Religious Education Support Resource for the Early Years

Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings
Religious Education

Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings

Archdiocese of Brisbane
© Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane 2010

The purchaser of this support material may make copies and amendments for use in the local school only.

Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings

Support Resource Writers
Kerry Rush
Anne Marie Pigott
Mark Elliott
Margaret Connors
Brisbane Catholic Education

Support Resource Series Editing
Graeme Barry
Brisbane Catholic Education

Support Resource Project Coordinator
Kerry Rush
Senior Education Officer ResourceLink
Mark Elliott
Principal Education Officer Religious Education
Brisbane Catholic Education

Artwork
Dr Jenny Close

Acknowledgements
Rev. David Pascoe
Archdiocesan Censor
Maureen Truasheim, Graeme Barry, Kay Cantwell
Brisbane Catholic Education
Jan Grajczonek
ACU Brisbane

Licensed under NEALS
Neals Agreement
Licensed Materials
Religious Education Support Resources for the Early Years

There are five Religious Education Support Resources for the Early Years, one for each of the Early Learning Areas: Religious Education. The purpose of the support resources is to provide guidance to early years classroom teachers. Each resource aligns teaching and learning pedagogy and practice with the document Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for the Early Years (Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2007). Teachers are encouraged to select, modify, or create learning experiences, assessment and reflection processes from the Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for the Early Years and the Support Resources to develop a learner-centred, integrated Religious Education program.

RE and Early Mathematical Understandings

Organising Ideas
- Patterns & Sequences, Movements and Directions in Religious Texts
- Attributes and Quantities in Biblical Stories
- Spatial Understandings in Prayer and Celebration

RE and Health and Physical Learning

Organising Ideas
- Making Choices
- Understanding Consequences
- Health and Spiritual Wellbeing

RE and Language Learning and Communication

Organising Ideas
- Scripture and Moral Stories
- Prayers and Celebrations
- Church, Seasons and Sacraments

RE and Active Learning Processes

Organising Ideas
- Planning & Problem Solving
- Awe and Wonder and Care for Creation
- Religion and Art

RE and Social and Personal Learning

Organising Ideas
- Love and Compassion
- Reconciliation and Peace
- Respect for Ourselves and Others
Models and Frameworks for Religious Education: Early Years

Each support resource has been shaped by the models and frameworks depicted below.

Curriculum Decision Making Model

Decision making in relation to the five key components, what students learn, partnerships, understanding students, contexts for learning and flexible learning environments needs to be dynamic, non-linear, integrated and child responsive. Teachers use these five key components as they plan, interact, reflect, and monitor and assess.

Learning Framework and Roles for Lifelong Learners

Teaching and learning in Religious Education aligns with the Learning Framework, particularly the Overarching Goal, *Empowering learners of all ages to shape and enrich our changing world,* by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The classroom teaching of religion in the early years contributes to lifelong learning by facilitating the development of the roles for Lifelong Learners, which have been adapted in the Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for the Early Years to support teaching and learning.

Model for Developing Religious Literacy

In the context of the early years, a core component of the Model for Developing Religious Literacy is the Available Designs phase. During this phase, teachers prepare activities for learners using the Four Resources Model and its four elements of Code Breaker, Meaning Maker, Text User and Text Analyst that align with the overall purpose negotiated in response to students’ needs and interests.

A Model for Religious Education

Religious Education consists of two distinct but complementary dimensions, an educational dimension and a faith formation dimension. The educational dimension, teaching people religion, focuses on the classroom teaching and learning of religion.

This document focuses on the educational dimension. Other documentation from Brisbane Catholic Education supports the faith formation dimension, teaching people to be religious in a particular way.
Early Learning Areas: Religious Education

The Early Learning Areas: Religious Education are closely aligned with the Early Learning Areas in the Queensland Studies Authority Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, 2006 (EYCG).

Religious Education Learning Statements are described in terms of what students will know, do and experience. They are comprehensive statements that guide teachers towards integrated learning and therefore can be used in full, or in part when planning, teaching, learning, monitoring and assessing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Learning Areas - ELAS</th>
<th>Early Learning Areas: Religious Education</th>
<th>Religious Education Learning Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings</td>
<td>Students engage with early numerate practices to enhance their understandings of the meaning of Scripture stories, simple celebrations and prayers, moral messages and beliefs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education and Social and Personal Learning</td>
<td>Students are introduced to Scripture and Catholic Christian teachings to further their understandings about relationships, diversity and self.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education and Health and Physical Learning</td>
<td>Students engage with and reflect upon life experiences and messages within Religious texts to build upon their understanding of physical and spiritual wellbeing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Religious Education and Language Learning and Communication | Students explore, interpret and experiment with spoken, written, gestural, spatial, audio and multi-modal Religious texts* to expand their Religious understanding, oral language and early literacy.  
* Religious texts include: Scripture and moral stories, simple prayers, gestures, celebrations and expressions of belief, Religious symbols, artefacts, art and music. |
| Religious Education and Active Learning Processes | Students imagine, investigate, and respond to their own and others’ ideas about phenomena in the natural world, sustainable environments and technology*, in light of their emerging understandings of Religious texts.  

Description of Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings (RE EMU)

Students engage with early numerate practices to enhance their understandings of the meaning of Scripture stories, simple celebrations and prayers, moral messages and beliefs.

This statement describes their engagement with numerate practices that enhance the meaning of religious texts to develop and inform:

- an ability to explore patterns and repeated sequences in religious texts
- an ability to compare and contrast attributes and quantities in the background of religious texts
- an ability to explore mathematical language, positions, movements, directions and space in religious texts and ceremonies.
Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings
Learning Statement Overview

**Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings (RE EMU)**

Students engage with early numerate practices to enhance their understandings of the meaning of Scripture stories, simple celebrations and prayers, moral messages and beliefs. (RE EMU)

**Suggestions for planning**

With students, teachers plan for learning across the five contexts by constructing experiences relevant to local settings, or drawing on the following examples, in which students:

a) explore patterns and repeated sequences in religious stories, songs and movements to enhance their meaning

b) compare and contrast attributes and quantities in environments in biblical times to enhance meaning

c) explore mathematical language, positions, movements and directions related to religious stories, gestures, celebrations and prayers to enhance their meaning

d) use spatial understandings to design and/or participate in simple prayer and liturgical celebrations to enhance meaning.

**Suggestions for monitoring and assessing**

In relation to this learning statement, teachers may look for evidence that the student:

a) follows a simple pattern and sequence and identifies attributes in religious stories, songs and religious gestures

b) counts small collections in different arrangements and identifies *how many* in small collections within religious texts

c) uses appropriate movements and gestures for religious purposes

d) uses a sense of spatial understanding when designing or participating in simple prayers and rituals.

Teachers monitor a student’s learning in relation to the Learning Statement as they:

- observe and analyse what the student is doing
- listen to and reflect on what the student says
- interact with the student
- record annotation
- communicate with partners including students, parents/carers and others.

Teachers gather evidence about a student’s learning through the five learning contexts: play, real-life situations, investigations, routines and transitions and focused learning and teaching.

**Suggestions for interacting**

Teachers create interactions relevant to local settings or draw on the following examples:

a) provide diverse opportunities for students to identify and experiment with patterns, sequences and attributes in religious stories, songs and movement

b) make explicit counting strategies used to count collections within Scripture stories and moral messages

c) model prayer gestures, movements and positions e.g. the Sign of the Cross and genuflecting

d) discuss the use of space in simple prayers and rituals.

**Suggestions for reflecting**

Adults and students might reflect on the following questions relevant to this learning statement:

- What did you want to find out?
- How did you work out what came next?
- How did you know how to do it?
- What actions can you use when you pray?

