



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional
Learning of School Leaders
and Teachers

Exploring Big Questions in Religious Education

2023-2024



Throughout the day ...



**Individual
work**



**Discussion
& Feedback**



**Breakout Rooms
& Group Work**

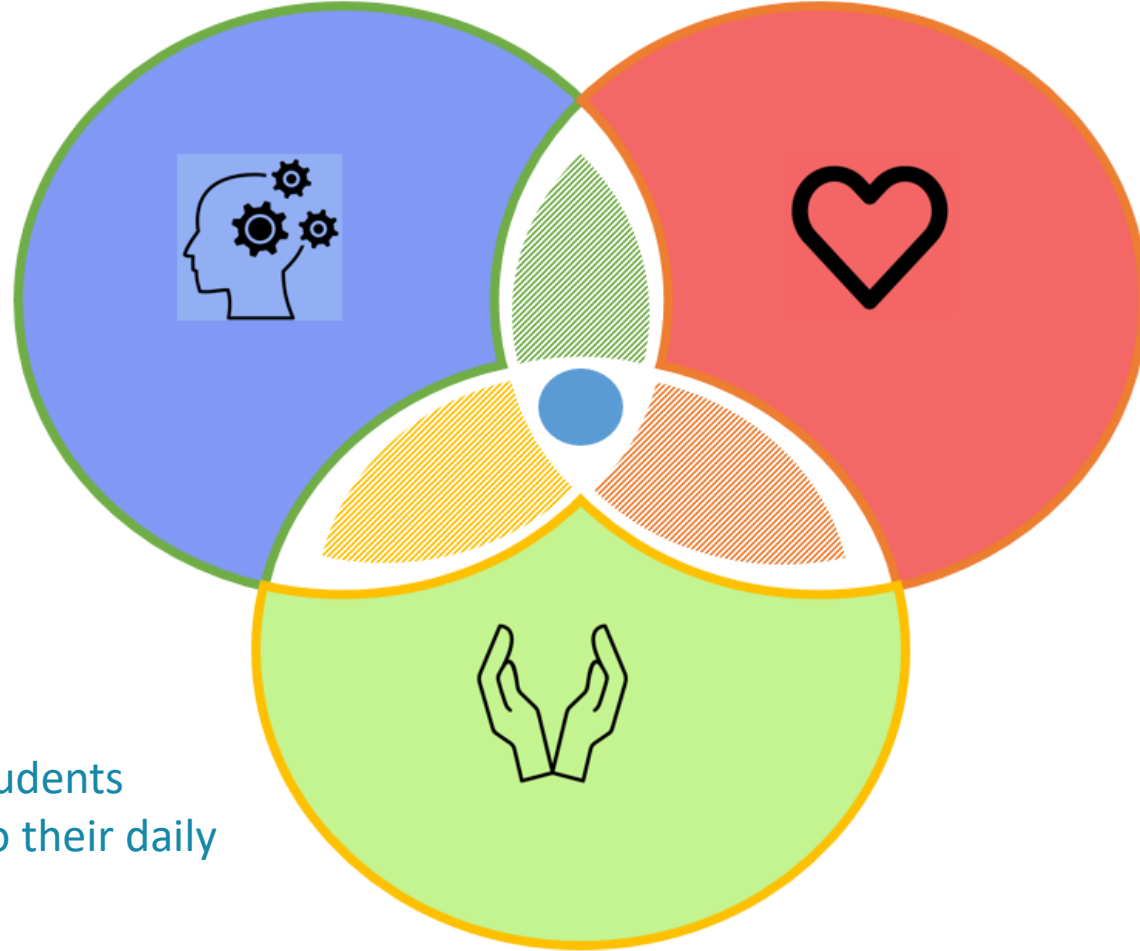


**Time for
Reflection**

What is the value of RE?

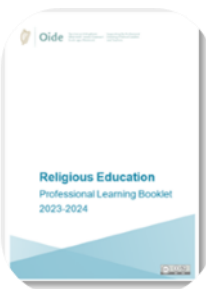


Head: What should students know and understand through their study of RE?



Heart: What important attitudes and values can be nurtured through the study of RE?

Hands: How could students apply their learning to their daily lives?



Development of Skills



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There are strong links between the aims of the syllabus for Leaving Certificate Religious Education and those set out in the Junior Cycle Religious Education specification. Significantly, there is a strong emphasis on students assuming the role of **critical questioner** and **reflective searcher** in Leaving Certificate Religious Education, building on the approach taken with students participating in Junior Cycle Religious Education.

NCCA Junior Cycle Religious Education specification, page 11

The Search for Meaning



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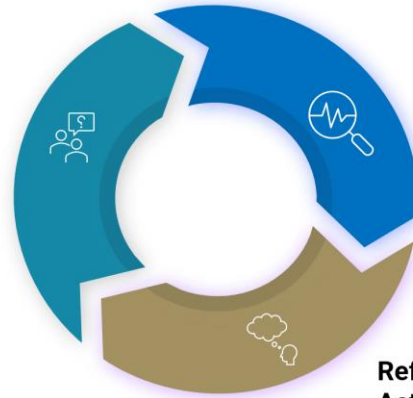
Critical Questioner and Reflective Searcher



Critical Questioner

Reflective Searcher

Enquire
pique curiosity,
intrigue, hook,
explore
questions ideas
and facts.



