Eastern Ontario
CATHOLIC
CURRICULUM CORPORATION

Classroom Management

Working Together for Catholic Education

FORWARD

The Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative would like to acknowledge the creativity and hard work of the members of the Classroom Management Document. Thanks is extended to Dale Henderson, Project Manager, Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board; Tammy Clune, Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, Stephanie Froats, Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, Michael Arsenault, Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board.

INTRODUCTION

The support document, Classroom Management, was initiated to extend material developed through the Elementary Curriculum Unit Project; Implementation Support Document, 2001. Classroom management involves elements of planning, preparation, positive reinforcement and collaboration between teachers, students and parents.

Planning for meaningful learning experiences based on enduring understandings will assist teachers both in straight or combined grade classes. Teachers may find it helpful to use the Journey Activities document with the Learning Continuum sheets contained in the Implementation Support Document to make those meaningful connections, establish prior learning/enduring understandings, and design learning activities necessary to prepare students for subsequent learning stages.

This Classroom Management resource will serve as a foundation of quality approaches, best practice and sound theory. The development process involved examining current research and shared experience from educators. We welcome you to develop the suggestions and consider your own approaches to managing your program.

Gerry Bibby, Executive Director of EOCCC

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Classroom Atmosphere

Infusion of Catholicity

> Sustained by our spiritual vision, we can keep on, knowing that sometimes we sow, other times we water, and God "gives the growth". (Corinthians 3: 6-7)
>
> Thomas Groome

Our goal, as Catholic educators is "to promote and maintain Catholic schools animated by the Gospel and reflecting the tenants of the Catholic faith." (ICE, Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations). As Catholic educators who have accepted the invitation to follow Jesus Christ, we do this by teaching the students about Jesus Christ so that they too can accept the invitation. "Catholic schools must be places where students can hear Jesus' invitation to follow him, where they can realize his presence and his promise to be with them always."[1] Therefore, Catholic schools are both places of learning and places of believing.

Teachers in Ontario Catholic schools use the Ontario Catholic School Catholic Graduate Expectations "to make decisions concerning program planning, instructional strategies, evaluation, and assessment." (ICE) The Catholic School Graduate Expectations (CGE) provide a greater purpose for knowledge, skills, and applications mandated by curriculum policy documents. "It is not simply enough to insert (these) theological characteristics abstractly into existing curriculum. They are the raison d'etre of our Catholic education system, and must permeate everything we do in our Catholic schools."[2] Every learning activity, planned by every teacher, should help students become the kind of graduate envisioned by these expectations. The Ministry of Education's Curriculum Unit Planner contains the CGEs for Catholic curriculum writers to use in their planning and writing of curriculum units. All units created specifically for Catholic schools should meet various CGEs as well as the Ministry expectations.

www.catholic.net
www.catholic.org

Additional information on the Ontario Curriculum Planner is available in Chapter VI.

> Catholic education views human life as an integration of body, mind, and spirit. Rooted in this vision, Catholic education fosters the search for knowledge as a lifelong spiritual and academic quest. The expectations of Catholic graduates, therefore, are described not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but in terms of values, attitudes, and actions.
>
> *Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations*
> *Institute for Catholic Education*

Holistic education, educating the body, soul, and the mind, is the thrust of the CGE. The seven components of holistic education are:

1. discerning believer
2. effective communicator
3. reflective thinker
4. life-long learner
5. collaborative contributor
6. caring family member
7. responsible citizen

When designing or implementing curricula, teachers must ask themselves, Do the planned activities help students **grow** in the direction envisioned by the CGE? Do the planned learning activities help students **become** Catholic graduates?

See Figure 1.1 - Working From The Catholic Graduate Expectations Action Template.

Collaborative Culture

> A community is a group of men and women who found the truth in Christ and in His gospel and who follow the truth and join together to follow it more strongly. In the group, each one finds that the brother or sister is a source of strength and that in moments of weakness they help one another and, by loving one another and believing, they give light and example.
>
> Archbishop Oscar Romero

Walk into any classroom and you will find that it is like no other. Every classroom is unique, having its own culture, values, and rules.

Early in the year, the classroom community is shaped and built, creating a predictable, safe environment for students to learn and interact with each other. The classroom culture cannot be anticipated or determined prior to the beginning of the school year. It must evolve out of the shared interests, values, and goals of the students. However, teachers can begin to lay the foundation for the classroom community prior to the commencement of the new school year. Preparing for the students' arrival can tell children what you expect and value. Bulletin boards, classroom arrangements and displays, name cards for children's desks and hooks, and even desk arrangement tell students and parents a little about your teaching style, interests, and preferences.

When students arrive on the first day of school, teachers must implement the routines and expectations that he/she has envisioned immediately. Students, like all children, want to know the boundaries of the behavioural expectations. Boundaries make children feel safe because they know what they and others can and cannot do within those boundaries. Teachers must have a clear idea of what their classroom will look like behaviourally before the first student arrives.

Teachers and students should decide on a few class rules that everyone is expected to follow. "The teacher's ability to act on those rules will determine whether or not the rules make a difference."[3] Most teachers will need to have a direct discussion with students of the behavioural expectations. This, in combination with the way the teacher responds to a student's failure to comply with behavioural expectations, will set the tone for the year. Some considerations for a class discussion of the code of behaviour are:

1. Aim for five rules or less.
2. Establish a rationale for each rule.
3. Explain ambiguous terms. For example, explain what "Use your inside voice" means.
4. Ensure that roles and responsibilities are learned.
5. State the rules in positive terms. For example, "Treat each other with respect." Rather than, "Don't put each other down."

Collaborative Learning

"A classroom community enables teachers to address children's basic needs, promote their resilience to hardship conditions, teach the values of respect and responsibility, and foster their social and academic competence." [4]

"The challenge in setting up every classroom is to make everything in the space promote the behaviours and learning outcomes which are desired."[5]

"Effective teachers know that what they do during the first two weeks of the school year sets the vision for the rest of the year. Once that two-week window closes it becomes increasingly difficult to alter the norms that are being established." [6]

Shared Ownership

A classroom is a shared environment. Students, teachers, and educational assistants share a common workplace for five or six hours a day. Therefore, everyone is responsible for ensuring that that workplace is one in which everyone contributes to its vitality and success.

As we get older, more and more responsibility is placed on us. Even at an early age, we had some responsibilities: feeding the dog, cleaning our rooms, and helping with the dishes. Responsibility-taking is a learned process. Therefore, we should be teaching students to take responsibility for their own schooling so that they can be competent, independent decision-makers. Teaching students to be life-long learners and to take responsibility for their own learning is essential in today's society. Our children are our future. We want to equip them with the skills that they will need to function in their working adult lives.

One way to achieve this is through **facilitative leadership** (Freiberg). Facilitative leadership promotes shared decisions. A facilitative teacher involves others, students, parents, colleagues, and the community, in the learning process. Freiberg believes that students process learning faster and at a deeper level if they have made choices. They become more competent directors of their future learning if they have had some responsibility in choosing some aspects of their learning. For example, students should be involved in establishing a code of behaviour for the classroom.   In addition, they should have input as to the consequences of failing to abide by the code of behaviour. Internalizing the rules through a democratic process of creating them helps to ensure that students see the inherent value in having a set of standards in the first place.

Both students and teachers must take ownership of the learning that takes place in the classroom. For example, many teachers assign jobs to individual students on a rotational, weekly basis. By having the students take responsibility for the care and cleanliness of the environment ensures that they will treat it with respect. Students are experts at ensuring that other students do the same. It involves the students in the daily activities of the classroom routine – not to mention that it saves the teacher a tremendous amount of work.   Older students can take responsibility for creating and putting up bulletin boards, taking attendance, handling milk money, designing a class or school newsletter, and for tracking intra-murals sports results. Younger

www.cssb.ab.ca/ tech/otn/learn/ collaborative.html

Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning Strategies

students can take some responsibility for cleaning chalk brushes, distributing workbooks, dusting low shelves, and taking notes to the office. Most students are eager to help. Others must be encouraged to do so. In the end, everyone benefits – the teacher is relieved of some of the duties and the students learn valuable organization skills and responsibility-taking that they will need to function as an adult in society.

Role of the Teacher

In education, all of the stakeholders share the same goals: to help children become life-long learners and socially competent members of their community.

> In the end, the mind of the teacher is the most powerful influence in any classroom. What she knows and believes about children will create the atmosphere affecting their learning. What she does in every single situation originates in what she thinks.[13]
>
> Alice Yardley

Teachers and students have complementary responsibilities. Teachers are responsible for developing a range of instructional strategies based on sound learning theory. They need to address different student needs and bring enthusiasm and a variety of teaching approaches to the classroom. Good teachers know that they must persevere and make every reasonable attempt to ensure sound learning for every student.

The teacher's role is to foster a love of learning in her students. In order to love learning, students need to be motivated to learn by an effective teacher. An effective teacher is interested in kids, knows learners as people rather than students, helps learners come to own their knowledge, cultivates humour and spontaneity, explains why you do things and shows the logic, encourages questions, and tests the work of the classroom against work in the world outside. [7] To be an effective educator:

1. Know as much as you can about your students.
2. Know about assessment and evaluation.
3. Know about the subjects you are teaching.
4. Know about the Catholic Graduate Expectations.
5. Know about the Ontario curricula.

A parent-child-teacher relationship is integral to the education of students. Open communication between the parent and teacher fosters a solid, consistent parents of students a teacher must understand the parents' past experiences with the school system. If they have not had a positive experience, they may feel left out of their child's education and distrustful of the teachers.

"…parents are your friends. Show your interest in a child and parents are on your side. Be casual, off-handed, be cold toward the child and parents can never work closely with you…To touch the child is to touch the parent. To praise the child is to praise the parent. To criticize the child is to hit at the parent. The two are two, but the two are one." [8]

Parents look to teachers for ways in which they can help their child succeed in school. They ask for ideas for helping their child improve his or her reading skills, math skills, and social skills. They ask for help in choosing an appropriate novel for their child. Parents seek reassurance that they are 'doing the right thing' when helping their child with schoolwork. As educators, it is our responsibility to ensure that parents feel that their efforts are appreciated, valued, and respected. This makes it more likely that parents will continue to support their child's progress in school and keep the lines of communication open.

Administrators play a vital role in establishing and supporting positive school-home relationships. "By creating a school atmosphere that welcomes parents and all family members, and by recognizing the importance of effective relationships with parents, administrators enable staff to feel positive and enthusiastic about involving parents." [9]
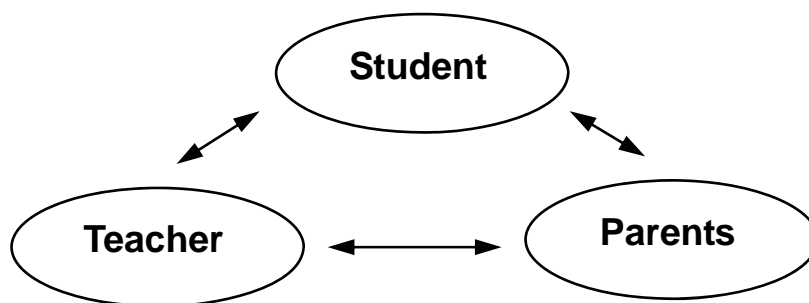
"Teachers and schools that view families as partners in the educational process become better schools." [10]

Role of the Parent and Family

> Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents are involved in their education. Parents therefore have an important role to play in supporting their child's learning. By reading the curriculum, parents can see what their children are learning in each grade and why they are learning it. This awareness will enable parents to communicate with teachers, to offer useful information, and to ask relevant questions about their child's progress.
>
> *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language.* Ministry of Education, 1997

"Learning is most successful when students, parents/guardians, and teachers communicate and work together." [11] Children bring their families to school through the stories they tell. They want to tell you about themselves and their family experiences. "Families are already part of your classroom community. Children do not enter into your classroom alone; they bring their families with them." [12]

Parents can become involved in many aspects of their child's education. As a teacher, you can involve parents by encouraging them to: accompany the class on field trips, become involved in school council, assist small group reading, develop with students a class newsletter, co-teach computers, put on a Physical Education clinic in basketball, head-up the baking of birthday cakes for student birthdays, maintain the class book order club, participate in parent conferences, attend information sessions, and speak to the class as a guest speaker (e.g., fire fighter, police officer, or dietitian).

As teachers we must remember that every parent wants his or her child to succeed. It is our job to help parents become vital contributors to their child's success.

Role of the Student

Studies show that home factors and family experiences continue to exert a powerful influence on children's success in school. Children spend more of their time learning outside of school. Therefore, learning to take responsibility for one's progress and learning, especially outside of the school walls, is an important part of education for every student.

Students also have responsibilities, which increase as they advance through elementary and secondary school. Good students have learned that attention and a willingness to work hard will enable them to develop the skills, knowledge, creativity, and personal qualities that good programs can foster. Some young people face extra challenges and may be growing up in environments that provide little or no support. For these students, taking responsibility for learning may be more difficult, and the patience and encouragement of sensitive teachers may be an extremely important factor for success. Nonetheless, learning to take responsibility for one's progress and learning is an important part of education for every student.

Communicating with Parents and Students

Parents

Keeping open communication lines between families and school is essential to any home-school relationship. "Many factors influence the effectiveness of communication: language, literacy levels, listening skills, voice tone, cultural expectations, values, and beliefs, and body language."[21] There are many ways to communicate with parents including newsletters, checklists, notes, telephone calls, e-mail, student agenda books, correspondence books/logs for some students, workshops (after-school), and interviews. Any written form of communication should be followed by personal contact to ensure that the parent(s) have understood the message and to give them the opportunity to ask questions.

See Figure 1.2—Sample Letter to Parents

Establishing a trusting, respectful relationship with parents through open communication takes time. Body language and tone of voice conveys more information to a person than do the words spoken. Often, misunderstandings occur when the words spoken do not match the body language and tone of voice of the speaker.

- When communicating with a parent, look directly at him or her, smile, and use appropriate body language to show that you are interested in the conversation.
- Try to understand the parent's point of view. Listen carefully.
- Speak clearly avoiding educational language that a parent may not understand.

- Respect cultural differences between yourself and the parents. You may not agree with their views but do not judge them.
- At the end of an interview, say something positive about the child. Parents will leave on a positive note.

When sending home written notes, be sure that the vocabulary that you use is easily understood. Literacy organizations recommend the following[14]

- Use short, easy, familiar words.
- Avoid long introductions – get to the point.
- Keep sentences short (no more than 20 words) and try to avoid words with multi-syllables.
- Write in logical order (who, what, where, when, why, and how).
- Be direct – use "you" instead of "parents".
- Use the active voice – "Please join us" rather than "Your participation is encouraged."
- Avoid jargon or abbreviations that parents might not know.
- Use pictures and headings to break up text.
- Have written communication translated for families who do not speak English.