Teachers also reflect on their practice, in terms of decision making and the five key components, in order to continually improve both their judgements about students’ learning and their planning for future learning experiences.
Connections to the Syllabus Content: Planning Support Table

**Religious Education Learning Statement**

Students engage with early numerate practices to enhance their understandings of the meaning of Scripture stories, simple celebrations and prayers, moral messages and beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Suggestions</th>
<th>RE Syllabus Content</th>
<th>Elaborations of RE Syllabus Content</th>
<th>Contexts for Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With students, teachers plan to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) explore patterns and repeated sequences in religious stories, songs and movements</td>
<td>• The Bible is used to tell key stories to introduce and develop students' familiarity with Scripture. (S23)</td>
<td>• Students, with support, know:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gospel stories are central for Christians. Jesus is the central person in the Bible for Christians. (S5)</td>
<td>• there are patterns and repeated sequences in many Bible stories, prayers, songs and rituals e.g. parables, miracle stories, liturgical seasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Bible is used as a source of prayer. (S22)</td>
<td>• the sequence of some Bible stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jesus taught in parables (The rule of three). (B38)</td>
<td>• gestures that are appropriate for prayers, songs and religious rituals and their meanings e.g. kneeling, genuflecting, praying, Sign of the Cross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There are miracle stories in the Bible (There are patterns in miracle stories). (B39)</td>
<td>• quantities and attributes of people and things in Bible stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sacraments are sacred actions. (C1)</td>
<td>• the comparison between quantities and attributes of people and things in Bible times and today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Liturgical Year has seasons, symbols, conventions and patterns. (C7)</td>
<td>• mathematical language and actions that support their understandings of movements and directions in Bible stories, prayers and rituals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prayer uses words, song and bodily action. (C37)</td>
<td>• how to follow and make meaning of directions and movements associated with prayers and celebrations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) compare and contrast attributes and quantities in environments in biblical times</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) explore positions, movements and directions related to religious stories, gestures, celebrations and prayers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) use spatial understandings to design and/or participate in simple prayer and liturgical celebrations to enhance meaning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Play:**
- Perform an *Echo Mime* that repeats patterns and sequences in biblical and other religious stories, prayers and rituals.
- **Investigation:** Listen to and identify common patterns in stories, events and objects in Bible stories.
- **Focused Teaching and Learning:** Imitate religious gestures common in prayers and liturgies.
- **Real Life:** Identify patterns from their life experience with those in bible stories e.g. pairs in Noah's story.
- **Routine and Transitions:** Learn and sing a song with repeated sequences and patterns at morning prayer, grace and thanks for the end for the day.
- **Play:** Choose appropriate biblical costumes and props and role play stories.
- **Investigation:** Use a *Then and Now* strategy to compare people and things in biblical times and in the present.
- **Focused Teaching and Learning:** Identify and record attributes and quantities in biblical stories.
- **Real Life:** Compare and contrast attributes and quantities of things in biblical stories and real-life today.
- **Routine and Transitions:** Say a verse that incorporates attributes and quantities in a Scripture story when moving from one place to another.
- **Play:** Use mathematical language when playing with figurines from a Bible story e.g. Zacchues is up the tree.
- **Investigation:** Use maps and drawings of places to move biblical characters from one place to another.
- **Focused Teaching and Learning:** Use code-breaking to teach mathematical language in bible stories, prayers and celebrations.
- **Real Life:** Give directions to others to move and place props in a biblical story.
- **Routine and Transitions:** Learn and sing a song or use a rhyme about movements and directions in religious stories and prayers.
Rubric for Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings

The following Rubric supports teachers in making judgements about students’ learning and development in relation to the four phases of learning for Religious Education and Early Mathematical Understandings. The rubric below is to be used by teachers to write their own descriptors in the four phases of learning. These descriptors reflect the negotiated planning, interacting, monitoring and assessing processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Becoming Aware</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Making Connections</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Links Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| With explicit support, the student uses numerate practices to engage with religious contexts. | With support, the student participates in numerate practices to enhance their emerging personal understanding of religious contexts. | With prompts, the student uses numerate practices to represent their own and others’ ideas and understandings of religious contexts. | The student identifies uses and communicates numerate practices, to explain their own and others’ ideas and understandings of religious contexts. | S1.2 Students gather and record information about people, places and things in scriptural texts.  
S1.3 Students share and compare their ideas, feelings and experiences in interpreting familiar scriptural texts.  
C1.1 Students compare ideas and experiences of rituals, prayers, words and actions in the sacraments of the Church. |

Learning Strategies

Throughout this support resource a variety of learning strategies have been suggested. These strategies draw on the bank of strategies provided in the forty-one Religious Education Modules for Years 1-10. When a strategy has been suggested, it is identified in bold print with the information logo, . For further information regarding how to adapt these strategies for use in the Early Years, consult the A-Z Strategies Book (copies of which have been made available to all schools) or the Brisbane Catholic Education Religious Education website.

Case Studies

Each Religious Education Support Resource also provides case studies. These are narrative recounts created by early years’ teachers from the Archdiocese of Brisbane. These teachers have used some of the learning opportunities suggested in this Support Resource in designing a program suited to their own classroom contexts.
Getting Started:

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Joseph the Dreamer

Students explore patterns and repeated sequences in religious stories, songs and movements [RE EMU (a)]

Students compare and contrast attributes and quantities in environments in biblical times [RE EMU (b)]

Students explore positions, movements and directions related to religious stories, gestures, celebrations and prayers [RE EMU (c)]

Student Responsive Curriculum: A Possible Scenario

Students at this stage are beginning to share their experience and understanding of travel and distance. They enjoy talking about going to different places and the journey from one place to another. Prior to the vacation break such discussions are often topical. Students sometimes compare what they are doing on the holidays, where they are going, the distances they will travel, how they might get there and how long it might take. During discussions about travelling and distances, students often reveal the diverse ways they are travelling and the distances they are going to travel. Very often teachers discover the diverse mathematical understandings of students and how their understandings impact considerably on their functional understanding of real life experiences and the meaning they bring to texts containing embedded mathematical language and concepts. As students compare their experiences of travelling distance, they could engage with thinking about how people might have travelled in earlier times e.g. they walked, travelled in horse-drawn carts and rode anything they could, such as horses, donkeys and camels. Students are often interested in comparing how long travel might have taken in the past compared to today and what the journey might have been like for travelers. Students could engage with inquiry questions like: Were there roads before cars? Did people have maps? Could everyone read directions or maps? How did people find their way if they could not read? What would they take with them on the journey? Students could explore travel in biblical times. The biblical story of Joseph the Dreamer is an engaging bible story that students might explore to focus on travel over distance. This rich story also has many significant religious messages for the early years.

Students’ understanding of the religious messages in the story of Joseph will be enhanced through learning opportunities that promote religious education and early mathematical understandings about patterns, sequences, attributes, quantities, position, movement and direction. Students will also engage with Joseph’s relationship with God and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation in Joseph’s life.

Teacher Background on Numbers and Mathematical Understandings in the Bible

It is not expected that early years students will know a great deal of detail about the significance of numbers and mathematical understandings in biblical times and bible stories. However, students involved in the five contexts for learning, particularly the contexts of play or investigation may engage with some of the mathematical terms, units of weight, money, measurement and the symbolic, theological meaning of particular numbers in biblical texts. The following teacher background will develop teachers’ knowledge of numbers and mathematical understandings in the Bible. Some of this knowledge will be appropriate to transfer in early years settings.

Many numbers in ancient Mediterranean and the Near Eastern world were full of symbolic meaning. They were given a significance that went far beyond a representation of quantity. Numbers were used for a variety of theological purposes.

Two different mathematical traditions and systems developed around the fourth millennium BCE in Egypt and Mesopotamia to fulfill the practical needs of those cultures. Egypt used a decimal system that had separate signs for units (1-9) tens (10–90) hundreds (100-900) and thousands (1 000-9 000). No zero was used. In Mesopotamia the system was sexagesimal, that is it was based around units of 60 instead of 10. Today’s system of hours, minutes and seconds developed...
from this time. Around the second millennium BCE, a system that used signs for one, ten and later zero was in place.

Israel was influenced by the quite sophisticated techniques of arithmetic and geometry from Egypt and Mesopotamia. Also there was a general interest in mathematics that went beyond pure functional aspects of life and culture. In the early Israelite documents, Egyptian numerals are found, while many multiples of 60 are found in the Bible and Apocrypha. There is little evidence of Israelite mathematical thinking beyond the influence of other significant cultures apart from an approximate relationship between the diameter and circumference of a circle as indicated in 1 Kings.

Significant Numbers

The theological significance of the number 3 is often associated with the Trinity. Jesus invites his disciples to make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 29:19). The number 3 is associated with God’s action. For example on the third day God came down from Mt Sinai to deliver the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:16). Most parables and biblical narratives are generically constructed using an underpinning rule of three. This means that most parables and narratives have three main characters or groups, three significant actions; ideas; interjections; or processes. Most gospel parables and narratives also have a twist, jolt or discombobulating shift. Some of these involve mathematical understandings such as the last shall be first and the true value of the widow’s mite.

