strong sense of Catholic values, which guide good decision-making and discernment in their personal lives.

The Discernment Process

The following is a discernment process when considering a resource or text:

Does the resource:

- Support the Catholic worldview? Align with the programs of study, curricular outcomes, and developmental level of students?
- Explicitly mention Catholic values and teachings within the text?

- If not, is there an opportunity to permeate Catholic values and teachings throughout the resource? Are you prepared to speak to the issue from a Catholic worldview?
- Foster understanding and empathy among students?
- Include cultural responsiveness and promote a globally aware mindset?
- Allow students to connect the curriculum to their own experience and the experiences of others?
- Inspire hope and strengthen faith even in challenging circumstances?
- Offer an opportunity to discuss a Catholic response to challenging situations?
- Inspire reconciliation and forgiveness within the local, national and global community?
- Include content reflective of students' diverse backgrounds, making them feel seen and valued?
- Include content that perpetuates stereotypes, biases?
- Include potentially sensitive or controversial content within the resource, such as inappropriate language, graphic depictions of sexual activity or fantasy?
 - ***If so, there may be literary value and merit to using the resource with permeation of the Catholic worldview, with consideration to:***
 - ***A parent notification letter containing the sensitive or controversial content, with the rationale of the resource/text choice.***
 - ***The materials are to be age-appropriate, and library and teaching staff are to be prepared to discuss the issues with students with the permeation of the Catholic worldview.***

To guide your discernment, consider:

- Do I need to use the whole resource, or are there parts that I can select to use?
 - The school staff member has read/viewed/listened to the entire contents of the resource prior to use with students in the school environment.
 - The school staff member prior to purchasing or use, researches any concerns with use in a Catholic school environment. (I.e. Common Sense Media, an AI tool, etc.)
- When I consider the classroom environment, are there any areas of resource that may be concerning to some students, parents and other stakeholders that I may need to consider?
- When I consider the resource, has consideration been given to the overall quality of the resource, reputation of the author, and reputation of the publisher?
- Did I consult the religious education consultant/lead teachers prior to selecting the resource to discuss any content within the book that I have not considered from a faith lens?
- Should I inform the school principal before commencing instruction and seek their guidance for any queries regarding sensitive and/or controversial content?

Appendix:

Approved/Mandatory Resources from the Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

- Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ (K-9)
- Blessed and Beloved (Grade 1- Fall 2026)
- Go and Make Disciples (10-12)
 - Religious Studies (Roman Catholic) 15
 - Christ and Culture. Ottawa, Ontario: Concacan, CCCB, 2004
 - Religious Studies (Roman Catholic) 25
 - Jesus of History, Christ of Faith Winona, Minnesota: St. Mary's Press, 1999
 - Encountering Jesus in the New Testament. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009
 - Jesus Christ: God's Love Made Visible. Winona, Minnesota: St. Mary's Press, 2011
 - Jesus Christ: God's Revelation to the World. Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009
 - Religious Studies (Roman Catholic) 35
 - In Search of the Good: A Catholic Understanding of Moral Living. Ottawa, Ontario, Concacan, CCCB, 2004
 - Religious Studies (Roman Catholic) 35
 - World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective. Toronto, Ontario: Novalis/Nelson, 2011
- Other Sources
 - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible
 - Catechism of the Catholic Church
 - YouCAT