Students

Teachers should communicate with every student every day. With some students demanding so much of our energy and time, it is easy to overlook the shy, quiet students. These students need as much of our undivided attention as any other student.

As educators we "have a responsibility to inform students about the significance of assessment in the teaching/learning cycle and their role in this process."[15] This enables students to see the connections between the expectations, learning activities, and the assessment process. In knowing what will be assessed prior to beginning a learning task, students can set personal targets for achieving a certain level of performance. They can assess their own work based on the same criteria as the teacher.

Students should be made aware of the expectations that they will be addressing prior to a unit of study or lesson. Teachers must communicate to them what they must do to achieve a Level 3 Provincial Standard. Teachers may show previous student work samples or other visuals as references for the students. This

information is not inherent in the teaching of the unit – students must be told in advance.

Communication throughout a unit enables students to monitor and adjust their performance to meet their goals. Regular feedback in the form of notes, discussions, journals, and rubrics enables students to find areas for improvement. Teachers can also offer suggestions as to what the student must demonstrate to achieve at a higher level.

Conferencing with individual students, while time-consuming, can provide valuable information for both the student and the teacher. This one-on-one interaction allows for more in-depth analysis of a student's thought processes which enables both parties to find the best strategy for performance improvement. Journals are another more private form of communication between students and teachers.

Communication is the key. Students need to know where they are going, and what they need to get there so that they will know when they have arrived.

Figure 1.1

Working From Catholic Graduate Expectations:
Action Template

Description of Activity	Expected Result
Facilitator/Leader	**Audience/Context**

Stage	Details and Special Considerations
Awareness	
Illumination	
Design	
Articulation	
Integration	
Documentation	
Celebration	

Effectiveness	Follow up

Figure 1.2

November 15, 2001

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Jones:

In mathematics, our Grade 1 class is learning about the passage of time and how to tell time using an analog clock. Joshua seems to enjoy the unit activities and can tell time accurately to the hour.

Joshua is having some difficulty telling time to the half hour and writing time. I would like to schedule a short meeting for us to discuss strategies to help Joshua learn and master these concepts.

Please choose two dates and times that are suitable for you and I will call you to confirm the date and time. I am available to meet from 8:00 a.m. – 8:55 a.m., 11:00 a.m. – 11:35 a.m., and 3:25 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. If these times are not convenient, we can schedule a later or earlier meeting.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mrs. L. Smith

Please cut and return the bottom portion to Mrs. Smith as soon as possible.

I prefer to meet to discuss Joshua's math progress:

	Date	**Time**
Choice 1	_____	_____
Choice 2	_____	_____

Parent's Signature   _____

II. Enabling the Learner

- **Cultivating Shared Ownership**
- **Teaching and Learning Styles**
- **Making Accommodations**
- **Characteristics of the Learner**
- **Instructional Strategies**

Enabling the Learner

Cultivating Shared Ownership

Setting the stage for learning in the classroom environment, including all the preparation we do, is for the learner. The students in classrooms across the province are unique individuals, created and loved by God. They are part of His plan. Each comes with his/her own gifts and talents, and commissioned to develop and use what has been given to them for the betterment of all and the glory of God.

Each child, and each Catholic, is on a journey as they work towards these expectations. The Catholic classroom has to be a place where students have been given the opportunity to grow in their faith, their intellect and their role in society.

At the same time Ontario students are under increased pressure from a curriculum that is rigorous in its demands and both wide and deep in content. Students are now required to be much more involved in the reporting structures. They are setting and assessing goals for their education and communicating these goals to parents and teachers.

Given the call of Catholic education and the challenge of the times, students working towards the vision of the Catholic learner need to view the classroom as a place where they can become engaged in the process of learning. The responsibility for creating this learning environment falls to the classroom teacher. One characteristic of a classroom that has achieved a rich learning environment is the presence of internalized democratic reasoning between students and teachers. In a democratic classroom, students will see that the classroom community decides how problems will be solved. Students and teachers work together in collaboration to uphold the rights of the individual. Within this environment, a code of behaviour can be set. All members of the classroom should agree to a classroom code of behaviour that is fair, reasonable and expressed in positive language. As with all curriculum areas, students will look for descriptive and specific feedback on their performance in the classroom that enables them to understand how to take the next step in their formation as learners. Students will also look to their teachers to model the behaviour that is expected. Establishing this discipline at the beginning of the school year and following it consistently will allow students to be comfortable in their classroom and engage in the business of learning.

Teaching and Learning Styles

Another sign of a classroom that 'works' has each student motivated, excited and involved in relevant and purposeful tasks. This presents a challenge to educators. Each learner is unique, yet the needs of all are to be met. In order to give students an opportunity to fully develop their role in the classroom it becomes 'crucial for teachers to understand the learners' individual learning styles. As teachers, our responsibility becomes managing an environment where each child finds success by learning in a style that is uniquely his or hers.

Lynne Sarasin, in <u>Style Perspectives: Impact in the Classroom</u> describes what is meant by the idea of learning styles.

> "The concept of learning style is defined as the certain specified pattern of behaviour and/or performance according to which an individual approaches a learning experience, a way in which the individual takes in new information and develops new skills, and the process by which the individual retains new information or new skills. Understanding learning styles includes understanding behaviors when approaching a learning experience, when evaluating a learning experience, and when applying new information and skills to situations in life."[1]

The three primary learning styles Sarasin explores in her work are visual, auditory and tactile/kinesthetic. In managing the classroom a teacher needs to be aware of these differing ways of learning and how attending to these differing styles will help meet the needs of the students.

Of the three learning styles, often the best-served learner is the visual learner. The visual learner learns through seeing observing and reading. Common traits of the visual learner include:
- Examining, looking at and reading about things
- An ability to plan ahead, writes things down
- Thinking in pictures, visualizing details
- Preferring to read rather than being read to
- A difficulty in remembering oral instructions but remembers what is written down.

These students learn best through written assignments, journals, displays and reports.

The auditory learner, who learns through listening, hearing and talking through a problem, may not be as well served in the classroom. Common traits of the auditory learner include:

- Preferring oral reading
- Remembering stories and directions after hearing them
- Enjoying music more than visual art
- Performing rote memory tasks well once they are attached to a tune
- Enjoys listening, but cannot wait to talk

These learners are enabled through tasks that allow them opportunity for discussion, debate, oral presentation, interviews and oral tests.

The tactile or kinesthetic learner may be the least served in our classrooms.   Kinesthetic students learn through touching, moving, doing and making things. Common traits include:

- Gesturing when speaking
- Pointing with the finger while reading
- Drumming of the fingers or tapping of the feet
- Moving lips while reading
- Selecting options that allow for physical activity

Kinesthetic learners are enabled through tasks that allow them opportunity for simulations, presentations, demonstrations and exhibitions.

While learning style refers to the way in which a student best perceives and learns new information, learning preferences refers to the range of preferred environmental conditions for learning. Rita Dunn in <u>How to Implement and Supervise a Learning Style Program</u> focuses on preferred envrionmental conditions.

"While concentrating on new and difficult information an individual's learning style preferences include:

- Quiet or background noise
- Bright or low light
- Formal or casual seating
- Uninterrupted study or intermittent breaks
- Perceptual modes (auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic)
- No intake or intake (snacking, chewing, drinking, or smoking
- Specific periods during the day
- Passivity or mobility
- Global or analytic processing styles" [2]

Further, Dunn states, "Although some gifted students can learn proficiently without using their learning style preference, low achievers perform significantly better when they capitalize on their learning preference." (p.3) In her research Dunn has noted that there are characteristic learning preferences that can impact on the performance of students who might be struggling.

- Frequent opportunities for mobility
- Reasonable choices of how, with which resources and with whom to learn
- A variety of instructional environments, materials, and sociological groupings rather than routines and patterns
- To learn during late morning, afternoon or evening hours
- Informal seating (e.g., beanbag chairs and cushions)
- Soft illumination – bright or florescent light may contribute to hyperactivity
- Introduction to materials with tactile or visual resources, reinforced with visual or kinesthetic resources; or an introduction to materials with kinesthetic or visual resources reinforced with visual or tactile resources.

Dunn goes on to say that students who struggle in school often have poor auditory memory. If they learn visually they prefer drawings, graphs or symbols rather than text. If a classroom relies on traditional methods of teacher talking and students listening/reading, these students will struggle. If these struggling learners are to continue in their quest of spiritual and academic development, teachers need to attend to their learning preferences.

Another perspective on learning preferences is found in the work of Howard Gardner and the theory of multiple intelligences. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited. Instead, Gardner proposes eight different intelligences (and others have suggested there may be many more) to account for a broader range of human potential in children. These intelligences are:

- Linguistic intelligence ("word smart"):
- Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")
- Spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
- Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
- Musical intelligence ("music smart")
- Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")
- Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")
- Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart")

Gardner asserts our schools and culture focus most of their attention on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence. The theory of multiple intelligence suggests that we should also place equal attention on individuals who show gifts in the other intelligences: the artists, architects, musicians, naturalists, designers, dancers, therapists, entrepreneurs, and others who enrich the world in which we live. Many children who have these gifts receive little reinforcement for them in school.

If we as teachers are going to meet the needs of learners with different intelligences we need to be trained to plan and present units of study, themes and lessons in a wide variety of ways. We should be using music, cooperative learning, art activities, role-play, multimedia, field trips, and inner reflection. If a teacher is having difficulty reaching a student in the more traditional linguistic or logical ways of instruction, the theory of multiple intelligences suggests several other ways in which the material might be presented to facilitate effective learning. When approaching a topic, unit or theme, efforts should be made to connect the learning with

- words (linguistic intelligence)
- numbers or logic (logical-mathematical intelligence)
- pictures (spatial intelligence)
- music (musical intelligence)
- self-reflection (intrapersonal intelligence)
- a physical experience (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence)
- a social experience (interpersonal intelligence), and/or
- an experience in the natural world. (naturalist intelligence)

One strategy to assist in planning for multiple intelligences would be to use a thought web. In the center of the web write the expectations to be addressed. Spokes are drawn out from the center of the wheel to an area for each of the intelligences. Write down connections and activities that could be made between the topic and each of the different intelligences. Use of a wide range of activities to engage a variety of intelligences will help ensure that all students are involved in learning.

See Figure 2.1

This table outlines a few of the activities that could be used to engage students in the different intelligences.
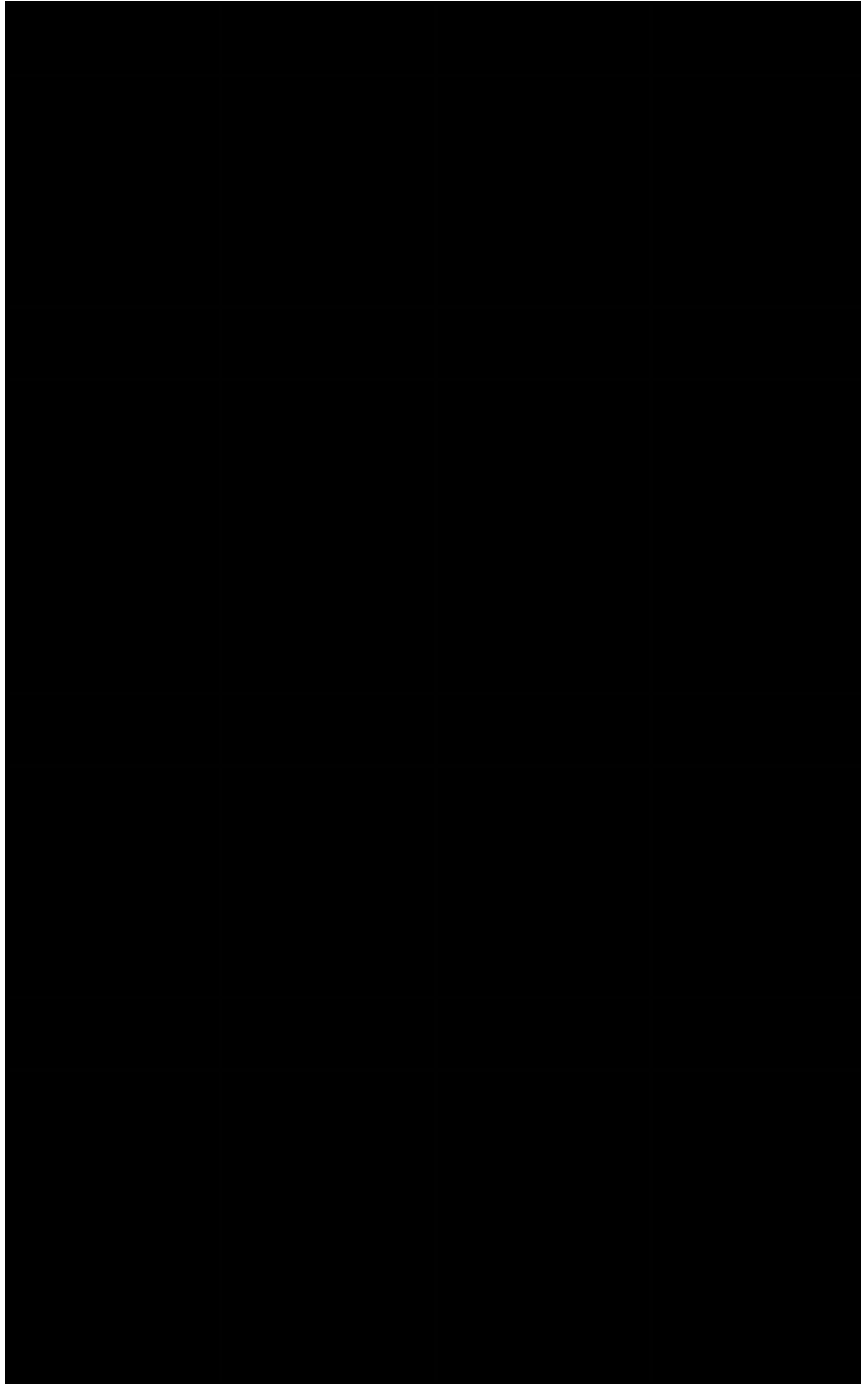
Adapted from
Toronto Catholic District School Board
Assessment of Student Achievement in Catholic Schools, 2001

For some students recognizing the particular learning style or preference will not be enough. The Special Education Companion that is found in the Curriculum Unit Planner outlines the steps that need to occur for a student with special needs to become fully engaged in a classroom. As with all students, these children require an encouraging and supportive classroom environment where they feel that they are valued members of the class. These students are looking for a classroom that promotes opportunities to contribute, participate, make choices, cooperate, and make friends. They want to be successful, needed, respected, valued and able to take risks. As learners, they want to feel useful, happy, free and confident. These students do require program accommodations that involve ongoing communication among teachers, parent/guardians, support staff, students, agencies and associations where appropriate. Students with communication, behavioural, intellectual or physical exceptionalities require the use of accommodations to ensure that they feel positive about their learning.