Mathematics may be the reason for the number 7 being the first of the Babylonian “prime” numbers. Seven is also used to suggest a figure or number beyond counting and the sum of 3 + 4. The number three symbolises spiritual order and the number 4 the created order. Seven is a holy number symbolizing perfection and it is frequently used in the Bible. In Matthew 18:22 Jesus tells Peter that sinners should be forgiven, not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

The number 12 is frequently used to represent Israel e.g. the 12 tribes of Israel.

The number 10 symbolises totality e.g. the Ten Commandments.

The number 40 symbolises a period of testing e.g. in the Noah story, when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights and in the New Testament Jesus fasts for 40 days in the wilderness.

Units of Weight and Monetary Units

In Old and New Testament times, monetary units were not units of currency, as in the modern times, but were units of weight. Therefore money and weight were inextricably linked. Most trade and exchange was based on a barter system. However silver and other metals were used as a medium of exchange, particularly in the manufacture of coins.

In the Old Testament the shekel is the basic unit of weight. It was the principal unit of weight in biblical times. Originally, shekels were stone weights carved into shapes that made them easily recognizable. Later shekels were forged in silver and other metals. A shekel weighed around 11.4 grams. Half a shekel was a gerab.

For larger quantities the talent was used. A talent was equivalent to 3000 shekels. The mina was equivalent to 50 shekels and 60 minas were equal to 1 talent.

In the New Testament times, Roman weights and measures were combined with older units of weight. The Roman pound weight was approximately 326 grams. It was equivalent to 84 denarii at the time of Augustus. In Palestine two denarii became the equivalent of one shekel. A mite was the smallest denomination of coin in first century Palestine. The mite was of little value.

Measurement of Volume

In the New Testament Book of Revelation, the quart is about one and three quarter pints, and the bushel in Matthew 5:15 is approximately 8 litres.
Linear Measures

The principal unit of length in the Old Testament was the **cubit**. This unit is approximately the length of an arm from the elbow to the fingertips. A cubit varied from 44 – 53cm. A **span** is the width of a hand from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. It was also considered half a cubit.

Units of Area and Capacity

Land was generally measured in terms of the area ploughed or seeded per day. This was called a **yoke**. Scholars are not sure of the precise area of a yoke in Israel, but the Romans estimated a yoke to be approximately one quarter of a hectare or one quarter of 10 000 square metres, which is 2 500 square metres, about one third of a rugby field.

Teacher Background on the story of Joseph the Dreamer

Joseph, is a major figure in the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). He was Jacob’s eleventh son and Rachel’s first. Joseph, son of Jacob, is one of the best-known figures in the Torah, famous for his coat of many colours (although this may be a mistranslation of the Hebrew word for “stripes”). Joseph had a God-given ability to interpret dreams. Due to jealousy, his brother Judah sold Joseph into slavery for 20 pieces of silver. Eventually Joseph worked under the Egyptian official Potiphar but was freed and became the chief adviser to the Egyptian Pharaoh, during either the Hyksos Era or, according to Kenneth Kitchen, the Middle Kingdom of Egypt.

Synopsis of the story

Joseph, whose name means “may God give increase”, was the eleventh child of Jacob and the first child of Rachel, Jacob’s second wife. Joseph’s half-brothers and sister were the children of Leah, Rachel’s elder sister. Joseph was the favourite child of Jacob; something Joseph’s elder brothers resented. “And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him”. (Genesis 37:4) As the favourite son Joseph is given a splendid coat of many colours, which would have been a long-sleeved coat. This favouritism and Joseph’s boastfulness exacerbates the situation particularly when he relates two dreams that foretell his own power over the rest of the family. (Genesis 37:11)

His angry brothers abducted Joseph, threw him down a well and sold him to foreign merchants into slavery. They told Jacob, their father, that an animal had killed Joseph and they produced his blood-stained coat of many colours as proof.

Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold to a wealthy man named Potiphar. Joseph was put in charge of all of Potiphar’s holdings and he increased his master’s wealth. But, Potiphar’s wife took a liking to Joseph and tried to seduce him. Joseph told her that to do as she suggested would be a sin against God. She pursued him nonetheless and finally Joseph had to run from her to get away. Potiphar’s wife accused him of trying to rape her and Joseph was put in jail. (Genesis 39:1-20)

While Joseph languished in prison, two chief servants from Pharaoh’s house were imprisoned with him. One servant was the king’s butler and the other a baker. Joseph interprets a dream for each of them. Events unfold as Joseph has predicted. The baker is executed, but the butler is released and restored to the house of Pharaoh. Joseph had asked this servant to tell Pharaoh about him but the servant did not. Joseph spent another two years in prison.

Here was another opportunity for resentment and bitterness to form, but Joseph did not succumb. He continued in his faith and waited on God.

Two years later Pharaoh had a dream in which seven fat cows come out of the Nile followed by seven thin cows, which then eat the seven fat cows. A second dream followed, in which seven plump ears of corn are swallowed up by seven thin ears of corn. Pharaoh did not understand the dreams and became alarmed. His servant told Pharaoh about Joseph and his capacity to interpret dreams. Joseph was brought to the palace. God revealed to Joseph that Pharaoh’s dream was a prophecy of the next seven years. He told Pharaoh that the kingdom would experience seven plentiful harvests followed by seven years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to store grain from the plentiful harvests to be used during the famine. Pharaoh agreed and put Joseph in charge of preparations for the years of famine. Joseph rose to a position of influence and power. (Genesis 42:1-36)
Pharaoh’s storehouses were filled through the seven prosperous years and then, when the famine came, people travelled from all around to Egypt to try and buy corn. When ten of Joseph’s eleven brothers came to Egypt in search of food, they did not recognize their brother Joseph. He gave them food and told them to return later for more. He demanded that one of them remain as a hostage and that they bring the youngest brother, Benjamin with them on their return. When Benjamin returned with his brothers, Joseph put a silver cup in his sack. Joseph accused Benjamin of theft. (Genesis 43-47) The brothers begged for Benjamin to be spared, and it was only then that Joseph revealed his true identity. He told his brothers his story and what had happened to him. This time of reconciliation and reunion was all a part of God’s divine plan to save the family. The brothers rejoiced and their relationship was restored. The father, Jacob, settled in Egypt with his household. After Jacob died his body was returned to Canaan.

Religious Messages in the Story of Joseph
There are many rich messages in this story. The story calls believers to emulate the faith of Joseph. Joseph was:

- a man of great faith and prayer who looked to God for everything
- a gifted and an intelligent leader who used these gifts to improve his own life and the lives of others
- a man of vision and wisdom
- an interpreter of dreams
- boastful in his youth but learnt humility through hardship
- patient and waited on God’s help
- courageous with God’s help
- gracious and calm under pressure
- thankful to God for all that he had received
- a person who never held grudges against the people who hurt him
- dignified, respectful and strong
- compassionate and forgiving of his brothers
- the instigator of reconciliation between members of his family
- a man who could see God’s plan in his own life and that of others.
Some Useful Resources for Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: *Joseph the Dreamer*

**Scripture and Other Sacred Stories**
- Story of Joseph (Genesis 37:1-50)
- Any Old or New Testament story that lends itself to students developing early mathematical understandings. Some examples are, the Story of Creation (Genesis 1:1-31), where concepts of time could be discussed, and the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:10-14), where concepts of subtraction and addition could be discussed.