Explore
question, probe,
interpret, draw
conclusions.

**Reflection and
Action**
personal and active
response,
the what and how of the
learning

Learning Intention for Session 1



Oide

To consider the role of Enquiry in enabling students to be **critical questioners** and **reflective searchers**.

We will:

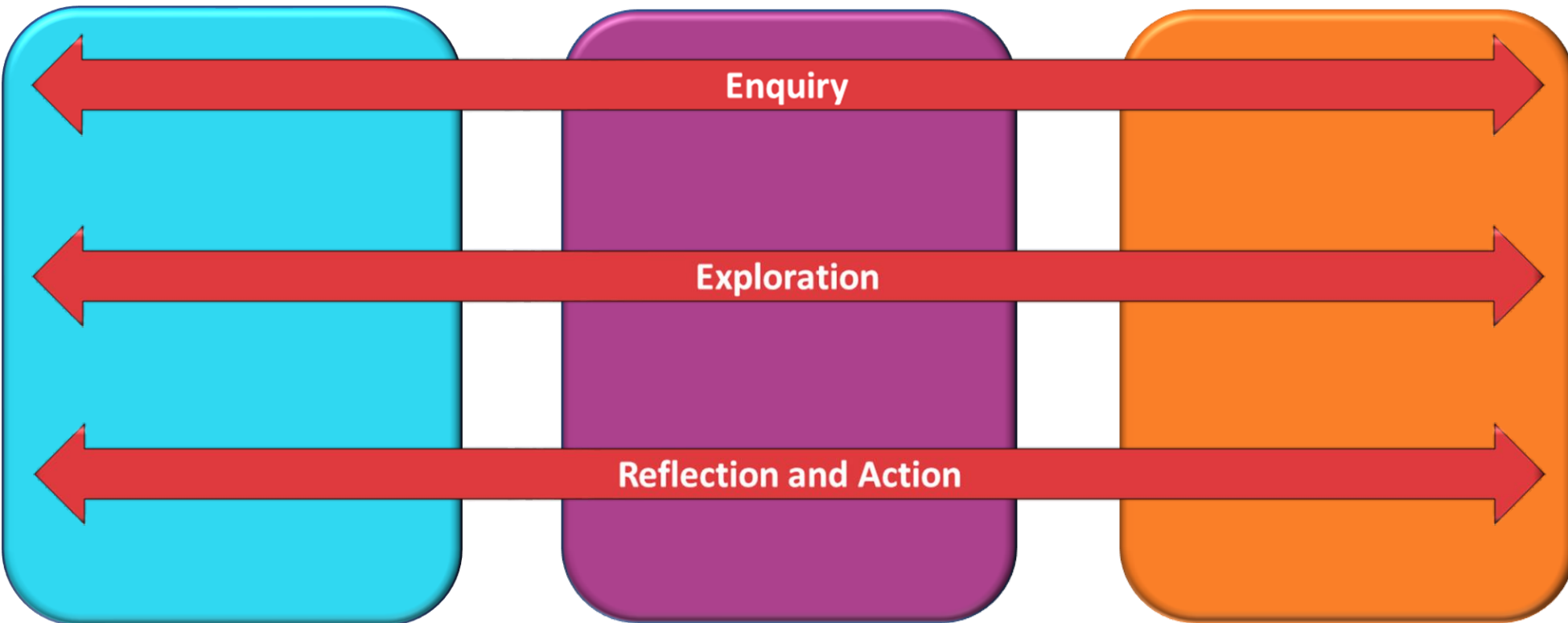
- explore strategies that support engagement with some of the Big Questions relating to the human search for meaning.