See Figures 2.2 and 2.3

Making Accommodations

When determining accommodations for students a teacher needs to consider content, process, product, and assessment.
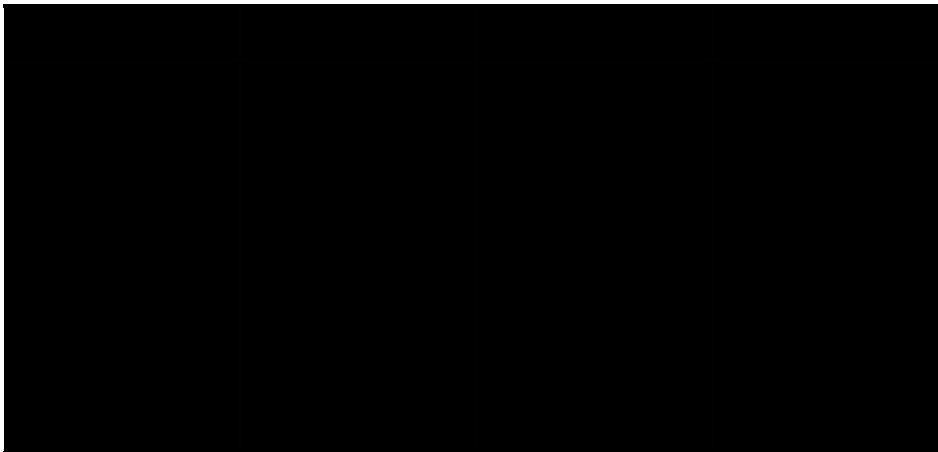
The Special Education Companion found in the Ministry Unit Planner contains a description of and accommodation suggestions for the following exceptionalities:
- Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder
- Behavioural/Emotional Disorder
- Blind and Low Vision
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Deafblind
- Developmental Disability

- Giftedness
- Learning Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities.

Effective use of the accommodations suggested in the Special Education Companion will allow students with special needs to participate fully in the quest for academic and spiritual growth.

Along with the learning styles and preferences of the students and any special needs that require accommodations, classroom teachers need to consider the intellectual, physical, emotional and social developmental stage of the students with whom they are working. There are many theories and descriptions of the stages of development that occur. One frequently referred to is the work of Jean Piaget.

Piaget has four stages of development; sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational. Most students have well passed the first stage, sensori-motor, by the time they enter school. Typically lasting from birth to age two, children in this stage approach their environment in terms of non-verbal thought. The child is gradually learning that the environment has spatial relationships; contains things having location and movement in space; operates through cause and effect; and contains objects that are permanent. Children at this stage of development need many and varied opportunities to touch and manipulate things so they can build up images of the world around them. [4]

The pre-operational stage occurs from ages two to six. This is the stage where most children will enter school. Throughout most of the pre-operational stage, a child's thinking is self-centered, or egocentric. According to Piaget, during the pre-operational stage a child has difficulty understanding life from any other perspective than his own. In this stage, the learner is very me, myself, and I oriented. In the pre-operational stage, the student begins to develop the use of symbols (but can not manipulate them), and the student is able to use language and words to represent things not visible. Also, the pre-operational learner begins to master conservation problems. Although the learner is still unable to think in a truly logical fashion, he/she may begin to treat objects as part of a group. The pre-operational student may have difficulty with classification. Students in this stage of development need to:

- experience as frequently as possible, trips, music, literature, films, games and physical activities;
- have many and varied concrete sensory experiences;
- interact, solve problems and create with many different materials and classes of things;[4]
- engage in a variety of social situations in order to work with

**Stage 1
sensori-motor**

**Stage 2
pre-operational**

others, communicate with others, and become less self centered.;

- manipulate a variety of concrete materials in order to learn to discriminate, classify, quantify, measure, weigh and order.
- have many and varied opportunities to communicate in both verbal and non-verbal ways;
- have opportunities for symbolic construction and fantasy play. [4]

The third stage of development is concrete operational. It usually occurs between the ages of seven and twelve. During this stage, the learner begins to reason logically, and organize thoughts coherently. However, he/she can only think about actual physical objects, they are not yet ready to work with abstract reasoning. It is also during this stage that the learner becomes less self-centered.   Students in the concrete operational stage of development need to:

- experience all the activities listed for a learner at the pre-operational stage, but with greater variety and more social, linguistic, and intellectual sophistication;
- have sufficient time to play with a wide variety of materials and games;
- have learning experiences based on concrete materials;
- have frequent opportunities to link 'doing' and 'telling' through talking, reading and writing about   present and past experiences;
- be encourages to persevere in activities;
- be given opportunities to make connections between things, between people, and between events;
- be encouraged to draw conclusions and make inferences.[4]

Stage 3
concrete operational

Students in grade 8 may be entering the last of Piaget's stages, formal operational. This stage is characterized by the ability to formulate hypotheses and systematically test them to arrive at an answer to a problem. The learner in the formal stage is also able to think abstractly and to understand the form or structure of a mathematical problem. Another characteristic of the learner is their ability to reason contrary to fact. That is, if they are given a statement and asked to use it as the basis of an argument they are capable of accomplishing the task. Students at this stage of development are able to consider others empathetically. Learners in the formal operation stage of development need to:

- be able to use strategies of the third stage when faced with new learning situations or when under emotional or mental stress;
- be provided with many opportunities to talk, read and write about abstract concepts;
- encounter many teaching-learning strategies which proceed from the concrete to the abstract. [4]


Stage 4
formal operational

The order in which human beings move through their developmental stages does not vary, but the age at which any learner enters or leaves a stage of development depends on a variety of factors. These factors include maturation, experience, and social interaction. Maturation is the physical and psychological growth that occurs in the student at a specific stage. Experience is when the student thinks and interacts with real or concrete objects in the external environment. Social interaction involves the child socializing with others, especially children. Teachers need to be wary of labeling children as being at any stage of development based on their chronological age. Students may operate in more than one stage at any given time and may regress to earlier stages of development if they are in new, embarrassing or otherwise stressful situations. Teachers should observe a student's development within a stage as well as their progression from one stage into the next and be conscious of the implications of each stage of development while planning curriculum and while teaching and evaluating students.

Instructional Strategies

Teachers make choices about the kinds of teaching strategies they will use with the students in their care. Well-crafted learning activities are ones that maintain a balance between enough organization to orient students' action and at the same time allow sufficient openness to accommodate the variety of interest, ability and experience found in the classroom. They are also open to the continued faith development of Catholic learning.

There is an enormous range of strategies a teacher can use in the development of learning activities. The Teaching/Learning Strategies Companion found in the Ministry Unit Planner contains detailed information about many teaching/learning strategies. The intent of the Teaching/Learning Strategies Companion is to assist teachers in making decisions about instruction. It provides detailed information on a wide range of strategies teachers may use when developing learning experiences, and determining the most appropriate teaching/learning strategies for the students. The Teaching/Learning Strategies Companion has grouped the strategies as outlined in the following table.
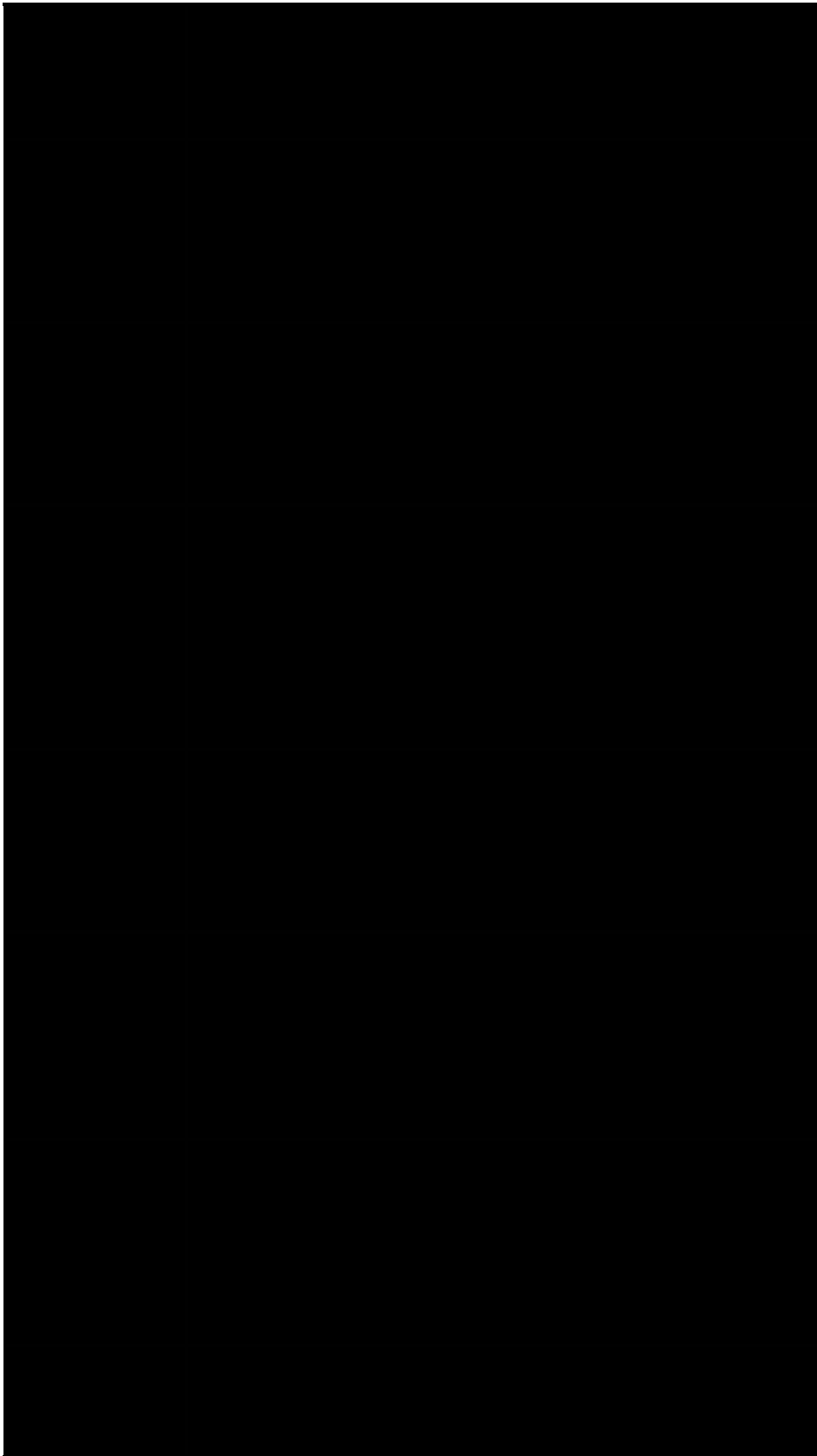
Conclusion

Each child in our classroom is unique and special, open to new experiences and ready to grow. Our vocation, expressed in the way we manage the environment and activities of our classrooms, is to ensure that the strengths of those children are capitalized on, and the weaknesses are compensated. Through our training, understanding and compassion we must create an environment that enables the learner. Each day they must have the opportunity to become more fully human, more fully alive.

Figure 2.1

Planning for Multiple Intelligences

Music

Physical

Self Reflection

Numbers or Logic

Topic/Unit

Words

Pictures

Natural

Social

Figure 2.1

Planning for Multiple Intelligences

Music

Reproduce musical patterns and motifs of the middle ages.

Choose music to create a medieval mood in the classroom

Physical

Build a model of a castle.

Acting out the different roles in medieval society.

Self Reflection

Reflection Journal on how life would be different in medieval times

Explain who you would like to be if you lived during the Middle Ages?

Numbers or Logic

Gather statistical evidence to demonstrate differences between medieval times and the modern world.

Topic/Unit

Grade 4
Medieval Times
(Sample)

Words

Research the lives of people who lived in medieval times.

Create a script for a play that shows daily life in a castle.

Pictures

Create tapestry images to decorate the castle walls.

Illustrate the findings from research.

Natural

Explore the ways in which the people in medieval societies relied upon and used nature in their daily life.

Social

Interview other class members as they play a character or role form the middle ages.

Figure 2.2

They are looking for a classroom where they can

Make Friends

Participate

Make Choices

Cooperate and
Contribute

Figure 2.3

Children with special needs have the hopes for school that all children have
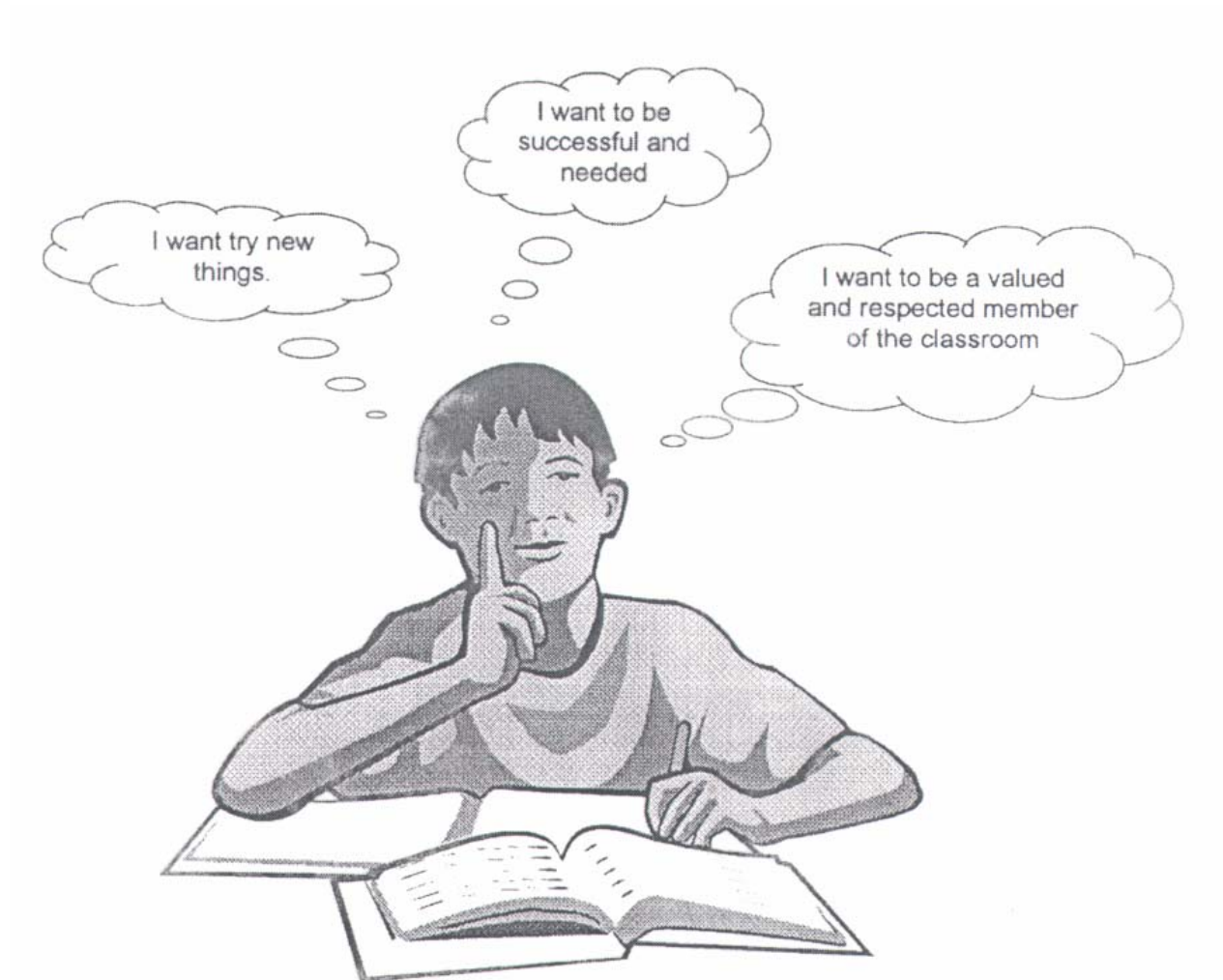
III. Planning

- **Long Range Planning**
- **Unit Planning**
- **Planning with the Curriculum Planner**
- **Sample Templates**

Long Range Planning

Why Do Long Range Planning?