**Film** (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Joseph’s Reunion DVD
- Joseph in Egypt DVD
- The Stories of Joseph and His Brothers, Ruth and the Passover DVD
- The Ballad of Little Joe DVD
- Awesome Kids in the Bible: 3-10 DVD
- Shema DVD

**Poster/Art** (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Bible Map Packs
- Bible Events Pack
- God’s Promises – The Old Testament Part 1
- Old Testament Pictures for Today
- People from the Bible

**Children’s Literature**
- Hobbs L., *Old Tom’s Holiday*
- Hutchins P., *Rosie’s Walk*
- Coxon M., *Kitten Finds a Home*
- Lester A., *Are We There Yet?*
- Wheatley N., *Highway*
- Gleeson L., *Where’s Mum?*
- Fienberg A., *Joseph*
- Embry M., *Homes and Families Growing up in Bible Times*
- Currie N., Thomson J., *In the Beginning*
- *Joseph the Dreamer – Big Book* (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)

**Music** (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- “Oh Little Joe” *VEGGIE TUNES 4*
- “113 years ago” *VEGGIE TUNES 4 “Joseph’s Song”*
- *LET’S CELEBRATE* John Burland
- “Five Little Ladybugs” *FIVE LITTLE LADYBUGS*
- “One two three four” *GOSPELLING TO THE BEAT 2*
- “Step by step” *GOSPELLING TO THE BEAT 2*
- “Two small fish and five bread rolls” *SING A NEW KIDS SONG*
- “Twelve Sons” *GREAT ADVENTURES*
- “Twelve Men” *GREAT ADVENTURES*
- “I’ve got 10 fingers” *AS ONE VOICE FOR KIDS – Disc 7*
- *30 bible songs and 30 Bible stories Vol 1*
Websites

- ShineOnline.net
- www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7316/coloringpages/josephcolor.htm
- www.edupatterns.com/lesson4.htm
- http://www.teacherhelp.org/color.htm#bible
- Google Earth
- http://www.topmarks.co.uk/judaism/joseph/joseph.htm

Digital Tools

- GPS for the neighbourhood walk
- Camera for photographing signs in your school and neighbourhood

Visual Resources (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)

- Story Cards Set 1
- Story Cards Set 2
- Story Cards Set 3
Learning and Teaching Suggestions

The following learning and teaching ideas are presented within the appropriate Early Years Context for Learning. The ideas described here relate to the previously outlined possible scenario (the story of Joseph the Dreamer) and have been shaped by the models and frameworks listed at the beginning of this support resource. Particular reference has been made to the Model for Developing Religious Literacy (specifically, the Four Resources Model), and the Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework (specifically, the Roles for Lifelong Learners).

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Joseph the Dreamer

Focused Teaching and Learning

- **Students listen to and/or view the story of Joseph.** Students use the images and text provided to retell the story of Joseph. To access an animated PowerPoint of these images with an embedded voiceover of the story of Joseph go to the online version of this RE and the Early Years Support document on the Brisbane Catholic Education K Web ResourceLink Portal.

Joseph and his family were shepherds and they lived in Canaan. His father Jacob had 12 sons, but Joseph was his favourite. Jacob gave him a special coat that had long sleeves and fancy coloured stripes. Joseph was very happy, he had everything a favourite son could want.

The brothers were jealous of Joseph and his fancy coat. He could be very annoying. For one thing, Joseph was better at dreaming than looking after sheep. He once dreamed that he would grow up to be the greatest of all the brothers. ‘Joseph is bragging again!’ they complained, ‘this time he wants to be the head of the family.’

They wanted to get rid of Joseph, so the next time the brothers went out to herd the sheep, they beat Joseph, took his coat, then threw him into a well. Joseph was very scared – the well was deep and it was very dark, but God was looking after him.

Later that day, the brothers sold Joseph as a slave to some traders who were riding by on their camels. ‘I hope we never see him again’ said one of the brothers. ‘Yes, that will teach him to boast’ said another.
They ripped up Joseph’s special coat, put animal blood on it and took it to Jacob. ‘Father, father’, they cried, ‘Joseph has been eaten by a wild animal.’ Jacob was very sad. He had lost his favourite son.

The traders and their camels were travelling to Egypt and they took Joseph with them. Egypt was a long way from Canaan. By the time they got to Egypt, Joseph was very tired and frightened, but God was looking after him.

The traders had no use for a shepherd boy like Joseph, so they sold him to a rich man, named Potiphar, to work as a slave in his house. Joseph was a good worker and before long he was in charge of the whole household.

Potiphar’s wife wanted to flirt with him, but Joseph just wanted to keep working. She got angry and told lies about Joseph.

Joseph was sent to prison. Joseph was very unhappy in prison, but God was looking after him. The prison guards could see that Joseph was very clever and before long he was put in charge of all the other prisoners.
Some of those prisoners had dreams that they did not understand. Joseph said ‘Tell me your dreams and I will explain what they mean.’ One of those prisoners had worked as a servant in the palace of Pharaoh, who was the king of Egypt. ‘Your dream means that Pharaoh will release you from jail and give you your old job back.’

The servant was very pleased. ‘If you are right, I will ask Pharaoh to release you from jail too,’ he promised. But when the servant went back to his old, comfortable life he forgot all about Joseph. Joseph was still in prison, but God was still looking after him.

One day Pharaoh had two dreams that puzzled him. In one dream, seven fat cows were eaten up by seven thin cows. In the second dream seven fat ears of wheat were eaten up by seven thin ears of wheat. ‘What do these dreams mean?’ asked Pharaoh. The servant was puzzled too, but then he remembered Joseph’s talent for understanding dreams. ‘Bring him to me’ said Pharaoh ‘and he can tell me what my dreams mean’.

So Joseph was released from prison. After he had shaved and changed his clothes, he went to the palace. ‘Pharaoh’ said Joseph, ‘both of your dreams mean the same thing. There will be seven years of good crops and then seven years of drought in Egypt.’ Joseph told Pharaoh to save food during the seven good years so that when the drought arrived there would be enough food for everyone in the land. Pharaoh was impressed by this advice. He could tell that Joseph was a special person. ‘Come and work for me Joseph,’ said Pharaoh. So Joseph became Pharaoh’s most important helper.

The seven years of plenty passed and seven years of hard times arrived in Egypt and in all the lands about. Joseph’s plan worked well and the Egyptians had enough food to eat. Joseph was very happy, God was looking after him.
Back in Canaan, Jacob and his family were short of food. ‘There is plenty of food in Egypt’ said Jacob, ‘so you boys must go and buy food for the family.’

So Jacob’s 11 sons set off with their donkeys on the journey to Egypt through the desert. Egypt was a long way from Canaan.

When they arrived, Joseph recognised them, but they did not recognise Joseph. He treated his brothers like strangers. He wanted to test them to see if they would do the right thing this time. So he tricked them. When they were leaving, Joseph hid a silver cup in the grain sack belonging to the youngest brother, Benjamin.

Joseph accused Benjamin of stealing the cup and he said ‘You will serve as a slave in my household for your crime’. The brothers were very unhappy. They loved their brother Benjamin and they knew that it would break Jacob’s heart to lose another son. So they begged Joseph to take one of them instead. Joseph could see that they had changed and he forgave them. He ran to them and hugged them. ‘I am Joseph your brother’ he cried. They were all very happy to see him again.

The brothers went back home to Jacob in Canaan. ‘Father, Father’ they said, ‘Joseph is alive and living in Egypt. He is rich and important, and he wants us to come and live with him.’

So Jacob and the rest of the family went to live with Joseph in Egypt. Joseph was very happy. He knew that God was looking after him and his whole family.
• Students engage with the story of Joseph in a whole class setting. After sharing the story, students brainstorm and list the key characters and events in the story using the **Story Map Strategy**.

• Students collaboratively create a word picture wall of the key characters and events and use this to help recall and retell the story.

• Students use code breaking opportunities to identify groups of people from the story and their roles within the story. They then may use puppets created with the drawings to enact the characters and their roles.

• Students use picture cards to sequence the major events in the Joseph story. Create picture cards or use prepared story cards of Joseph (Redemptorist Education, Alphonsus House, Chawton, Hampshire, GU 343HQ. Email: sales@ShineOnline.net – also available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education).

• Students examine selected images from the Joseph story and respond to questions that develop their visual literacy. For example, looking at the pictures to the right, students might explain why the illustrator chose to make Joseph much larger than the other brothers inside the highlighted cloud, or why they think Joseph is wearing different clothes to the ones Potiphar and his wife are wearing in the second image.

• Students develop their visual literacy through critical analysis of the symbolism within selected images. Students respond to questions such as ‘why do you think the illustrator chose a cloud to symbolise Joseph’s dreams?’ or ‘how has the illustrator shown us that the story of Joseph happens in Egypt?’. Further information about visual literacy in the Early Years classroom is available in this excellent article: [http://teacher.scholastic.com/polaroid/pdfs/visuallit.pdf](http://teacher.scholastic.com/polaroid/pdfs/visuallit.pdf)

• Students create drawings and label significant symbols within the story e.g. coat, wheat, family, brothers, cows, drought, famine, gold cup, sacks of grain, camels, the well. They discuss their own experiences of these things and what they believe their meaning in the story might be.