EXPRESSING BELIEFS

EXPLORING QUESTIONS

LIVING OUR VALUES



Three Elements

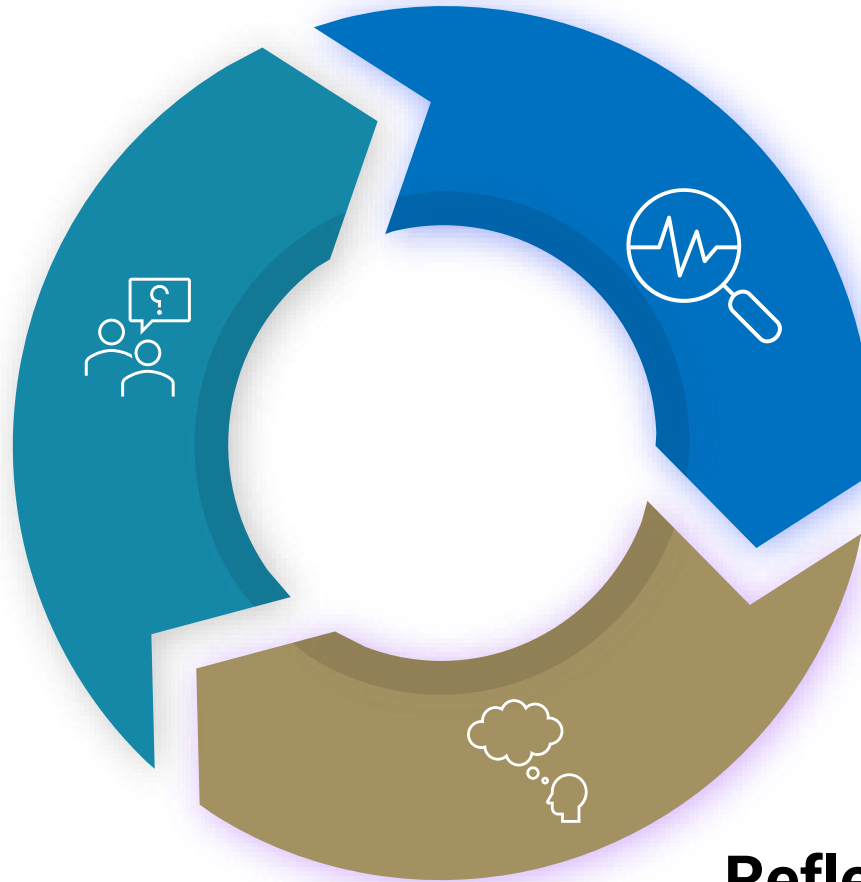
Critical questioner and reflective searcher





Enquiry

pique curiosity,
intrigue, hook,
explore
questions,
ideas and
facts.



Exploration

question, probe,
interpret, draw
conclusions.

Reflection and Action

personal and active response,
the *what* and *how* of the
learning.



Enquiry

pique curiosity,
intrigue, hook,
explore
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facts.



This element focuses on stimulating students' curiosity and prompting their engagement in a topic or question. Through a process of enquiry, students engage with a range of stimulus materials to uncover ideas, facts, information, images and perspectives related to a topic or question.

Critical Questioner and Reflective Searcher



The Big Questions



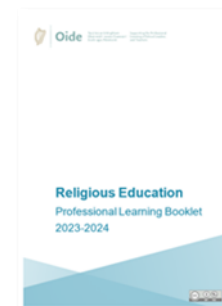
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“Foundational questions which relate to the human search for meaning. These questions are **common** (shared by everybody); **central** (help us understand ourselves and our world); and **contestable** (can lead to different and sometimes competing understandings)”

NCCA Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification, p.28



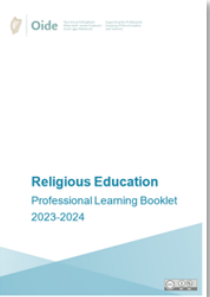
What Big Questions have we heard from our students?