When thinking of long range planning a specific quote comes to mind.

"To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you are going to that you understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction." [1]

This quote by Steven Covey conveys the importance of knowing where one is going. Teaching is no different than any other profession, planning leads to a more effective use of time.

To be an effective planner one needs to recognize the link between thoughtful planning, instruction and assessment. All three elements are integral to the teaching learning process.
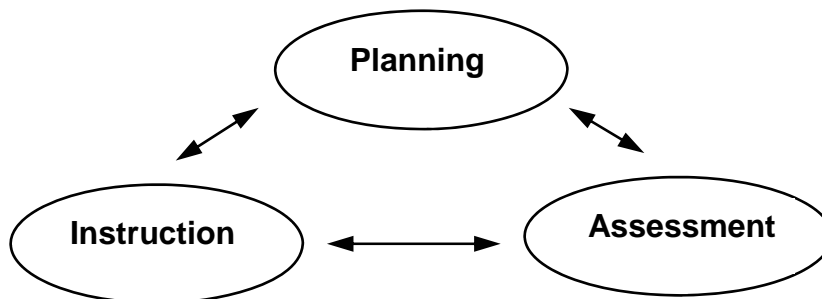
The materials and skills that we teach are positioned within a Canadian context and are mandated by the Ministry of Education and outlined in the subject specific expectation documents. Many boards of education, Catholic educational co-operatives and associations develop support or resource materials based on these documents to assist teachers in the delivery of the curriculum. Also, many educators spend countless hours developing materials that are specifically tailored to their student's needs. The figure that follows outlines the levels of responsibility involved in the generation of curriculum.

Levels of Responsibility[2]

Canadian Society

Ministry Curriculum Documents (mandated curriculum)

Catholic Graduate Expectation

Ministry/Board Cooperative Developed Resources

Teacher Developed Materials and Plans
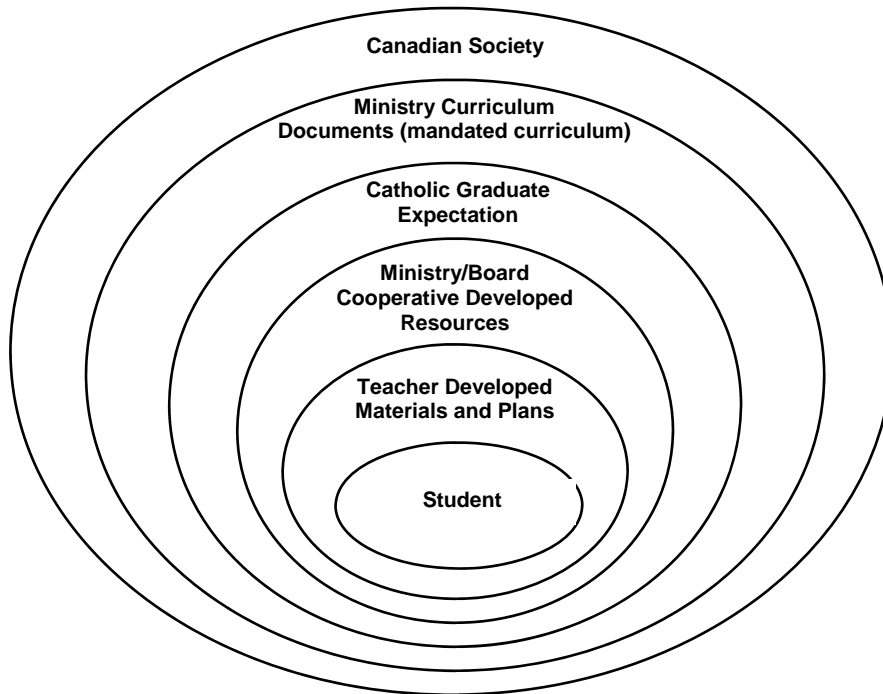
Student

One of the main benefits of long range planning is that it provides the teacher, administrator, parents and students with the big picture. It conveys what content and skills will be delivered at what specific points in time. However, regardless of the attention to planning it is important to realize that the plans must be viewed with flexibility in mind. The teacher will always have to adjust to differences in abilities and interests.

Long range planning is necessary because:
- It helps us consider the time that we have to deliver the Ministry expectations.
- Planning forces us to make choices in terms of what parts of the curriculum are most important. This is not to say that one omits segments but the degree of emphasis may vary depending on the students' current knowledge and skill level.
- It alleviates stress. When long range planning has been completed there is a feeling of being prepared for the year. Without a plan in place the end of the year can be very stressful if one is trying to play catch-up with the remaining curriculum.

- With long range planning in place the teacher realizes the resources that need to be collected, when materials need to be booked and preparations made to deliver curriculum effectively.
- As members of the staff develop their own individual plans there is frequently the realization that team planning can result in a sharing of expertise. Planning with members of your division or grade is very effective and can result in a more harmonious sharing of resources as well as workload. This collaboration can also lead to other types of sharing including the sharing of accomplishments with other classes. **See Figure 3.1**

As you embark on planning keep in mind the necessity of having a balanced program. This means that the program should incorporate varied ways of working and varied ways of assessing. **See Figure 3.2**

Also when planning a program be sure to include opportunities for the students to:
- Use concrete materials
- Participate in exploratory and investigative experiences
- Experience peer support
- Talk about their ideas
- Interact with technology
- Read a variety of materials
- Write on assigned and personally selected topics. **See Figure 3.3**

All planning reflects the beliefs of the educator. How one plans a language, mathematics or science program relays pedagogically what is valued. Before embarking on long range plans consider the following critical components in the core language, mathematics and science program areas*.
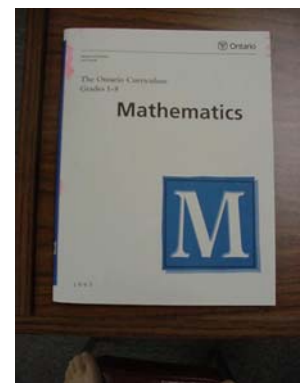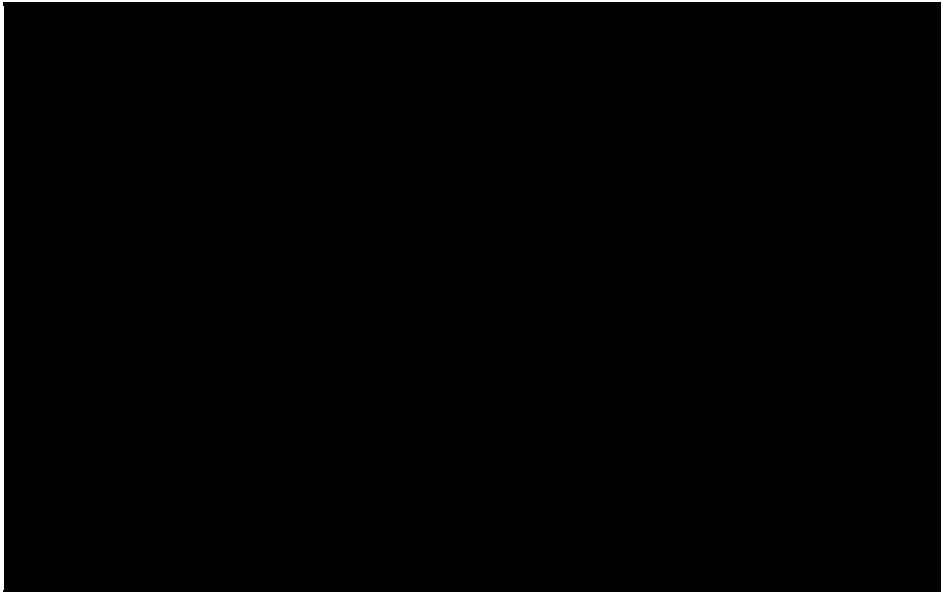
The Use of Time

No matter how carefully we plan there never seems to be enough time to do everything. There are a number of points about time to keep in mind as we start planning.

- Even though we may schedule or plan for specific periods of time there will be the need to let go of the time restrictions and let other more important aspects be the priority. For example, if a student brings in an object that provides an ideal learning opportunity for your students, good pedagogy dictates that we seize the teachable moment.
- Some program areas require longer periods of time and specific projects may be done over a number of blocks of time.
- Short intensive periods of time are best for spelling, handwriting or computation.
- It is practically impossible to predict the time that each child will need for various tasks or experiences; therefore, we need to adapt to the needs of the students.
- Be sure to provide time for the students to make choices and to participate in the assessment process.
- Keep in mind that there will never be enough time to do all that you need to do.[5]

Hints for Successful Planning

- The balance between the different program areas and the kinds of learning should be examined on a regular basis.
- Experiences that reinforce each other in learning should occur close together; for example, learning about measuring can be linked to map making or modelling.
- Learning occurs sequentially and continuously and long range planning should reflect this belief.

Getting Ready

Gather together all the resources that you will need to plan. These resources might include:

- The Catholic Graduate Expectation Document
- The Ministry Expectations
- The Ministry Exemplar documents
- Ministry curriculum units
- OECTA curriculum units
- EOCCC curriculum units
- A calendar - You will also require a calendar as well as key Board dates. Consider holidays and Professional Development Days and Catholic Education Week. Are there special months or liturgical seasons that lend themselves to the delivery of specific strands of the curriculum? May, for example, is the month to celebrate our environment with Earth Day. It is also designated as The Month of Mary. Are there special Board events for example, tournaments, Winter Carnival?
- Template - Last but not least you will require a long range planning template. When selecting and using a template be sure that you have checked with your principal for there may be a specific format that is required. A number of sample templates have been included at the end of this section.

Planning – Going Solo or Using a Team Approach

The majority of teachers complete their long range planning individually. This is usually due to specific situations; for example, single grade classes such as one grade 4 in the school or it may be a case of time which does not allow for the collaborative process. However the benefits of planning and working together have been supported by research and certainly are advantageous for both the student and teacher. Some of these benefits include:
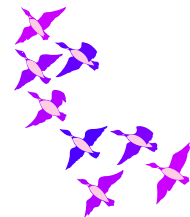
- An increase in general and personal teaching efficacy (Ashton, Webb & Doda, 1983; Cavers, 1988; Denham & Michael, 1981)
- Increased levels of self-esteem and a positive outlook on teaching which leads teachers to become more concerned with self-improvement (Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981)
- Teachers thinking critically about what they do and acting on those thoughts. If this occurs then there should be an accompanying change in pupils' achievement, attitudes and behaviour. (Archeson & Gall, 1992; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991; Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1993)

Teachers tell us that planning together:
- Provides affirmation
- Is a learning experience
- Frequently leads to other joint decisions and planning opportunities
- Saves time
- Results in more in-depth plans
- Produces a better product
- Results in the sharing of expertise and resources
- Is more enjoyable

Planning a Unit of Study

What to Include

There are a number of different ways to plan a unit and a number of different types of units. Regardless of the type of unit, the teacher will always want to allow for incidental or spontaneous learning experiences which are very meaningful to the students and connect them to the real world. Any unit developed is as current as the materials and research available at that point in time. Therefore, units require regular modification based on the needs of the students as well as updating so that new materials can be incorporated.

A unit may focus on one or more program area. It may also revolve around a specific theme such as community or a specific season. Theme planning is an effective way to ensure meaningful learning experiences. When planning and developing a unit the workload is considerably reduced if a unit is developed by a team of teachers. The old adage of more heads are better than one is certainly applicable when it comes to planning. The input of multiple ideas leads to a better product. Subject expertise, someone who has taught a subject for a number of

"What do we want our students to understand and be able to use several years from now after they have forgotten the details?" [6]

years or has been trained in a particular program area; curriculum expertise, someone who may be familiar with the design down model and various assessment methods; and someone possessing technical skills would be valuable assets to a development team.

Currently, there are a number of curriculum units available to the teacher. Which one(s) should be selected? This depends on the needs of your students. It also depends on the quality of the unit(s). If a new unit is being developed what are some of the key components that should be included?

Key Components in Planning an Integrated Unit

- Catholic Graduate Expectations
- Ontario Ministry Expectations
- Overview of the Unit
- Prior Learnings
- Learning Activities
    - Teaching/Learning Strategies
    - Assessment Criteria
    - Resources
- Culminating Performance Task (including Assessment)
- Communication to Parents

Getting Started

When we think of designing curriculum the "design back" model described by Steven Covey comes to mind. This model ensures that planning is closely linked to assessment. The following questions are based on this development method.

Pre-Planning

Before putting pen to paper there are some aspects that need to be considered. Just as we ask our students to pre-plan writing by generating webs we too need to plan our unit before writing. Some areas to consider are:

Type of Unit
- What are the grades and subjects being addressed?
- Will it be a single strand unit or a multiple strand subject specific unit?
- Will it be a combined grades unit?
- Will it be an integrated unit?

Scope of Unit
- What is the scope of the unit?
- Where does this unit fit in the larger curriculum map?
  A unit should not be considered in isolation but considered as part of a bigger plan. We then decide on the expectations to incorporate. At the same time we reflect on the ones not being addressed so that they can be incorporated in the overall plan.