• Students use ordinal numbers to order the major parts of the story, with teacher assistance. Places and events can determine the different parts of the story e.g. 1st Joseph’s life in Canaan, 2nd Joseph and his brothers fighting, 3rd Joseph being sold and travelling a long distance to Egypt, 4th Joseph in Egypt, 5th Joseph in prison in Egypt, 6th Joseph working for Pharaoh, 7th Joseph’s brothers coming to Egypt, 8th Joseph reconciles with his brothers.

• Students use early mathematical language when describing Joseph being thrown down the well, his long journey, when he was sold to merchants, and when he travelled through the desert from Canaan to Egypt.

• Students use mathematical language for position, movement and direction as they retell the story of Joseph e.g. along the road, next to the river, inside the well, a long distance, across the land, over hills and valleys and through the desert.

• Students make meaning of one of the main messages in the story of Joseph - **God is with you in good and bad times.** Students use a reflective process of visualising Joseph’s feelings during the difficult times in his life e.g. when he was thrown in the well by his brothers, when he was sold as a slave, when he was put in prison in Egypt and the good times e.g. when he received his coat from his father, when he worked with Pharaoh, when he was reunited with his brothers. This could be achieved using a **Y chart**.

• Students jointly construct a poster about the main message that **God is with you in good and bad times**, setting it in a familiar contemporary context.

• Students use a variety of art materials to paint and construct landscapes and landforms of the Holy Land and the journey to Egypt.

• Students collaborate to create a list of positive attributes they identify in the characters from the story of Joseph. For example, Joseph was:
  - a man of great faith and prayer who looked to God for everything
  - a gifted and an intelligent leader who used these gifts to improve his own life and the lives of others
• a man of vision and wisdom
• an interpreter of dreams
• boastful in his youth but learnt humility through hardship
• patient and waited on God’s help
• courageous with God’s help
• gracious and calm under pressure
• thankful to God for all that he had received
• a person who never held grudges against the people who hurt him
• dignified, respectful and strong
• compassionate and forgiving of his brothers
• the instigator of reconciliation between members of his family
• a man who could see God’s plan in his own life and that of others.

• Students choose one of Joseph’s attributes or virtues each day or every few days and write at the top of a large sheet of paper. Encourage students to add a check mark to the paper whenever anyone exhibits that attribute or virtue. Tally the marks at the end of the day to assess progress and discuss the results.

• Students develop counting and matching skills using a teacher created chart showing the twelve brothers, with numbers 1-12 printed on them in sequence. Copy the chart and cut out each brother and laminate these individually. Students match each laminated brother to the brother on the chart, counting as they go.

• Students use the laminated brothers from the activity above to play What’s Missing? Attach the laminated figures to a felt board or whiteboard. Choose a student to remove one figure while the class hides their eyes. The students open their eyes on command and guess which numbered brother is missing.

• Students use the laminated numbered brothers for addition and subtraction games.

• Students play matching games using sets of teacher created symbol cards. Twelve sets of cards are required. Each set should contain twelve cards, with a different symbol from the story of Joseph on each card. The symbols could be sacks of grain, tunics, drinking goblets, camels, coins etc. Using the numbered figures from the activities above, ask the students to share the symbol cards evenly between the laminated brothers. One to one correspondence and conservation of numbers may be practised and evaluated through this exercise.

**Play**

• Students role-play the main characters in the story through dramatic play.

• Students use the home corner to create, retell and re-enact the story of Joseph the Dreamer, role playing the main characters in the story and using props. Props could include plain tunics and one colourfully decorated tunic, a head dress for Pharaoh, simple sashes draped across the body to designate roles. Tea towels and elasticised head bands would make easy to use head dresses for Joseph and his brothers.

• Students use collage materials to make characters for the Joseph story and create props associated with each character, and use these to create or retell the story of Joseph.

• Students construct a landscape in the water trough or outside in the playground. The landscape is stimulated by real-life or illustrated representations of the land of Canaan, and an Egyptian landscape, featuring the Nile River and the pyramids.

• Students create props of the people and animals in order to retell the story of Joseph. Alternatively, ready-made models may be used e.g. blocks or wooden figures, toy sheep, camels, etc. In play contexts students tell the story using the created landscape and the props.
• Students build a pyramid big enough to sit in. This could be done by utilizing a large cardboard box or boxes.

• Students use the Giant Puppet Strategy to make puppet characters for the story of Joseph. They can then use these puppets with the large pyramid in their play.

**Real Life**

• Students view different types of dwellings in Egypt and Israel from the time of Joseph, using the internet or print resources. Good online examples are available at:


  - Students compare their family and the number of members in it with that of Joseph. Create a class pictogram to represent the data.
  
  - Students reinforce their understandings of patterns and design as they plan and create a colourful Joseph coat including a patterned border.
  
  - Students make ‘Joseph coats’ for dolls from the home corner or for stuffed toys from home, using fabric and other items such as tape measures, self adhesive velcro spots or glue. Some supervision with a needle/bodkin and thread might be required.

  - In small groups, students utilize knowledge gained from investigating maps to design a map of Joseph’s journey to Egypt using outdoor play equipment.

  - Students undertake a re-enactment of Joseph’s journey by proceeding through the map they have designed. Encourage students to realize the need for signs and symbols to mark the start, finish, and turns required to undertake the journey. These signs could then be added to the maps. In addition, students could create signs to be strategically placed on the route so that it could be followed as designed. Would Joseph’s route have been marked in this way? How did people of his time find their way from one place to another?

  - Students explore how people today find their way on journeys. Students go on a neighbourhood walk and copy or photograph the signs they see on the way. Use a GPS device to show the way on the neighbourhood walk. Discuss the oral directions the GPS gives. Compare this experience to that of Joseph when directions were told and remembered, as most people could not read or write and GPS devices did not exist.

  - Students record or photograph the signs they see on their own journey to school. Compare and discuss the different signs.

  - Students note and discuss symbols from mathematics with which the children are familiar e.g. + -. 

  - Students discuss signs or symbols we use when we pray (sign of the cross, hands joined in prayer, prayerful gestures). Brainstorm a list. After prayer time, re-visit the list with the class, making any additions the students noticed as they prayed. After the next time the whole school prays together, re-visit the list again, making any necessary additions. Encourage the students to utilize these signs and symbols when designing future class prayers and liturgies.
Investigation

- Students investigate the composition of their families and record their findings in a table. Compare the size of the families in the class with Joseph’s family. Use the language of size to describe Joseph’s family and modern families. What is a large-size family today?

- Students investigate how long the drought lasted in Joseph’s story. Use a calendar to understand how long one year is, and then imagine how long seven years must be.

- Students list the impact the drought had on the people of Joseph’s time. Discuss the impacts drought has had on our own lives, and list points from the discussion. Compare the lists for similarities and differences, and discuss these.

- Students recall what Joseph did to manage the drought, and brainstorm a list of how we manage droughts in modern times. Compare the lists for similarities and differences.

- Students investigate the position of Egypt on a map or globe and the route of Joseph’s journey from Canaan to Egypt. Use Google Earth to view the countryside of Israel and Egypt.

- Students view Google Earth or other images of Israel and Egypt, and describe the attributes of the landscape - grassy, hilly, mountainous, sandy. Students compare and contrast the settings in the story, Canaan and Egypt.

- Students examine how numbers are used in the Joseph story and list the examples they find, e.g. 11 brothers, 3 branches, 3 trays, 7 lean cows, 7 fat cows, 1 gold goblet etc.

- Investigate the attributes of 2 and 3 D shapes e.g. Egypt’s pyramids.

Focused learning and teaching and investigations of topics often lead to child initiated, spontaneous follow up activities in which the students engage in play which reflects interests developed and knowledge gained.

These boys co-operated in spontaneously measuring and mapping an area outside the classroom after focused learning and teaching sessions on the importance of planning prior to building.

Routines and Transitions

- Use the numbers in the Joseph story, 3, 7, 11, 12 etc as numbers of actions before students are dismissed to play or other activity, e.g. James, hop seven times before you go to lunch. Mary, turn around three times before you go to lunch etc.