Worlds Apart

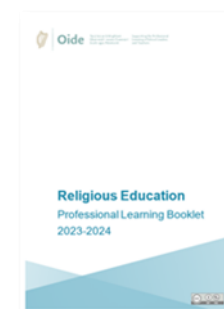


Critical questioner and reflective searcher

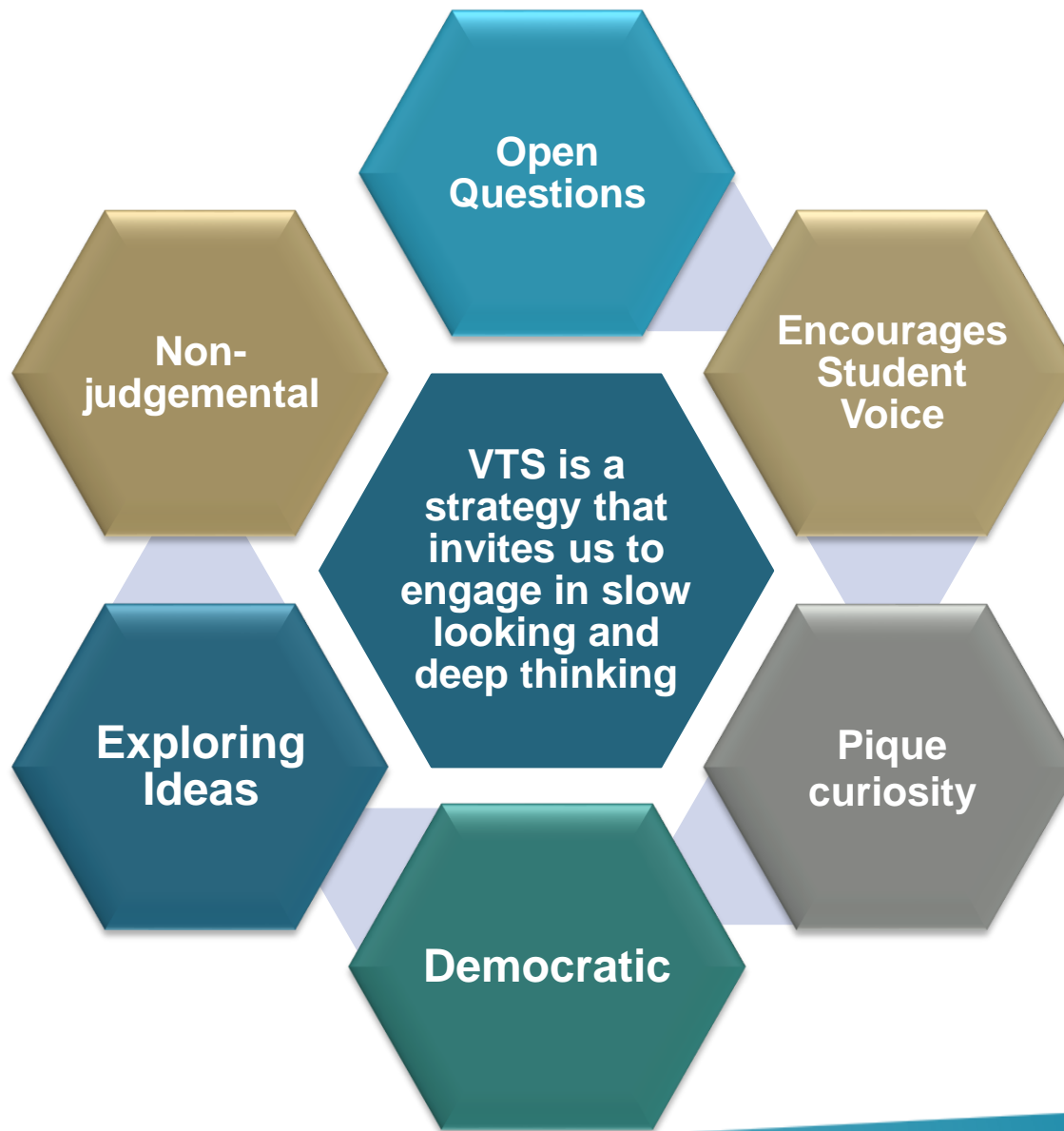




How can we support students to generate their own Big Questions?



Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS)



Visual Thinking Strategy to deepen Enquiry



Begin with a moment of silence.
Consider the picture.

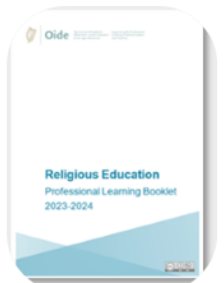
Three Questions

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say ...?
3. What more can we find?

What Big Questions are raised in this picture?



Paraphrase → Point → Link



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Oide



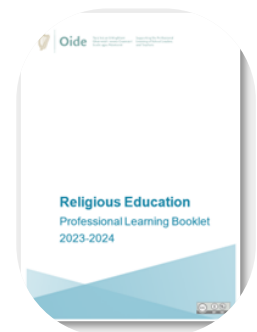
Reflection on Learning Session 1



How	Now	Wow
How can visual art help to pique students' curiosity when engaging with life's Big Questions?	When might I use Visual Thinking Strategies for slow looking and deep thinking in my RE classroom?	Is there anything new that surprised or challenged me that I will need to think more about?



REFLECT



Learning Intention for Session 2



Oide

- To consider the role Exploration plays in enabling students to be **critical questioners** and **reflective searchers**.

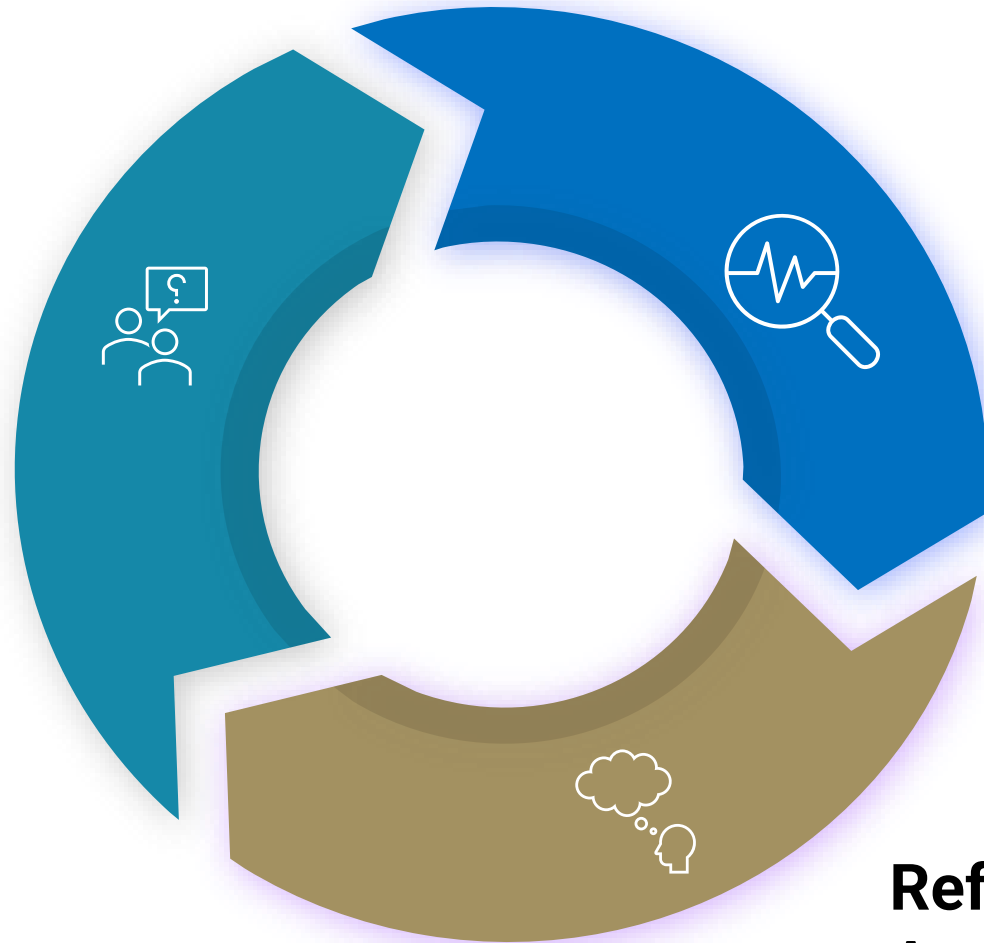
We will ...