Expectations
- What is the meaning of the expectation(s)?
- What experience did the students have with this skill/ knowledge and what are the students expected to demonstrate?
  A review of a continuum of any of the subject skills quickly shows that there is a progression of skills. The curriculum is spiral for it builds on previous learning. An examination of the expectations also shows that there are groupings of skills. There are some that naturally fit together. These groupings naturally allow for the writing of sub-tasks that include a number of expectations.

Enduring Understandings
- The longer overall enduring understandings are still part of the curriculum.
- *Does the chunking of the skills reveal larger, overall understandings?*
  Enduring understandings are the processes or understandings that will last beyond the classroom. They are the essential ideas that are at the heart of the subject. They are the transferable skills that can be applied to new situations.

Focus of the Unit
- Will the unit focus on a particular theme?
- What will be the real world connection?

Culminating Performance Task
- What will be the culminating performance task?
- What form of assessment will be part of this task?
- Will it focus on both process and product?

Assessment
- What types of assessment will be incorporated?
  Assessment needs to be on-going throughout the unit. Assessments incorporated into sub-tasks act as checkpoints to ensure that students are ready to progress to the next group of expectations. They measure the student's understanding and reveal their growth over time.

Sub-tasks
- The development of sub-tasks also needs to be planned.
- We need to ask ourselves what needs to be considered in the development of a sub-task?
  Consideration should be given to the nature of the task and what expectations will be addressed. Prior knowledge and skills need to be assessed and the planning of the teaching process needs to occur. The incorporation of assessment is a necessity.

Celebration
- Don't forget to celebrate!
- Will there be an opportunity to share with another group the work that has been accomplished?

Combined Grade Strategies

The development of combined grade units is never a simple task but here are a few hints that may make the work a little easier.

- Use a main idea or issue as a unifying theme or larger concept that connects the two curricula.
- Group the sets of expectations of the two curricula.
- Develop a set of enduring understandings and essential questions.
- Develop a separate culminating task and accompanying assessment for each grade.
- Design activities for both grades. There may be some skills that cross over both grades that can be done together.

Planning

With pre-planning in place it is time to begin the actual writing. There are many sample formats available but one that is available is The Ontario Curriculum Planner. The benefits of the planner are numerous.

- Since your work is in electronic form it can be revised at any time.
- Your work can be shared with others and The Ontario Curriculum Planner also brings you multiple units already developed by your colleagues.
- You may use them as they are or modify them to fit the needs of your students. The information that follows provides an overview of The Ontario Curriculum Planner and its features.

Using The Ontario Curriculum Planner

The Ontario Curriculum Planner is a curriculum resource tool designed and produced by the Ontario Ministry of Education to assist teachers with planning and sharing classroom units based on the Ontario Curriculum. The Planner makes use of FilemakerPro to provide templates for writing curriculum and to access resources to assist in writing units.

The Planner provides three different environments to create units. Within each model, prompt texts help the teacher follow the design model. Drop down menus with 'point and click' choices make the organization and planning of a unit efficient and consistent.

1. Open Authoring Environment: The Open environment is the most extensive writing environment in the Planner. The Open environment is used to write unlimited text in scrolling windows. Unlimited expectations and subtasks may be attached.
2. Outliner Authoring Environment: The Outliner environment is the most basic writing environment in the Planner. The Outliner uses a template to create a two-page unit with up to 5 subtasks. Each subtask will accept up to 6 expectations.
3. Lite Authoring Environment: The Lite environment uses a template to create a more extensive unit than the Outliner but has some limitations. The amount of text is limited to the size of the window in the template. The number of subtasks in a unit is unlimited but a maximum of only 8 expectations may be attached to a subtask.

Unit List

Subtasks
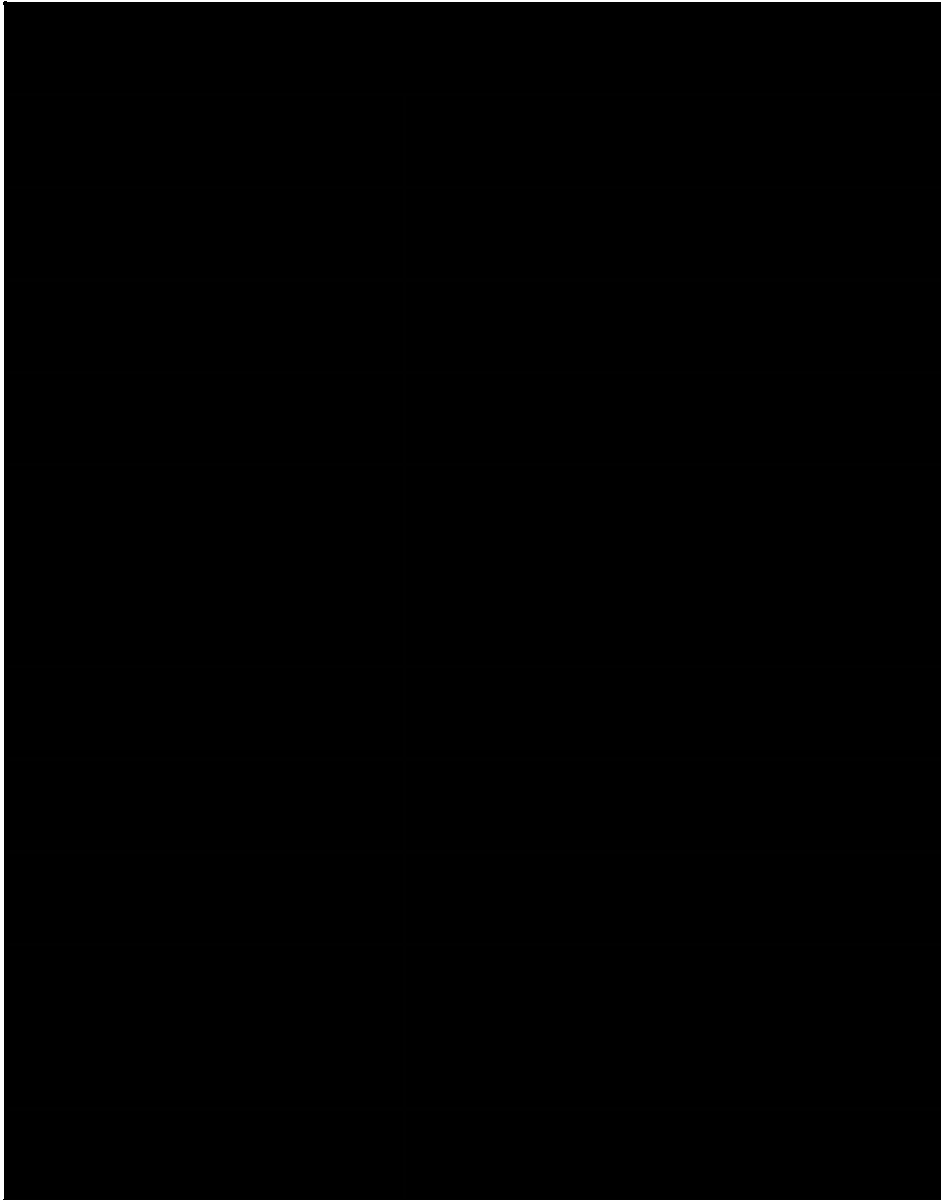
Quick Facts

- An overview of units is available
- All units can be modified.
- There are 3 different type of units.
- There a number of excellent resources i.e. Teaching/ Learning Strategies.
- A rubric template is available.
- BLM's can be created.
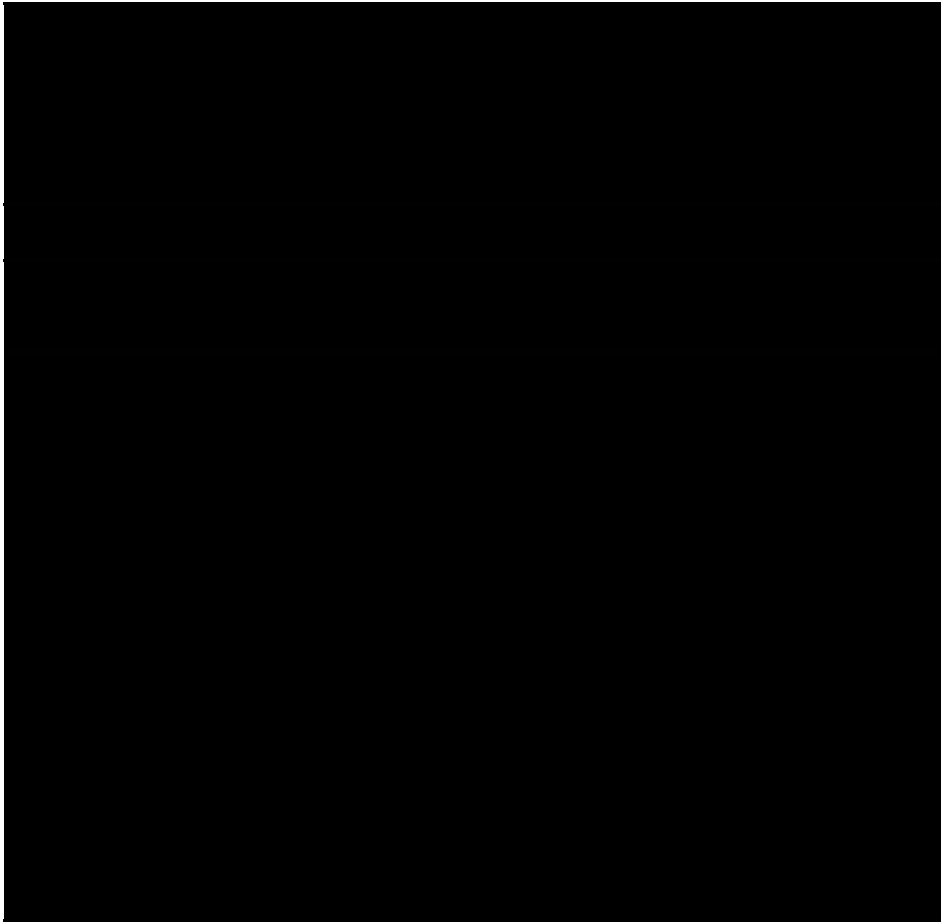
Help

Within the Help section, teachers can work through a tutorial of the Curriculum Planner. An important feature is the link to the Planner website which lists the units available to teachers province-wide. Teachers can view the profiles of units and import them into their own library. **Once a unit is imported and copied, teachers can modify sections of the unit to adapt them to their classroom needs.**

Figure 3.1

Building in Classroom Opportunities

Your view of the classroom will be reflected in your planning for learning. Within the classroom there needs to be opportunities for the students to become involved in the following.
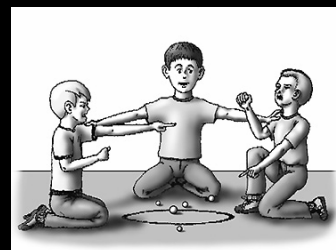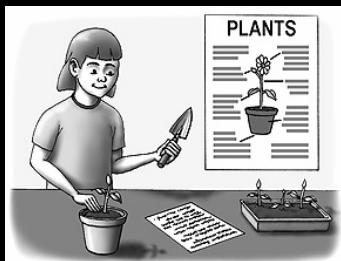
Figure 3.2

Planning a Balanced Program

Students need to have opportunities to work:
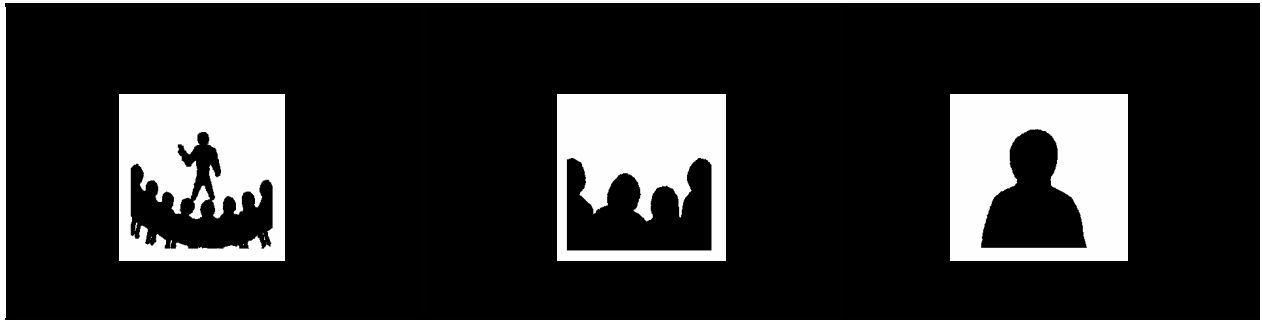
Students need to have opportunities to:
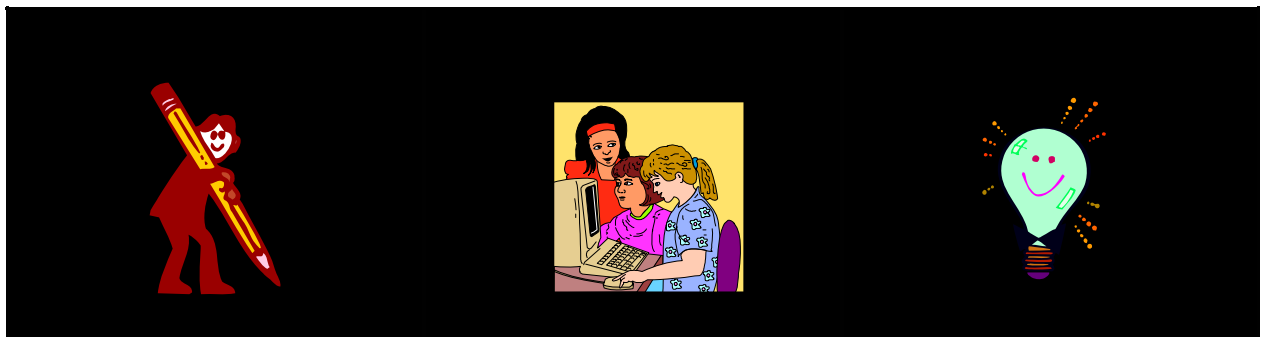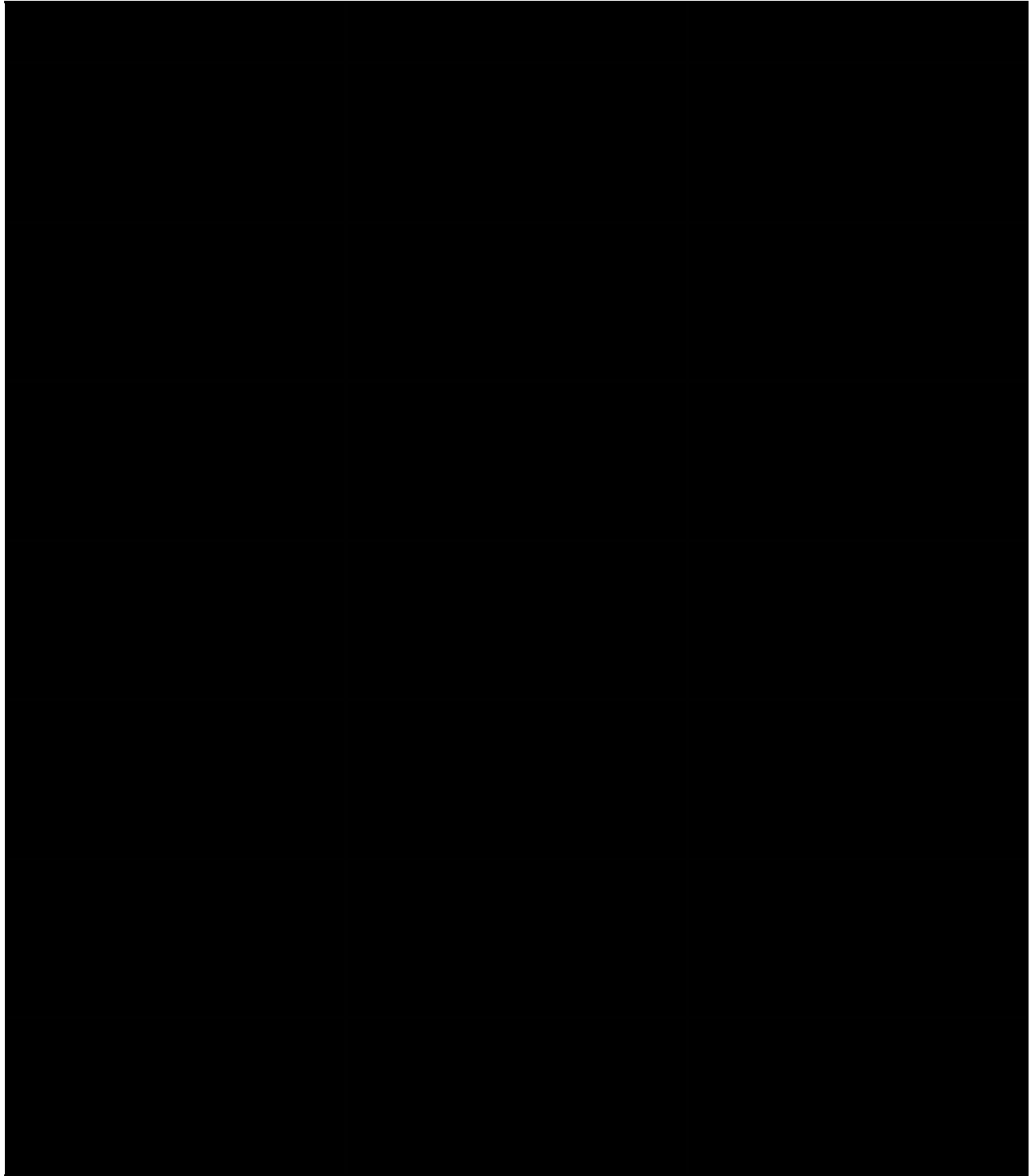
Figure 3.3