- Make up simple rhymes, songs, poems, chants etc to say with routines or to move to another activity or area. e.g. at tidy away time students could all chant to the tune of Johnny works with one Hammer:

> Joseph worked very hard, very hard, very hard.
> Joseph worked very hard, all day long.
> We can work very hard, very hard, very hard.
> We can work very hard all day long.
Case Study

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Joseph the Dreamer

Meet Alicia McNamara. Alicia is an experienced teacher who taught in New South Wales prior to moving to Queensland. Alicia prepared these learning opportunities when she was teaching prep at Assisi Catholic College. In this case study Alicia demonstrates the ease with which scripture may be integrated into planning for the Early Years. She also demonstrates how students’ understanding of scripture stories and their messages are deepened when students engage with learning opportunities that promote religious education and early mathematical understandings about patterns, sequences, attributes, quantities, position, movement and direction. Students also engage with Joseph’s attributes and virtues and his relationship with God. Alicia believes that religious education in the early years classroom is more effective when integrated as part of the whole study being undertaken and not as an isolated or imposed study topic.

Background

Egypt had been a part of our class discussions since the beginning of the year. It stemmed from one child’s interest in Egypt. In Term One we had established a class Museum and during our investigations in setting this up, students had brought in artefacts from Egypt to display in our Museum. In Term Two when we were practising and performing puppet shows, one was called “Ralph goes to Egypt”. Once again this reignited our interest in Egypt. Some of the students decided to draw pyramids at Indoor time and the ensuing discussions about Egypt aroused the students’ curiosity and left them wanting to learn more! When we decided to ‘learn’ about Ancient Egypt we explored many aspects that had captured the students’ interest. These included making Tutankhamen’s mask, listening to a talk by a parent born in Egypt, wrapping mummies and more. It was at this stage that I saw the opportunity to integrate Religious Education into the curriculum through the Story of Joseph, as a part of this rich story and its message set in Egypt. We engaged with the Big Book Joseph the Dreamer to commence the learning opportunities.

Introducing the Story and Making the Coat

We read the big book: Joseph the Dreamer as a whole class. We talked about the illustrations, the pictures of Egypt, the coloured coat and Pharaoh’s head dress and decided to make our own Coloured Coat. Every child illustrated their own patch of fabric to decorate the coat. We sewed the coat together and the students took turns wearing the coat around the classroom. We compared a number of illustrated versions of the story using students’ bibles and picture books.

Students discussed how Joseph would have felt in his amazing coloured and patterned coat. We also talked about how his brothers felt about Joseph and his coat. Students shared their understanding about jealousy in family relationships. Students decided on some other ways Joseph’s brothers could have acted.

Students found evidence in the story that proved that Joseph was a man of God, a man of prayer and a man with deep faith. As a class we made up some simple prayers asking for God’s help when we feel afraid as Joseph would have felt when he was down the well and when he was taken a long way away from his family to Egypt.
Telling the second part of the story

We used our painted maps and small toys again to map out the second part of the story. This is the part where Joseph is in Egypt working as a slave. His master’s wife had told a lie about Joseph and so Joseph was thrown into jail. While he was in jail he interpreted a fellow prisoner’s dreams. Meanwhile Pharaoh had his famous dreams of the seven fat and seven skinny cows and the seven fat and seven skinny stalks of corn. Pharaoh called upon Joseph to interpret his dreams and Joseph was given an important job and was no longer in jail or a slave. The main theme of this part of the story is that God is always there for you, in good times and in bad. Even at times that were hard for Joseph, God was caring for him. We closed our eyes to imagine how Joseph would have felt, a long way from home, in another country without any family or friends. We also thought about how he would have felt when he was in prison for something he did not do. During these tough times God was there for Joseph. We made a poster to help us remember that God is always with us and that we can always ask him for help.

The Sand Play

The students enjoyed setting up a sand play for Egypt. We used a water trough and filled it with sand. We included pyramids, trees, a river, hippos, camels, a snake, and the characters from the story. The students found a map in one of the information books and copied that in the sand play. They retold the story to themselves while playing.

Making a Pyramid and Wrapping Mummies

The students were particularly fascinated with Mummies. We sang “The Mummy Song” constantly, sometimes three times a day. The students enjoyed singing the lyrics which contained facts about Egypt presented in a humorous way.

We made a large pyramid. This was a difficult task. We had made small pyramids before but this time we had to transfer our knowledge to making a large cardboard pyramid. We talked about how the pyramid needed a square bottom and four triangular sides that met at the top.

The students wanted mummies in the pyramid. They brought toys from home to wrap in toilet paper and put inside the pyramid. The students found it was quite a difficult fine motor task to wrap the toilet paper tightly around their toy and stick it together. All sorts of toys were brought in to be mummified, including a snake, a donkey, dolls and teddy bears.
Revisiting the first part of the story

After the holidays we revisited the story of Joseph. The students worked with a partner to order the sequence of the story. They used ordinal terms such as “first, second, third and fourth” to order the pictures of the story, e.g. Joseph is given the coat, he tells his brothers about his dreams and they throw him in the well, Joseph is rescued by travellers and he is sold as a slave. This part of the story stimulated discussions about how the brothers could have treated Joseph, and whether the brothers were acting as God would have wanted when they were jealous of his coat.

We painted a map of the Promised Land and of Egypt to be used in the story-telling. Figurines were used to tell the first section of the story. We used positional language for position, movement and direction in the story while the students moved the characters along the road, next to the river, inside the well, a long distance, across the land, over hills and valleys, through the desert and into the well.

We also looked at all the special numbers in the story. Students found evidence in the story of seven and twelve things. We discuss the religious significance of these numbers. We decided they were holy numbers that are often in bible stories.

We then looked at the importance of being able to forgive one another for things that have hurt us. We went back to the story of Joseph to see how Joseph did not hold a grudge against his brothers. We saw how Joseph forgave them and all of the family was happy again and reunited. From there we discussed the way we forgive one another and make friends again. We made a class chart of forgiveness and tallied the number of times we forgave as a class in a day.
Getting Started:

Attributes and Quantities in Biblical Stories: Noah the Dreamer

Students compare and contrast attributes and quantities in environments in biblical times [RE EMU (b)]

Student Responsive Curriculum: A Possible Scenario

There are many classroom scenarios that would encourage early years teachers to explore the Noah story with their students. For young children this amazing story always intrigues and mystifies. It is a story that captures the imagination because of its charm, compassion and improbability. This is story of a man and his family obeying God’s instructions to build a huge ark; gathering animals in pairs and herding them into the ark; surviving a huge flood by living on the ark with the animals for 40 days and nights; sending out a dove to search for dry land; resting the ark on a mountain and finally at the end of the story, living a life of peace in harmony with God and creation. Young imaginations seem to connect with this rich story instinctively. From a religious perspective the Noah story provides students with the opportunity to grow in their understanding about the following: God from an Old Testament perspective; the importance of living a good life; being patient and peaceful; being obedient and courageous; being good and trying not to make bad choices and remembering God’s promises to God’s people. For students who have a keen interest in construction involving mathematical understanding, natural disasters, animals, boats and things that float, the story of Noah and the activities in this support resource will be appealing.

Using an integrated approach, students could explore and investigate stories and real life contexts in religion, mathematics and science, that involve the concepts of floating and sinking. For example, if students are intrigued by things that float and sink, two entry points into this support resource could be the Noah story and Pamela Allen’s Who Sank the Boat? Focus questions to stimulate learning could be Why is floating hard for us and easy for boats? How do fully laden boats remain afloat? Why do some things float and some things sink? From a religious perspective a focus question could be Why can faith keep peoples’ lives afloat? The two stories provide the stimulus to investigate these and all kinds of mathematical, scientific, religious questions and truths in an integrated and relevant way.

Teacher Background on Noah

The Story of Noah appears in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament. Genesis tells the story of the creation of the world through to the death of Joseph in Egypt. In telling this story, Genesis introduces the reader to God, God’s relationship to humanity and God’s plan to work with humanity in order to move humans and the world toward ultimate perfection. Along with these major themes, Genesis introduces a series of sub-themes that are essential both to the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) and the rest of the Bible. Sub-themes include the basic unity of all humankind, human propensity for evil, human rebellion and the covenant between God and people. As you read through the Noah story in preparation for teaching it, you may want to consider how these and other themes are being developed. Another significant theme and message for believers is the importance of being obedient to God and leading a good life, especially in times when the majority of people are living lives of lawlessness, violence and self-indulgence.