- explore how object-based learning supports classroom practice when engaging with the human search for meaning.



Enquiry

pique curiosity,
intrigue, hook,
explore
questions,
ideas and
facts.



Exploration

question, probe,
interpret, draw
conclusions.

Reflection and Action

personal and active
response,
the *what* and *how* of the
learning.



Exploration

question, probe, interpret, draw conclusions.

Critical questioner and reflective searcher



This element focuses on examining a topic or question in detail, questioning, probing, discussing, listening, imagining, interpreting and drawing conclusions, for the purpose of discovery. It also focuses on encouraging dialogue and appreciation of the diversity of interpretations and responses that may exist.

Object-Based Learning



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Object-Based Learning (OBL) is a student-centred learning approach that uses objects to facilitate deep learning. The use of objects can act as multi-sensory “thinking tools” to promote learning. The objects are used to stimulate the learner’s imagination and to help them apply their understanding to other contexts and problems. The central proposition of OBL is that working with objects helps to mediate and strengthen learning.

Romanek and Lynch, 2008

Critical questioner and reflective searcher





Learning Outcomes

1.6 examine and appreciate how people give expression to religious belief in religious rituals, in formal places of worship and other sacred spaces.

1.8 describe the role of prayer in the lives of people of faith.

2.2 consider responses from one major world religion and from a non-religious world-view to some big questions about the meaning of life, such as, How should we live?

3.2 reflect upon and discuss what it means to be moral, why people living in society need to be moral and what are the influences on and sources of authority for a person's moral decision-making

Reflection

How would this object be used in a religious ceremony or ritual?

How does this object help people to express their beliefs?

How does this object show that people value prayer in their lives and in choices they make on a daily basis?

Key Learning

Students will

- identify objects associated with prayer and religious ritual.
- understand the role of prayer in people's lives.
- encounter ways in which people use objects to express their relationship with God/gods and the Divine.
- examine ways in which prayer can relate to the everyday choices of a person of faith.

Level 2 LP

1.2 Ask questions to obtain information.

1.15 Find key information from different forms of writing.

1.17 Write notes and messages needed for simple tasks.

Ongoing Assessment

Students will

- choose one object associated with prayer.
- share observations about this object in a group.
- craft questions they would like to ask their peers.
- identify and research facts relating to that object.
- create a poster and share their learning with other groups.

Learning Experiences

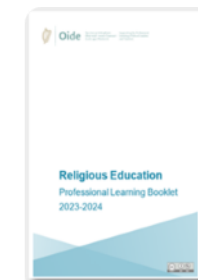
Students will

- engage with see- think -wonder prompt questions about the sacred artefact and its relationship with prayer.
- share their observations using the Placemat activity.
- explore the object further by engaging in a card-sorting activity, a dialogical tool to encourage discussion.
- create an information poster and share their learning.
- explore other sacred artefacts in a gallery walk activity
- using the reflection prompts to consider how people of faith use objects to express their beliefs and how this is expressed in their everyday choices.

Object-Based Learning Lesson



Oide

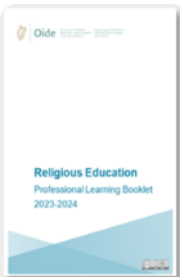


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What direction could the learning take to engage students in Big Questions?