When Planning a Program

When planning a program it is important to keep in mind that students need opportunities to experience the following.
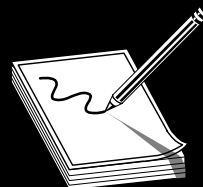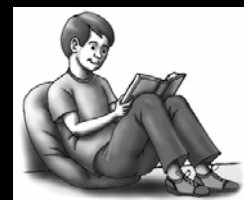
Sample Templates

Long Range Plan

Long Range Plan
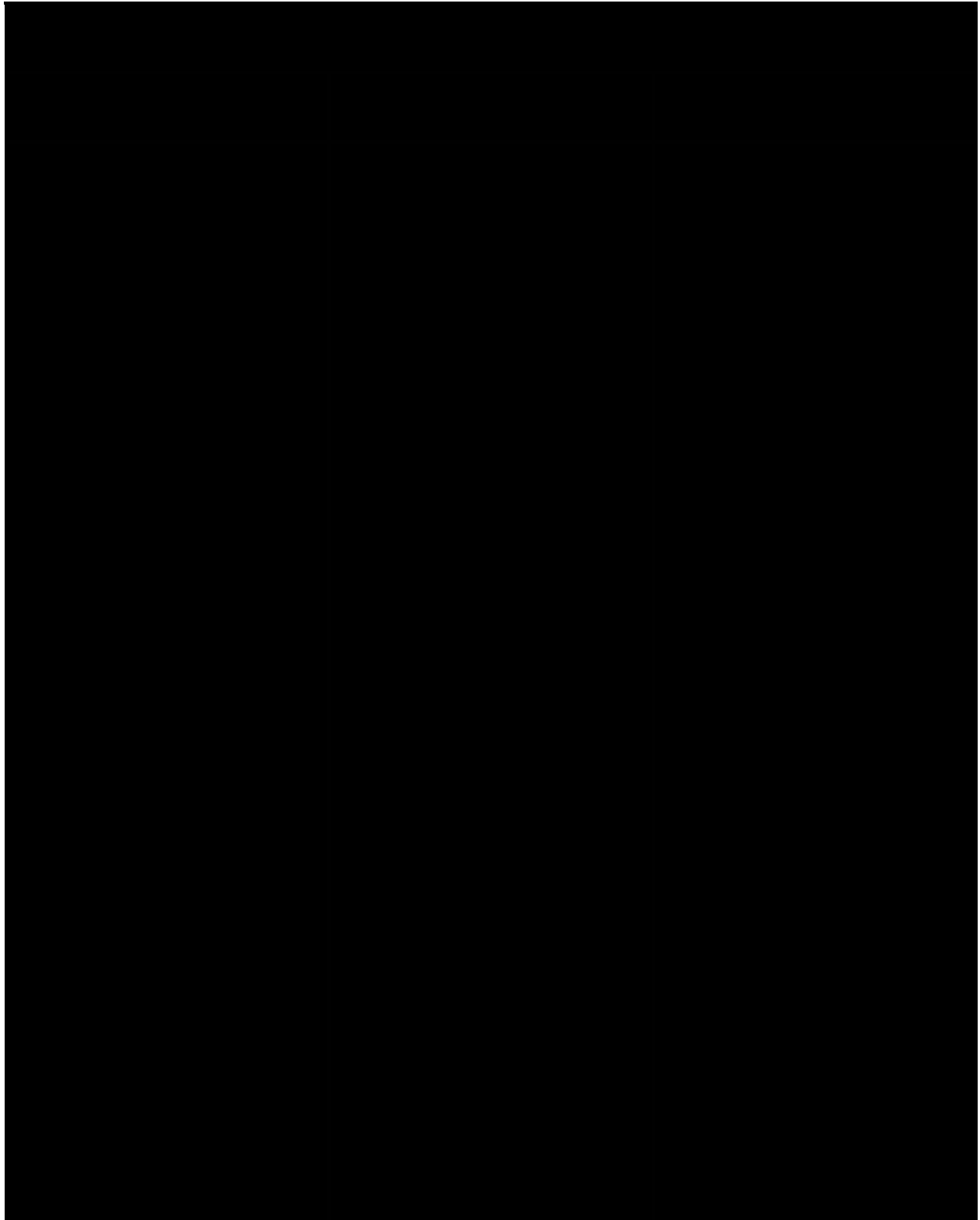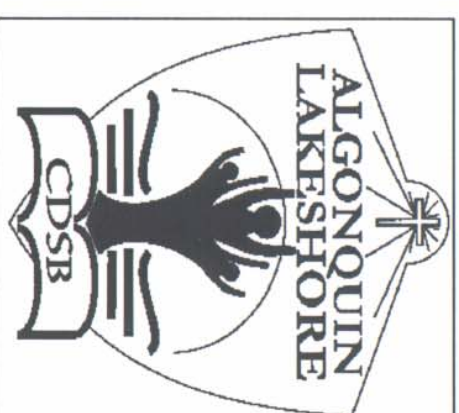
Long Range Plans - Grades 1-6

Teacher: _____

Grade(s): _____

Principal: _____

School: _____

School Year: _____

Notes Regarding Students and Physical Environment:
(e.g., M/F, special needs, IEPs, equipment, resources available …)

Long Range Plans - Grades 7-8

Teacher: _____

Grade(s): _____

Principal: _____

School: _____

School Year: _____

Notes Regarding Students and Physical Environment:
(e.g., M/F, special needs, IEPs, equipment, resources available ...)

IV. The Learning Environment

- **Overview**

- **Classroom Organization**

- **Learning Centres**

- **Grouping Strategies**

- **Discipline**

The Learning Environment

As we all know, a well organized classroom doesn't just happen. It obviously takes a lot of advance planning and hard work. Each year, we are faced with the challenging task of deciding how to best utilize the space provided in order to set up an effective classroom. Students and teachers spend many hours per day in the school setting. In order to gain a positive attitude towards learning and school, children must be in an organized, visually stimulating environment where they feel warm and secure. The overall set up sets the stage for a productive year where students are invited to explore, interact and investigate as they acquire new knowledge, skills and values.

How you will arrange your classroom will ultimately depend in part on:

- What furniture you have at your disposal
- The configuration of your classroom/physical space available
- Fire codes and other specific safety procedures applicable to your school/board
- The needs of your students
- Your instructional objectives
- Your personal teaching style

The Learning Environment

Use of Wall Space

Sample Seating Arrangement

You Value:
- gospel teachings
- organization
- nurturing and supporting students
- respect for all people
- creativity
- self-discipline and autonomy
- interdependence
- the pursuit of excellence

So, Your Classroom Will:
- respect the dignity of each student
- be neat and orderly
- be bright, positive, and invitational
- be inclusive and reflective of the community from which the students have come
- be stimulating and thought-provoking
- be filled with opportunities for student discussion, exploration or relevant issues and decision-making[1].

Strategies for Successful Planning

- Don't hesitate to give your room a personal touch. What will give your room a distinctive ambiance and still be functional?

- Use graph paper and try out different arrangements.

- Keep high traffic areas clear and avoid putting desks, chairs and other pieces of furniture in front of doors, sinks, etc. Remember to check out any fire codes or safety regulations for your school/board.

- Collegial support is invaluable. Visit the classrooms of a few colleagues and remember to invite them to visit your classroom set up.

- If you are sharing the classroom with other teaching partners remember to involve them in the overall planning.

- Be ready on the first day since first impressions really do count. However, don't worry about having "everything" in place since you will want to wait until class rules and routines are established prior to beginning any learning centers, etc.

- Involve students – What can they add/contribute to make it their space?

- Continually reflect on the use of space, organization & accessibility to materials. View the room for any trouble spots. Sit in various locations to get a bird's eye view of the classroom. Don't be afraid to make changes if the arrangements doesn't work.

- Work gradually to make any changes and remember to teach any new routines required.

- Don't change it too often! Let students have time to adjust and thrive between changes.

Classroom Organization

A. Seating Arrangements

Different seating arrangements are needed to accomplish different tasks. Tasks and/or activities may include:
- sitting to hear a story
- paired problem solving
- viewing a video
- demonstrations
- cooperative learning
- small group work
- taking a test
- whole group instruction
- independent work
- experiments

Since the types of activities students are involved in vary greatly, it is not unreasonable to expect that a variety of seating arrangement may be required to support student learning. Some possible arrangements may include:
- half circle
- u-shape
- traditional rows
- full circle
- group seating
- centers

Regardless of the format used, it is important that teachers remember some key features when determining the appropriate seating arrangement for students.

- Arrange seating to accommodate students with special needs (e.g., visually impaired students may need to be close to the front of the room, etc). Do your best, however not to isolate any special needs students from the rest of their peers.
- Place desks/tables so that all students can easily see you during whole class instruction.
- Try to arrange work areas so that you can easily see and monitor all of the students regardless of where you are in the room.
- Whenever possible, allow sufficient aisle space so you can move around easily.
- Maximize proximity to students. The closer you are to your students, the more you will minimize your classroom behavioural problems.
- Separate students who should not be together for social and/or behavioural reasons.
- Assign seats, especially on the first day of school. Although many students would like us to believe that they would like to select their seating partners, this unfortunately can lead to feelings of peer rejection and rarely promotes diverse collaborative partnerships. One way students can provide input is by filling out a preference card (see sample A).