In the Noah story it is the religious messages that are of prime importance. Therefore, in the early years, the students begin to develop an understanding of the metaphorical meaning, rather than a literal meaning of biblical texts. Students and teachers must always remember it is the messages of the story that are of prime importance not the literal probability of the events of the story.
These following messages are helpful for early years students:

Noah showed people how to be:

- a person of great faith in God
- obedient to God
- a person who prays and hears God’s word
- a good parent and husband who cares for his family
- a carer for all of God’s creation
- a persistent, clever and hard-worker for things that are good and worthwhile
- a person who loves animals and people
- a person who is patient and has faith that God will provide
- a person who is strong enough to stand for what is right even when most people are doing the wrong thing
- a person who lives by what he believes in and not by what others want him to believe.

Students can also be introduced to religious signs and symbols. For example, in this story the rainbow is the sign of God’s covenant or promise, God’s blessing and peace.

Biblical scholars generally agree that the material appearing in Genesis comes from three sources, each commonly referred to by a letter: J stands for the Yahwist tradition; E the Elohist tradition; and P the Priestly tradition. The Yahwist, Elohist and Priestly groups of writers all authored parts of the Old Testament, some writing their particular version of common material. Another group, the Deuteronomists, were also responsible for text that appears in the Old Testament.

Yahwist (J) material was the earliest, and was written with the viewpoint of showing how God’s promises to Abraham were fulfilled in the monarchy of David. Elohist (E) writers reflected the views of the northern kingdom, after Solomon’s kingdom fell apart and the north went its own way. Priestly (P) writers reorganised other materials and added some new material to reflect the needs of the exilic community.

There are other parallel stories of Noah from ancient times. The most famous parallel to the biblical flood story is the Mesopotamia Epic of Gilgamesh which was discovered in 1878. It was written on clay tables in the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh.

The Noah Story in Genesis

For the purposes of this support resource, the Noah story will be taken to include Genesis 6:1-9:17. In Genesis 6-8, there are two stories of the Great Flood. Flood stories were a common theme in the ancient literature of the Middle East. These stories have been intermingled and combined by editors to form the text commonly known as the Story of Noah and the Flood. The older of the stories is found in Genesis 6:8-10; 7:1-10, 16c; 8:6-12, 20-22. This story comes from 1000 BCE and may have Egyptian influence. The newer story is found in Genesis 6:9-22; 7:11-24; 8:1-5, 13-19; 9:1-17, and comes from 500 BCE with Babylonian influence. As a result, the edited story has a number of contradictory elements.

Textual Features of Narratives

This information could be helpful when teaching the story of Noah or any narrative to early years students.

Every narrative or story has a purpose. One purpose is to entertain and hold the interest of the reader. However stories can also be written to teach or inform, or to change attitudes, ideas or opinions. Narratives always sequence characters in both time and place.

There are three key features of a narrative. They are:

- **Characters**: the ‘who’ in the story
- **Characters talking**
- **Words** that help readers, listeners and/or viewers to use their **imagination**.
In a traditional narrative like the story of Noah and the Flood, the focus of the text is on a series of actions:

- **Introduction** or **beginning** when we find out the who, what and where of the story
- **Problem** or **middle** when the ‘who’ in the story experiences a problem
- **Resolution** or **end** when the problem is resolved. Sometimes things turn out well for everyone in the story and sometimes some are happy and others are unhappy. Some stories have many problems, solutions and a final resolution. This keeps readers, listeners and/or viewers interested, concerned and/or entertained.

To help students explore narratives, teachers should focus on:

- **What** is going to happen? **What** are the main messages of the story?
- **Where** did the story take place?
- **Who** are the main characters? **What** do they look like?
- **How** will the story begin? **How** will the problem be solved?
Some Useful Resources for Attributes and Quantities in Biblical Stories: *Noah the Dreamer*

**Scripture and Other Sacred Stories**
- Genesis 6-9
- RE Resource Module – Introducing Scripture – Level 1

**Film** (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- The stories of creation, Noah and Abraham DVD
- Awesome stories of faith: ages 3-10 DVD
- Awesome animals of the Bible: ages 3-10 DVD
- Creation and the flood DVD
- DVD Bible Vol 1: 13 stories from the Old and New Testament DVD
- The Bedbug Bible Gang: Following God DVD
- Don’t miss the boat DVD

**Poster/Art** (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Bible Map Packs
- Bible Events Pack
- God’s Promises – The Old Testament Part 1
- Old Testament Pictures For Today

**Student Literature and Reference Books**
- Carle E. Why Noah chose the Dove
- Hathorn L. The great big Animal Ask
- Cousins L., Noah’s Ark Walker Books
- Fingley Noah’s Wife Eerdmans Books
- Pinkney J., Noah’s Ark Sea Star Books
- Winch J., Two by Two Scholastic
- Embry M. Homes and Families Growing up in Bible Times
- Currie N. Thomson J. In the Beginning
- Old Testament Stories – Big Book (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Noah and the Ark – Big Book (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)

**Music**
- The Ants go Marching One by One
- Rain, rain, go away
- It’s raining, it’s pouring
- The wise man built his house upon the rock
- All Things Bright and Beautiful
- Highest Mountain Deepest Sea Gospelling to the Beat 2
- Arky, Arky song
- Who built the Ark? As One Voice for Kids 7
- Creature Praise
- 30 Bible Songs + 30 Bible Stories: Vol 1 (BCE Resource Link)
- Great Adventures: a musical extravaganza of stories, songs and fun CD (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Jesus loves me, this I know (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
Websites

- www.rainforestmaths.com/
- http://infants.reonline.org.uk
- www.teacherhelp.org/color.htm#bible
- RE Resource Module - Introducing Scripture

Software Programs

- Kid Pix

Learning and Teaching Suggestions

The following learning and teaching ideas are presented within the appropriate Early Years Context for Learning. The ideas described here relate to the previously outlined possible scenario (the story of Noah the Dreamer) and have been shaped by the models and frameworks listed at the beginning of this support resource. Particular reference has been made to the Model for Developing Religious Literacy (specifically, the Four Resources Model), and the Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework (specifically, the Roles for Lifelong Learners).

Attributes and Quantities in Biblical Stories: Noah the Dreamer

Focused Teaching and Learning

- Students listen to the Noah story read from a children’s Bible (Genesis 6-9).
- Students use a wall chart in the shape of an ark to draw and label information about the characters. Include some important messages and other words that stimulate their imagination.
- Students, with teacher support, sequence images of the main events in the story. Students identify three parts: the introduction, which is the ‘who’, what, where of the Noah story e.g. Noah and family building the ark; the problem or middle which is when the who in the story experience a problem e.g. the flood; and the resolution or end of the story which is when the problem is resolved e.g. the dove flying out and coming back to the ark with an olive branch in its beak.
- Students use a 5W’s + H Strategy to explore questions like: What is going to happen? What are the main messages of the story? Where will the story take place? When will the story take place? Who are the main characters? What do they look like? How will the problem of the flood be solved? Why was this story told?
- Students use Feeling Faces Strategy as the Noah story is being read. Students justify the feeling face they chose for particular parts of the story.
- Students discuss and role play the following significant messages in the Noah story: Noah was obedient to God; God calls people to be patient; God calls people to be peaceful; God wants people to live a good life; God gives people strength to be courageous; God calls people to speak out about bad things.
- Students compare different versions of the Noah Story.
- Students brainstorm Noah’s attributes: trusting, faithful, a builder, a caretaker, family man.
- Students make charts about Noah as a man of God e.g. Noah trusted God, Noah was obedient to God, Noah was a good husband and father, Noah cared for all of God’s creation.
- Students discuss and list ways people develop their faith or belief in God.
Students use a **Then and Now Strategy** to depict Noah and a contemporary father or individual. Students draw and label Noah’s attributes as a Man/Person of God and how a person of God would live their life like Noah.

Students discuss how they can be like Noah.

Students use Noah’s attributes in simple class prayers e.g.

**Leader:** Lord, help us listen to your voice.

**Response:** Like Noah listened.

**Leader:** Lord, help us to be kind to the creatures you created.

**Response** Lord, Noah cared.

Or

**Leader:** Lord, help us listen to your voice.

**Response:** Like Noah listened and built the Ark.

**Leader:** Lord, help us to be kind to the creatures you created.

**Response** Like Noah was kind and cared for his family and the animals.

Students explore the concept of **staying afloat**. Students explore things that stay afloat and how people can stay afloat. Students draw and find pictures that illustrate **staying afloat**.