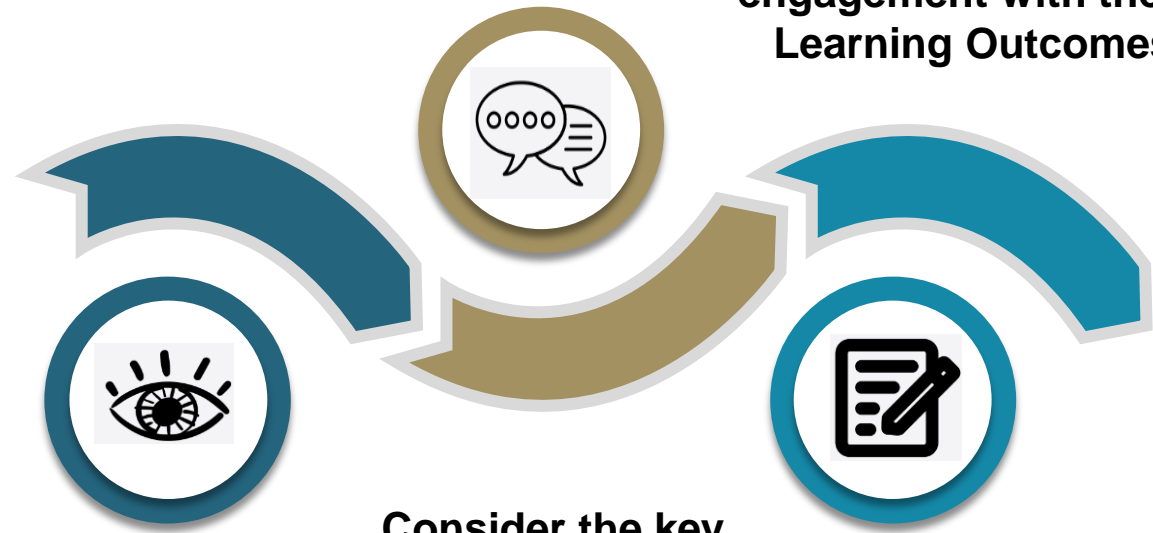
Critical questioner and reflective searcher



Big Questions in the Specification



Discuss your group's assigned Learning Outcomes



Explore the Big Question(s) that might arise during engagement with these Learning Outcomes

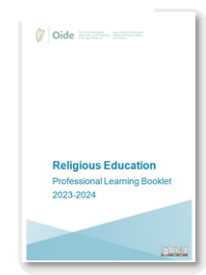
Consider the key learning for students, i.e., the *KUSAV with which students might engage

*knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values

What are the Big Questions?

Foundational questions which relate to the human search for meaning. These questions are common (shared by everybody); central (help us understand ourselves and our world); and contestable (can lead to different and sometimes competing understandings) such as, why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die? etc.

NCCA Religious Education Specification, p.20

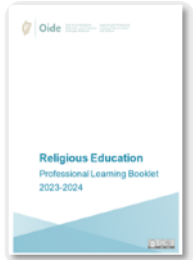


Pages 12-14

What is Happiness?



How could the enquiry of this concept be extended?



Concept Corner



Happiness

The image of 'happiness' you have chosen...

Phrases or sentences where we use the concept of 'happiness'..

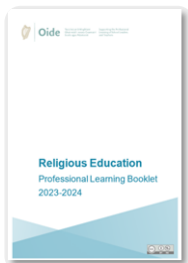
Related ideas or associations...

Words or phrases of similar or opposite meaning...

Examples or contexts where the concept of 'happiness' applies...

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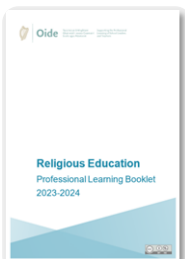


What is Happiness?



Exploration focuses on students developing a set of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values that allows them to question, probe, interpret, analyse and reflect on these big questions, in dialogue with each other.

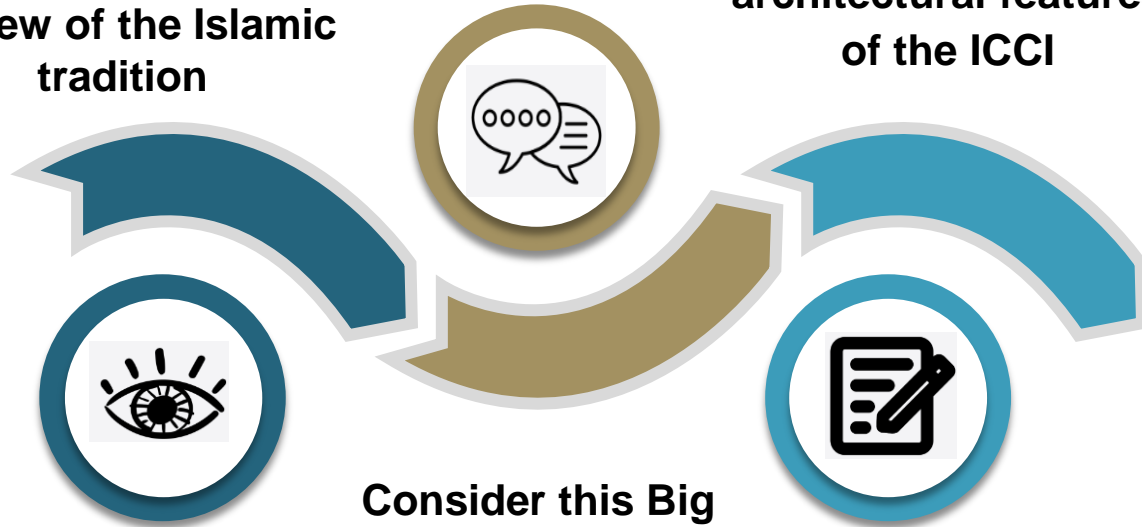
JC RE Specification, p.9



Solo Time: How Should I Live?