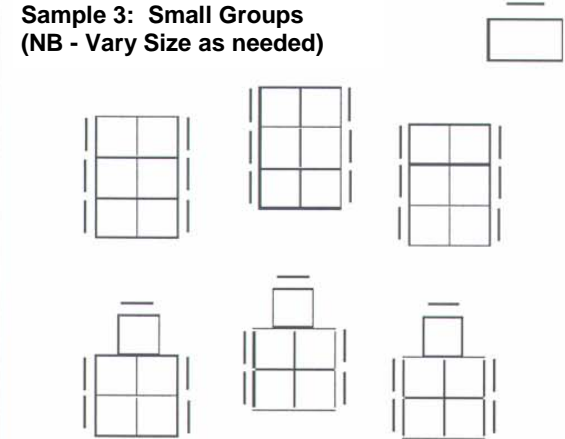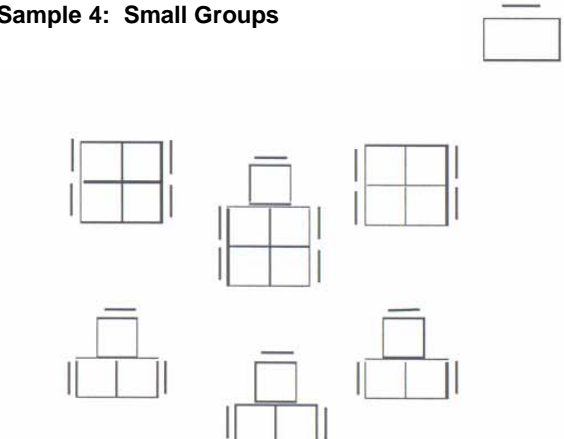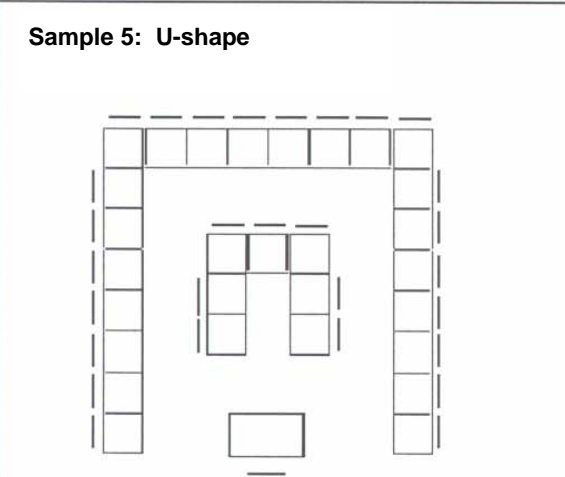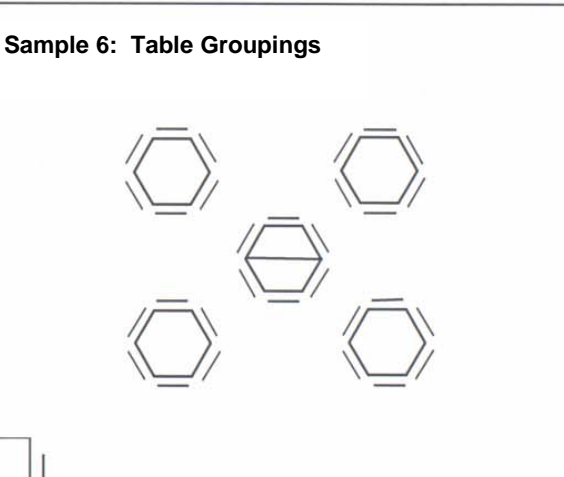| Sample A |
| --- |
| **Term 2** |
| **Joshua** |
| I can work well with the following students: |
| 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ |
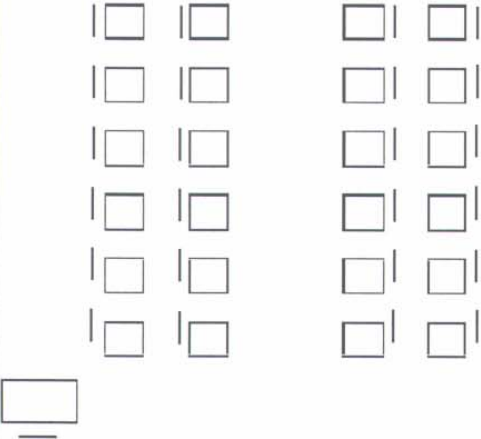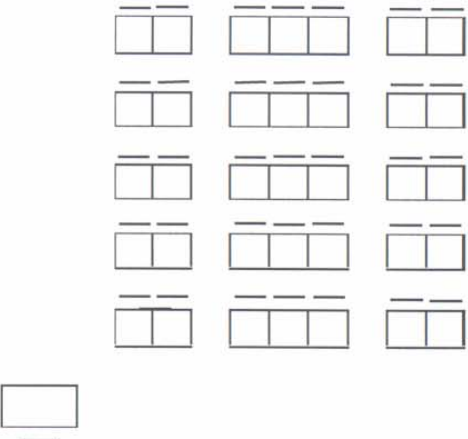
Letting students know that you will be referring to their preference card as seating arrangements are changed throughout the term provides some reassurance and comfort. Trying to place at least one peer from the list is probably manageable. Allow students to fill out new cards frequently, especially during the first few months of school when new friendships are developing.
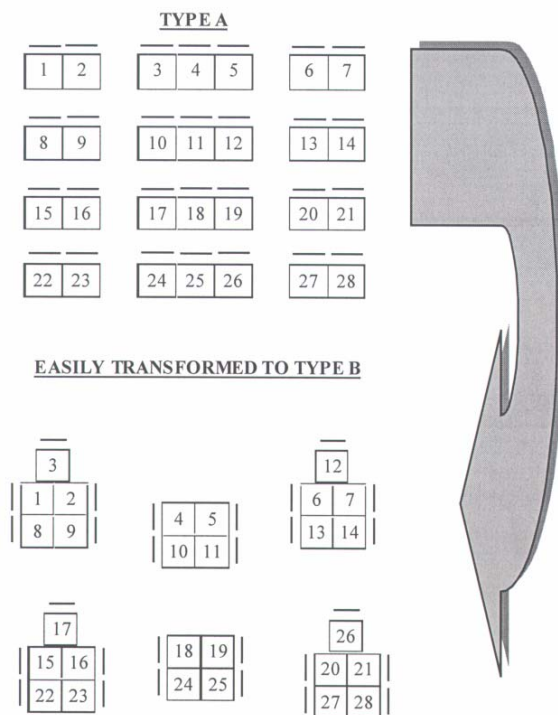
SAMPLE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

Sample: Debate Style

Sample 2: Modified Traditional Arrangement

**Sample 3: Small Groups
(NB - Vary Size as needed)**

Sample 4: Small Groups

Sample 5: U-shape

Sample 6: Table Groupings

Although there are a multitude of possible combinations for classroom seating arrangements, they usually fall within two distinct categories:

Type A: *Whole group teaching, paired, and individual work (rows, u-shape, etc.).* This type of seating arrangements is useful during direct instruction and test taking. It also assists with controlling behaviour since students are usually not sitting close to one another.

Type B: *Collaborative group work (centers, groupings of desks/ tables, etc.).* This type of seating arrangement facilitates collaboration and interaction. It is also useful for small group instruction.

If you would like the flexibility to benefit from both types of layouts, you may want to consider having <u>two</u> basic room set ups. Studies have shown that student are actually able to rearrange the classroom seating arrangements with 1-2 minutes once the routine is established. This is most often done at the end of a session just before a natural break such as lunch, recess, gym class, etc. Rotating team captains can also ensure that desks/tables are moved in a safe and organized manner[2].

TYPE A

1	2		3	4	5		6	7
8	9		10	11	12		13	14
15	16		17	18	19		20	21
22	23		24	25	26		27	28

EASILY TRANSFORMED TO TYPE B

B. Use of Floor Space

You are only limited by your own imagination when it comes to designing the floor space in your classroom. Think about providing areas for whole group instruction, small group work, learning centers/area, and quiet work spaces.

Sample Layouts
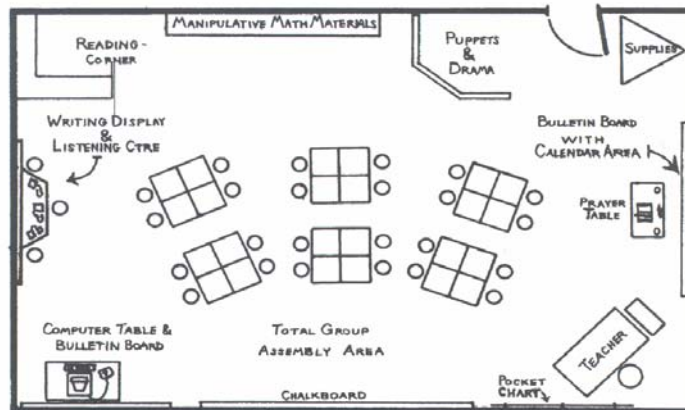
3
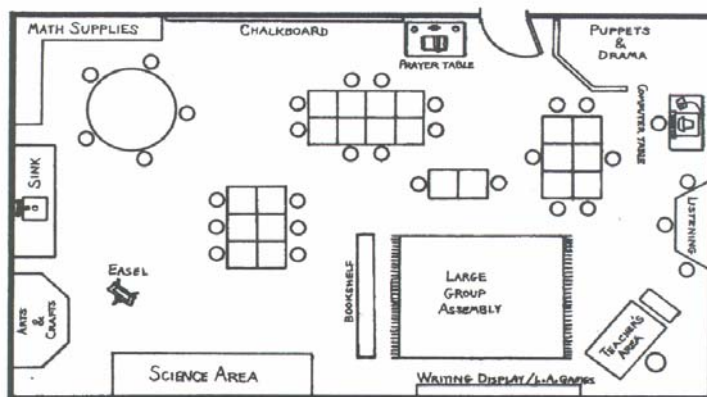
4

A Few Tips to Help Get You Started

- Use dividers and/or shelves to define small work areas

- Remember to clearly label all items for easy access and place object close to areas where they will be needed

- Short dividers tend to create a more open space and allow for an unobstructed view

- Place tall bookcases against the wall whenever possible

- Using a pocket chart with a stand can also help define a learning area

- Try to group related centers and/or materials while trying to separate noisy and quiet areas

- Give special consideration to high traffic areas

- Place learning centers/area around the perimeter of the room

- Provide additional chairs, if available, at various learning centers/area

- Ensure that children can move around freely without disturbing others

- Prominently display important signs and symbols

- Place craft area near sink, if available

- Avoid glare from sunlight by facing computers away from windows

- Use masking tape to mark out meeting area on the floor

- Provide small sample carpets for students to sit on (many stores provide old ones free of charge to teachers)

- A study carrel provides a good quiet work place (one can also be made by placing tall cardboard on 3 sides of a desk)

- Only leave out what you want students to use

http://www.nea.org/
helpfrom/growing/
work4me/organize/
baords.html

http://www.nea.org/
helform/growing/
work4me/organize/
posters.html

- Add thematic work to windows (science, literature, seasonal, etc.) by painting them with a mixture of tempera paint and about ¼ cup of dish detergent for easy cleaning

- Keep blackboards clean by putting lemon oil or spraying a small amount of furniture polish on a clean rag. Store in a plastic baggie and wipe board clean (only use a very small amount – keep almost dry).

- Draw lines on your blackboard using a white pencil crayon to keep your writing nice and straight. As the lines begin to fade with washing, simply trace over.

C. Use of Wall Space

- Create a print rich environment for your students.

- Post rules and routines and teach your students to become responsible for their learning by <u>using</u> these charts.

- Display work, whenever possible at the children's eye level.

- Displaying your students work will send them a strong message that you value and appreciate their effort.

- Ensure a balance of student and teacher created material.

- Select a consistent place for posting the day's schedule and assignments.

- Dry erase sheets that are torn off a large pad and stuck to the wall by static electricity are now available at office supply stores.

- Locate helpful information as close to learning centres/areas possible.

- Hot glue clothespins to a painted cinder block wall to hang student work (you may need to ask for permission first!)

- Rain gutters installed on the walls of your classroom help display a variety of books "face-out" (install the brackets to the wall or if you are concerned about safety and/or the additional cost simply drill screws and washers right through the rain gutter into the studs), check out httpp://www.trelease-on-reading.com/whats_nu_raingutters.html to see how a school has transformed its walls with this inexpensive building material!

D. Staying Organized

- Store leveled books on shelving units or in bins. Remember to clearly identify levels for easy access.

- Students will take pride in their learning environment if they are involved in the process. Provide each group with a numbered spray bottle filled with water & vinegar. Students love using these to keep their desk/table clean. On Fridays, the cleanest team might be the first to select an activity or choose from a class raffle box.

- Assigning students to a variety of classroom jobs on a rotation is also an effective way to encourage student responsibility and pride.

- Setting up mail slots for each student is a great way to ensure that absent students receive any missed work. It's also a super place to store all of the notices to be taken home at the end of the day.

- A great way to keep from losing the caps to markers is by filling an old bowl with Plaster of Paris and inserting the caps about ¾ of the way into the plaster. Once dry, just pull out and return markers as needed. If you buy the same brand of markers, these will last for a few years.

- Use a variety of bins, crates, magazine holders, stacking boxes, cans, baggies, pizza boxes or just about anything you can get your hands on to organize your classroom.

The Learning Environment

Grouping Strategies

The task of grouping students for instructional purposes requires a lot of advance thought and preparation. Organizational and management questions arise in addition to the concerns of how to 'best' group our students for maximum effectiveness.

It is important for us to remember that working groups provides students with vital learning opportunities. William Glasser's work certainly supports the value of group work. We remember:

> 10% of what we READ
> 20% of what we HEAR
> 30% of what we SEE
> 50% of what we both SEE and HEAR
> 70% of what we DISCUSS WITH OTHERS
> 80% of what we EXPERIENCE PERSONALLY
> 95% of what we TEACH TO SOMEONE ELSE

Recognizing the overall value of group work, however, doesn't come without its challenges. In fact, some studies have reported possible harmful effects relating to the overuse of certain grouping strategies. For example, Fountas and Pinnell, authors of *Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for all Children* have found that reading ability groups do not seem to meet individual needs[5]. They highlight that:

1. Once a child is assigned to a low reading group, the chances of moving to a higher group is very low (Hiebert 1983; Good & Marshal 1984)[7].
2. Students' self-confidence & self-esteem are damaged by their assignment to low groups, since no matter how hard we try to name groups, students inevitably figure out which is low and which is high (Filby, Barnett & Bossart 1982)[8].
3. Minority groups are more likely to be assigned to low groups (Elders 1983;[9] Good & Marshall 1984[10]; Sorenson & Hallinan 1986)[11].

Consequently, many teachers and researchers have become increasingly aware of the importance of keeping group membership flexible in order to provide students with the opportunity to work with as many different peers in a variety of situations.

Here are a few items to consider when forming groups:

- vary the size of the groups according to the specific activity rather than on the total number of students participating
- assign specific tasks to all students to ensure maximum participation by all members
- limit teams to 4-6 students since research indicates that this is a good, manageable size so that all students participate while reducing the risk of one person dominating the activity
- try to group students who work well together
- clearly explain how and why the group is formed as this will directly influence how quickly your students will move into their designated groups
- teach the necessary concepts and/or skills to be used during group activities
- vary the length of time the group is together depending on the nature of the task
- match the grouping strategy to the purpose of the task (e.g., interest groups, social groups, peer-helping groups, needs groups) however, as often as possible ensure that they are heterogeneous in terms of gender, ability and ethnicity
- remember that constant reinforcement, time and patience are required for success

Highlighted below are some specific features relating to a variety of grouping strategies. These were compiled by the Waterloo Catholic District School Board to provide additional strategies for combined grade classrooms[12].

- *Ability Groups*
  Teachers may group some students together from the two grades who are at the same level of achievement. These groups, for example, might be formed in the area of mathematics or language. The students in one ability group would be working on the same concept or skill or be at the same developmental stage. Teachers are to be cognizant that sustained ability groups could negatively influence the self-esteem of the lower ability group members.

- *Interest Groups*
  Teachers may form interest groups based on common topics of interest. The students in each group may agree to investigate a problem or examine a subject. The interest group may focus on a project and be motivated to produce a product. Again the members of each group may be in different grades and achieving different expectations while working on the same project.

- *Cooperative Learning Groups*
  The teacher may place students in cooperative learning groups randomly or based on his/her knowledge of the children and their strengths. The students assigned to each group usually complement each other. The group and the teacher may identify the task or tasks to be accomplished. Each member of the group has an assigned role and responsibility to carry out the task or discussion.

- *Cross-Class Groups*
  If a school has two or more combined grade classrooms with the same grades, the teachers may at times decide to combine the students from the same grade in groups to attempt to form a homogeneous group. The teacher may need to utilize this grouping for instructions in the Sacraments or other purposes such as the Grade 3 testing. In other cases, teachers may group students of the same grade temporarily to re-establish friendships or to teach common concepts for that grade. Sometimes, two teachers of combined Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms, which are adjacent, may have a common activity time in order that same-age peers from both classes may interact.

- *Individual Work*
  The teacher should incorporate much independent, individual work in the classroom to allow students to work at their own pace and to demonstrate individual strengths, needs or interests. A time for personal reflection and personal choice is important. When involved in individual work, the student can progress at his/her own pace. Teachers often use contracts or student education plans to formalize the expectations of each student and to monitor progress and accomplishment of previously established tasks and timelines.

- *Pairs*
  Teachers may encourage students to form pairs or assign students to pairs for a given task. Sometimes weak/strong students are paired together, just as students from two grades could be paired together to encourage peer relationships and to stimulate each other's cognitive growth. The pairs are sometimes more effective groups than small groups and can be used for peer evaluation, shared reading, study partners, reader/actor roles, etc.

See Figure 4.1

- *Whole Group*

  There are many opportunities for whole class instruction in a combined grade classroom. The whole class might be involved in a presentation by a writer, a discussion, a dual reading, a shared story read by the teacher, cooking or science experiences, open-ended art activities, etc. When addressing the whole combined class, the teacher should be aware of the various cognitive levels of the students. The vocabulary can be enriched, but some statements could be reworded in order to be understood by all children. For example, "The political implications of an imminent election are numerous" could be repeated as "If our country has an election soon, there could be a new government and some new rules." Teachers need to ask students open-ended questions which could be answered correctly with a variety of answers. Also, "wait time" is very important in allowing children time to process the questions and formulate an answer.

Classroom Discipline

One of the greatest challenges faced by teachers is determining how to maintain a positive classroom environment with a minimum of disruptions. In order to teach successfully, it is critical to have the necessary circumstances which make it possible to teach effectively and for learning to take place. It is important to note that what occurs during the first few weeks of school impacts greatly on the rest of the year. That is not to say, however, that classroom behaviour cannot be improved later in the year, it will just be more difficult once the stage has already been set.

Positive Expectations

A key feature of good classroom management is expecting students to do well. It is a well studied fact that:

> "Students tend to learn as little or as much as their teachers expect. Teachers who set and communicate high expectations to all their students obtain greater academic performance from these students than do teachers who set low expectations." [13]

Knowing that students do better when high expectations are in place, it is important to spend a considerable amount of time up front teaching and modelling good behaviour.

In OECTA's (Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association) Beginning Teachers, they suggest using the following strategies to help reduce classroom conflicts:

- show faith in each child and build on strengths
- believe that all children are capable and lovable
- insist that everyone be treated with a wholesome respect
- listen to student opinions and consider their feelings
- arrive in the classroom before students
- organize and prepare before each lesson
- maintain a sense of humour and a tolerant attitude
- help children make appropriate choices
- teach students decision-making skills
- help students live with mistakes and take them in stride
- use a quiet, friendly tone of voice

- help children to increase their feelings of self-esteem
- have a low-key, consistent and matter of fact manner
- use realistic, logical consequences and enforce them

Guidelines for Effective Discipline

When looking at effective discipline, there are a variety of models available for teachers to draw upon. Presenters such as Lee Canter and Fred Jones, for example, have very specific philosophies of addressing classroom behaviour. Seven systematic models can be found in *Building Classroom Discipline: From Models to Practice*[14].

A simple model to start with is presented in OECTA's <u>Beginning Teachers</u> manual (p.c/9). Their three guidelines include:

1. *Monitor student behaviour*
   Use an active eye. Watch what is going on. Don't become preoccupied with someone or something and ignore the rest of the class. It's said that one teacher on his/her feet is worth two sitting down. This benefits your discipline program as well as being an effective teaching strategy. Simply looking the student directly in the eye for prolonged contact while you continue your lesson sends a non-verbal message that says, "I saw what you did and I want it stopped."

2. *Be consistent*
   Have the same expectations for appropriate behaviour for all students. Your students should know that you will enforce rules consistently. Your goal is to be fair, but that might mean differing consequences for students. If one student frequently fails to return homework, you may choose a different consequence than you would for a student who forgets his/her homework for the first time. In knowing that you will be fair, but not equal, your students should understand that being equal is not always fair. In order to be consistent, be certain that the consequences for student behaviour are reasonable, and known in advance.

www.humboldt.edu/
~tha1/discip-
options.html

http://falcon.jmu.edu/
~ramseyil/
disciplinebib.htm

3. *Promptly manage inappropriate behaviour*
   Effective classroom managers know that misbehaviour must be handled immediately or there is a risk of a snowballing effect. Instead of one or two students involved, soon there may be several.

Effectively managing misbehaviour takes a little practice. Here are a few techniques worth trying out:

1. Win students over:
   - Politeness
   - Meet and greet them at the door
   - Demonstrate personal interest
   - Smile

2. Use a signal to begin:
   - Develop a signal or routine that means "quiet please".
   - Pause until silence or near silence is attained.
   - Make the pause active not passive.

3. Be on alert. Stop things before they go too far. Know when to ignore:
   - Eye contact is crucial
   - Use of visual motions (hands, eyes, body)
   - A shake of the head
   - A quiet "no" and nothing else
   - Using students' names from the start
   - Model and/or reward appropriate behaviour

4. Proximity:
   - Regularly move about the room while teaching and during student activities.
   - Move toward the inappropriate behaviour

5. Deal with the problem not the student:
   - Remove object causing distraction
   - Distract allies

6. Come Back In
   This is done after an intervention. Allow the student back into the group activity.

Establishing An Effective Discipline Plan

Taking the time to develop an effective discipline plan that will match your personal teaching style as well as the learning styles of your students will be time will spent. Two important components of any plan include rules and consequences.

Classroom Rules

Setting up classroom rules early in the year is a good way to provide structure and guidelines for your students. Students need to clearly understand the boundaries and expectations. Simply stating rules, however, is not very efficient. For maximum effectiveness, it is important to:

- <u>teach</u> the necessary rules
- <u>review</u> rules on a regular basis
- consistently and promptly <u>enforce</u> identified rules

Although class rules can be predetermined prior to beginning school, involving students in the process can lead to increased ownership. In <u>Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach</u> Bennett and Smilanich suggest the following five key components when establishing classroom rules:

1. Rules are few in number – five seems to be a common upper limit.
2. A rational is established for each rule.
3. Ambiguous terms are explained.
4. Roles and responsibilities are learned.
5. The rules are stated positively rather than negatively. (e.g., "Treat each other with respect." Rather than, "Don't put each other down.")[15]

Sample Classroom Rules

Other ideas:

Consequences

The next step after establishing the rules is setting appropriate consequences. These can be either negative or positive and involve an individual student or the entire class. It is important to remember that unless your classroom rules are enforced, they will have little value.

Sample Rewards/Positive Consequences

Other Possible Strategies to Encourage Good Behaviour

- Marble Jar — Add a marble to the jar when the class is working well. Once it's filled, the class can select a reward.

- Class Points — Put up a tally sheet and record a point each time students are on task. Once the predetermined amount has been reached, the class can select a reward
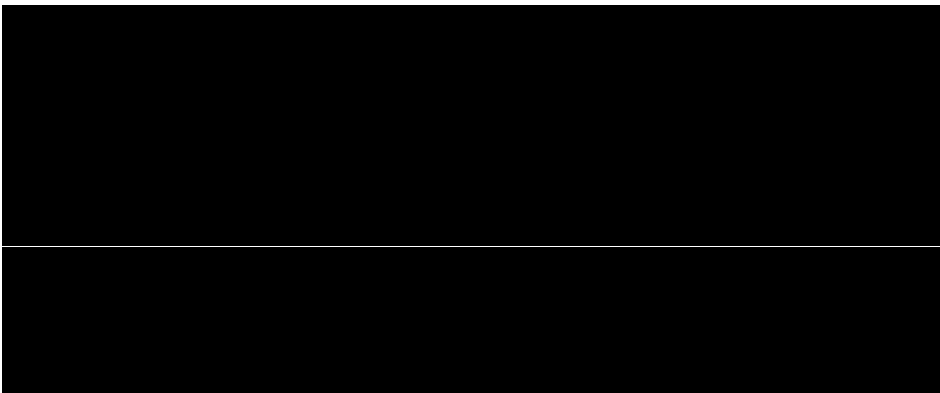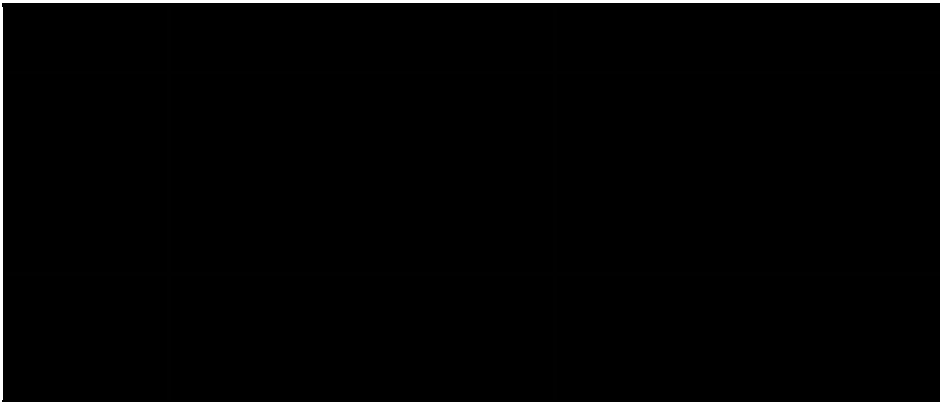
www.track0com/
canteach/elementary/
classman1.html

Figure 4.1

Grouping Strategies in the Elementary Classroom: Language Arts

Adapted from "No More Rocks: Grouping to Give Students Control of their Learning" (Berghoff and Egawa, 1991)

	Whole Group	Small Group	Pairs	Independent
Why?	Develops the learning community; time to share culture and literacy.	Common interests; strategy instructions; opportunities to plan, think, work toward a goal.	More intimate group requires less negotiation about agenda; more opportunity to construct.	Allows sustained reading and writing; allows personal choice; time for personal reflection.
How?	Possibilities include sitting in a circle, having a special chair for authors or report givers, musical signals to call the group together.	Groups of 3 or 4 self-chosen for interest; teacher planned considering social relationships, expertise or needed language support.	Self-chosen partner; teacher assigned partner to assure success stronger/weaker, expert/novice; to encourage new friendships.	Teacher specified time for independent work; children separate themselves to work alone.
When?	Decision making – class rules, plans; problem-solving – playground issues; listening to stories; choral reading; teacher or "expert" demonstrations; shared experiences – cooking, science experiments, art activities; celebrating – completion of a major project, individual accomplishments; sharing individual scholarship.	Discussion groups; literature study; content area explorations; writing support groups; instruction groups; and inquiry project.	Shared reading; study partners; cross-age tutors; letter exchanges; skills pairings – author/illustrator, reader/actor.	Sustained reading and writing; personal investigation; journal writing; alternative sign system response; gathering personally inviting resources; time for personal reflection.
How does it foster literacy?	Provides a meaning-rich context where language is used to share meaning and students' individuality is explored and supported.	Opportunity to use oral language in social context to construct meaning; functional reasons to read and write; allows students to shape their own development of personal literacy.	Allows the child to set a personal pace for thinking; allows the child to make personal connections to the larger community; time to savour class learning; time to use written language.	Allows time for the child to do what he enjoys without pressure to negotiate with the larger community; time to practice, to own new learning; time to work in the child's first language.
How does it support students with diverse language, cultural, ability, or experience backgrounds?	Shared experiences give the class a shared vocabulary and practice in social meaning making. Exposes differences and similarities of all students so that they are expected and accepted.	Develop awareness of multiple perspectives; peers provide support and language opportunities.	Opportunities to make connections with all class members; reasons to relate in spite of differences.	Allows time for the child to do what the child thinks about, what aspects of reading and writing make sense to the child and can be used for her/his own purposes.
What does the teacher learn from the students?	What the children value. What energizes the group. Which children need more help in making their meanings public.	Can see the children try out different perspectives and roles; can see how the children's personal sense of power is evolving; can see what knowledge is constructed.	What the child can do with support; what kind of support the child needs; how the child accepts or rejects different perspectives.	What the child's interests are; what the child thinks about, what kind of support the child enjoys.

V.

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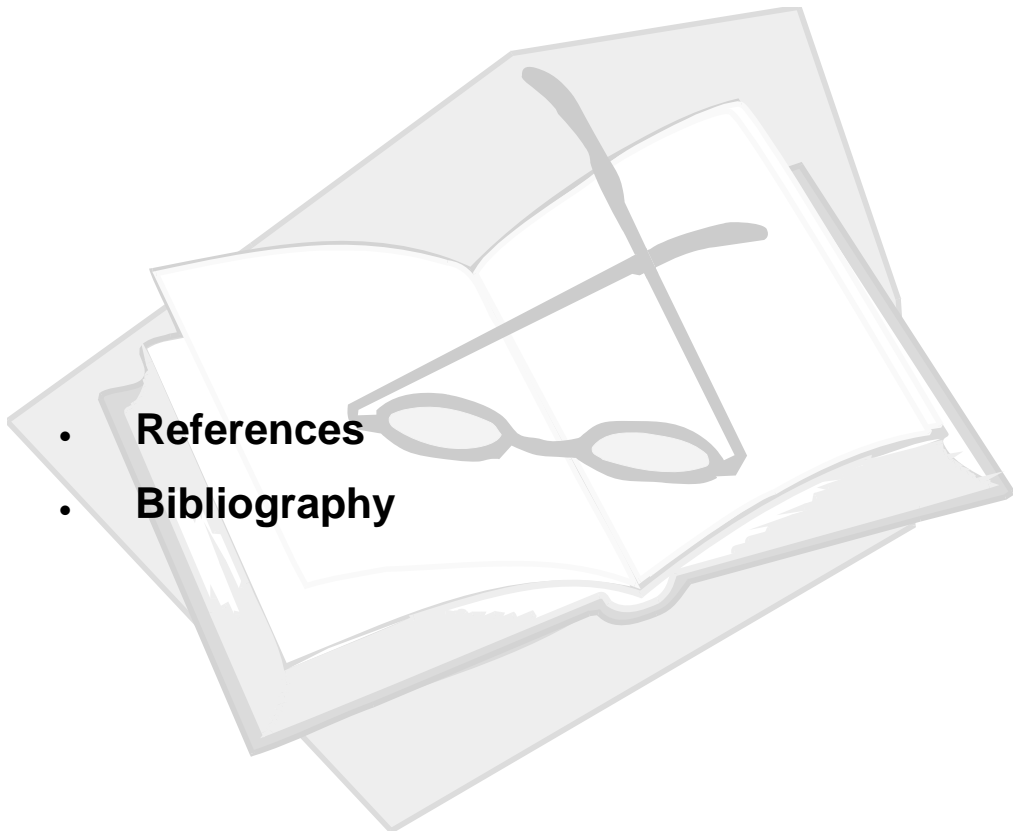
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