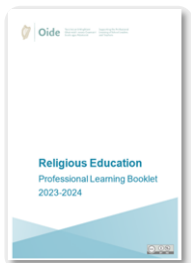
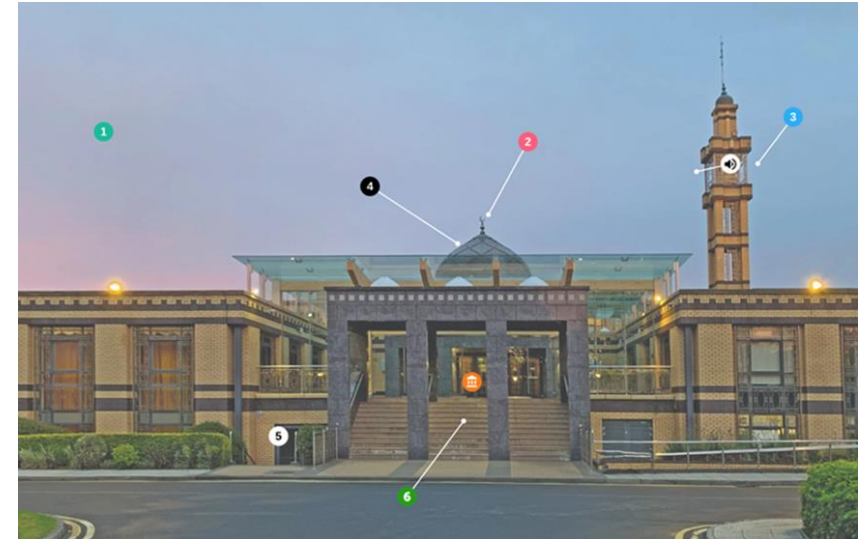


In solo time, you will explore the Big Question: How should I live? from the point of view of the Islamic tradition



Consider this Big Question using an architectural object by way of a virtual visit

Share the links you can make between the Big Question and the architectural features of the ICCI



Exploring Connections



1. What connections could students make between the Big Question and the object?

2. How can we encourage students to connect the Big Question to other areas of learning?

Critical questioner and reflective searcher



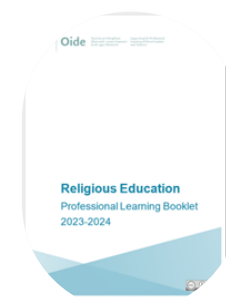
Reflection on Learning Session 2



How	Now	Wow
How can a deeper exploration of an object(s) enhance my students' learning experience?	What might I need to do to use OBL in my RE classroom now?	Is there anything new that surprised or challenged me that I will need to think more about?



REFLECT



Learning Intention for Session 3



Oide

To consider the role Reflection & Action play in enabling students to be **critical questioners** and **reflective searchers**.

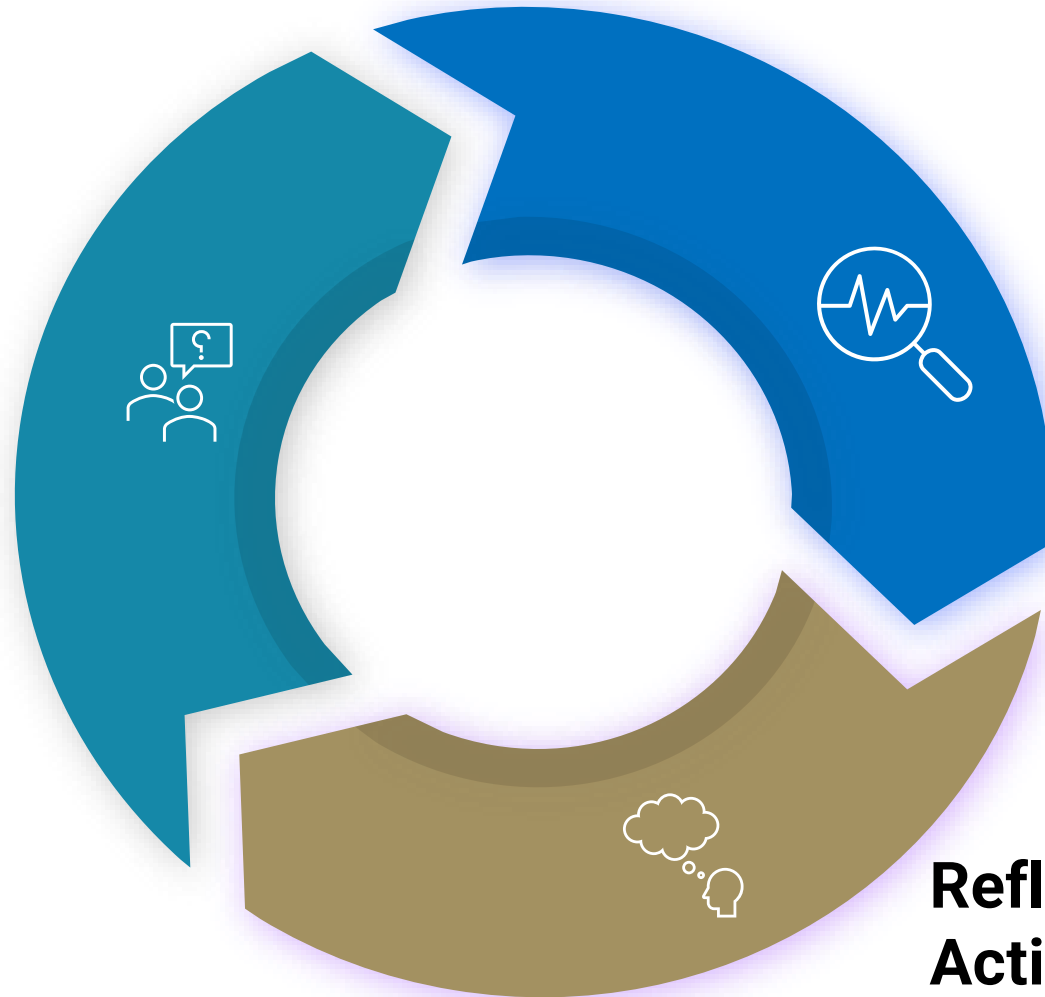
We will ...

- recognise how reflective thinking can develop personal response and explore ways to support it.
- choose a Big Question to explore using the elements of Enquiry, Exploration and Reflection & Action.



Enquiry

pique curiosity,
intrigue, hook,
explore
questions,
ideas and
facts.



Exploration

question, probe,
interpret, draw
conclusions.

Reflection and Action

personal and active
response, the *what* and
how of the learning.



Critical questioner and reflective searcher



Reflection & Action

personal and active response, the *what* and *how* of the learning.

This element focuses on students reflecting on what they have learnt and on their own experience of, and/or response to, the topic. It encourages students to examine what they have learnt in order to gain deeper insight and understanding. It also enables students to consider how the learning relates to their lives and/or to the lives of others, thus prompting active and responsible citizenship.

Student and Teacher Reflection



Oide



Supporting Reflection

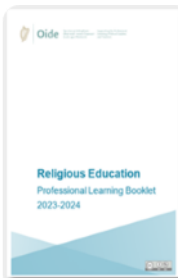


Take a moment to think about the following questions, you can use the Stop and Jot section of your booklet to record your thoughts.

1. Consider opportunities for reflection before, during and after learning in this lesson.

2. How do you support reflection on learning in your RE classroom?

Critical questioner and reflective searcher



Reflective Thinking



Reflection as Personal Response



Oide

Staying Well



Being Spiritual

‘As students explore some of life’s big questions they will grow in awareness, grounded in a sense of purpose, meaning and connectedness.’

Religious Education Specification, p. 8.



Spirituality in the RE Space

Indicates a sense of relatedness to something bigger than the self. For some, this may be in relation to their understanding of the Divine. For others the relationship is with a power or presence. All religions seek to foster a spiritual life, although spiritual can also refer to something other than religious affiliation. It refers to a quality beyond the material and the mundane that strives for inspiration, reverence, awe, meaning and purpose.

Religious Education Specification, p. 21.



How can I inspire
reverence and awe
in my students
when engaging with
the Big Questions?



REFLECT

Supporting Personal Response

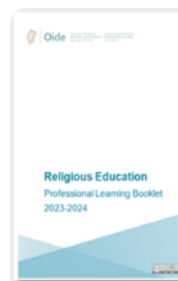


Take a moment to think about how we can develop reflection for personal response to learning. You can use the Stop and Jot section of your booklet to record your thoughts.

1. What meaningful questions do I ask my students to encourage them to personally engage with Big Questions in life?

2. In what ways can students express their personal response to Big Questions?

Critical questioner and reflective searcher



Elements in Action



Why does suffering exist?

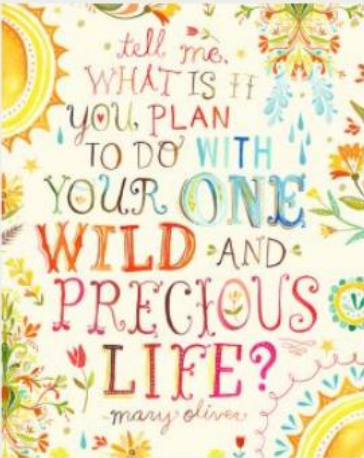
The Big Questions

What is love?

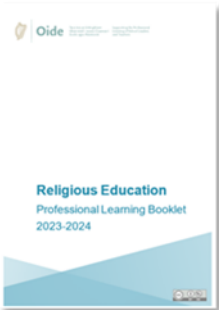


Are we all equal?

Why do we exist?



What happens when we die?





Oide

Thank you!