Students add weights to things that are floating in water to determine when they will sink. Students record the weights of these measures.

Students explore the allegorical or “story” meaning of **staying afloat** and **not sinking** in terms of personal relationships and in life, in general.

Students explore the allegorical or “story” meaning of **staying afloat** in relationships with God. Students explore the question: **How can we stay afloat in our relationship with God?**

Students discuss and illustrate God’s covenant or promise to never flood or destroy the earth again. Students share their illustrations of the rainbow, the symbol of God’s covenant.

Students count the numbers of colours in a rainbow and the number of different colours they can make using these colours.

Students list and number some of the important things Noah did to care for his family and the animals of God’s creation e.g. First or 1st Noah obeyed God and built an ark, Second or 2nd Noah etc.

Students in small groups, or as a whole group, prioritise the way they care for creation at school by using ordinal numbers e.g. place 1st or the word first over the activity e.g. 1st We water our class plants. 2nd We…….

Students list in sequence using ordinal numbers how Noah built the ark.

Students discuss the way they would build an ark today. Students list and order the steps that would be involved. Students discuss the importance of planning prior to building.

Students draw plans of their own Noah’s ark. Teachers scribe the students’ understandings on the plans.

Students discuss units of measure in Noah’s time with particular reference to the cubit and the span. Students estimate the approximate size of Noah’s ark 300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. The following information was taken from the teacher background at the beginning of this support resource.

*(The principal unit of length in the Old Testament was the cubit. This unit is approximately the length of an arm from the elbow to the fingertips. A cubit varied from 44 – 53cm. A span is the width of a hand from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. It was also considered half a cubit.)*

Students are introduced to the concept of scale and models using an age-appropriate approach. Students, with considerable teacher support, build a scaled model of Noah’s ark using Lego or blocks, and the measurements given in the Noah story. Students, with the teacher’s help, could find things that are made to scale e.g. matchbox toy cars, dolls furniture etc. Students working on a scale model of Noah’s ark, with teacher support,
choose a Lego piece that represents one cubit. Students, with teacher support, make a chart that illustrates the difference in measurement of the cubit and the Lego piece and discuss how builders and designers use scale to show people what a building, boat or other design might look like when it is finished.

- Students use mathematical language to describe the difference between Noah’s ark and the scaled model of the ark e.g. Noah’s ark would be (number) times longer, wider and higher than this scale model of Noah’s ark.

- Students discuss the shapes seen in the pictures of Noah’s ark from picture books and children’s bibles e.g. triangle, rectangle, square.

- Students use building blocks to make what they image to be Noah’s ark.

- Students explore and use location language, in the side, on top, on the bottom, underneath, below, up, down, in between, front, back, under, above.

- Student play Animal Sorts (Links to Science: LL1.2) Students sit in a circle around two hoops. Students receive animal card or plastic animal. Students take turns to place their card/animal into the labelled circles. Students repeat this activity using different criteria for sorting (legs/no legs; fur/no fur; African animals/Australian animals.

- Students extend their thinking to categorise animals into three groups or use overlapping hoops to create Venn diagrams.

- Students brainstorm ways to classify animals e.g. tall, short, four legs, two legs, no legs, fur, no fur, smooth skin, rough skin, etc. Students may even begin to classify animals according to their “family”: mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, amphibian.... their eating habits: herbivores, omnivores, carnivores.

- Students construct a class mural of all the animals on the ark. Students discuss the awe and wonder of animals as part of God’s creation. Students include a rainbow in the background of the mural as a reminder of God’s covenant.

- Students, with support, create a class weather chart. Students count forward and highlight day forty on the chart. Students make a second weather chart showing forty days and title it Noah’s Weather Chart. Students in pairs, note and record the weather each day for the next forty days. Students compare and discuss the weather charts over the forty day period.

- Students use Feeling Faces Strategy or happy face, sad face, and neutral face symbols on the weather chart to show how the weather influences how the class feels. Students discuss some of the problems the people and animals on the ark would have faced over forty days.

- Student use simple animal shapes to make patterns. Students describe their animal patterns.

**Play**

- Students build a class Noah’s ark using suitable materials and core information provided in the scripture story e.g. the boat had three levels, it was made of wood, it floated, it contained animals of every kind.

- Students use blocks to make an ark. Students use animal and people figures to act out the Noah story in block corner.

- Students use collage materials to build individual arks, animals, Noah and his family.

- Students retell the Noah story using their collage pieces.

- Students are provided with paddle-pop sticks, and/or matchsticks to create a 2D ark which has 3 decks, a door in the side, a window and a roof. Students draw animals on their ark using crayons and paint.

- Students retell the Noah story using their collage pieces.
• Students use rulers and tape measures and other measuring tools to assist them with their plans.
• Students use a set of animal counters with two of each kind. Students count the animals in the set. Students who like a challenge could explore playing and counting in twos. Students use the term *pairs* appropriately.
• Students use animal counters or plastic animals to match and where possible count pairs of animals.
• Students use *Kid Pix* software on the computer for diverse learning. Students use software to sort animals. In this software program the line tool is used to fill cans to create background spaces of land, water and sky. The stamp tool can then be used to sort animal stamps into appropriate habitats.
• Students make a chart about the *Awe and Wonder of God’s Creation*. Students use pictures from magazines to cut out animals and paste into awesome groups based on the amazing attributes of animals.
• Students review the key messages in the Noah story through music. Students learn songs about the Noah story and accompany their singing creatively. For example students might use rain sticks or castanets for rain; cymbals or hands clapping furiously for storm conditions; a cacophony of students’ voices for animal noises; whooshing sounds for the wind; a triangle for the dove; bells for sunshine etc.
• Students paint and draw rainbows. Students discuss the amazing attributes of a rainbow and the meaning of the rainbow as a sign God’s promise to care for all of creation.

**Real Life**

• Students review the story of Noah and reflect on how Noah was strong and courageous and had the strength to stand up against the mobs of people who were making bad choices in their lives and laughing at him. Students label and draw ways people today can act with God’s help to stand up against people and things that promote bad choices and things that are harmful.
• Students in role-play act out Noah’s strength in difficult times. Students in role-play act out contemporary real life scenarios when people can be like Noah and with God’s help be strong and courageous.
• Students share their understanding of the way God spoke to Noah. Students share ways that God can speak to people today, especially when they have to make hard choices.
• Students observe, interact and build something with a carpenter or builder. Students make the connection between a contemporary builder and carpenter and Noah. This can be achieved by inviting a real carpenter or builder to the classroom to discuss their trade with the students. Students listen to and view the carpenter’s plans and the mathematics involved in creating a plan. Students are made aware of the need to draw plans using correct measurements before beginning to build, and the need to refer to the plan while building. Students record and list the tools carpenters use to measure, cut and fit wood. Students compare these tools, measures and instruments and the ones Noah used.

*A ‘builder dad’ demonstrating the preparation for building*
• Students list some simple steps for building a boat today.
• Students use a **Then and Now Strategy** to compare building a boat in the time of Noah and building a boat today.
• Students go on an excursion to see a boat or boats.
• Students visit a dry dock, boat yard or marina. Students compare boats, noting sizes and function.
• Students visit an animal sanctuary to investigate how different kinds of animals are housed. Students discuss how Noah might have managed this activity on the ark.
• Students care for a class pet. Students list and label the class pet’s needs and how the pet will be cared for during its stay in the classroom.

**Investigation**

• Students investigate contemporary news items and/or children’s literature and, on a class chart, record the number of people who demonstrate **People who are like Noah** e.g. People who listen to God and are obedient; People who care for the family; People who are patient; People who care for God’s creation; People who are strong and stand up for what they believe; People who are hard-working and build good things for others.
• Students investigate picture book stories and on a class chart record the number of characters whose actions show they are like the people in the Noah story that were making bad choices and mocked Noah.
• Students, with support, search the internet to discover what a cubit and span represented in the time of Noah.
• Students investigate whether the cubit is a reliable unit of measure. Students measure each child’s forearm. Students, with support, make a simple chart to record the results. Is a cubit a reliable unit for measurement?
• Students investigate whether a span is a reliable unit of measure. Students measure diverse objects using the span as a measure. Students use a simple chart to record the results. Students discover whether a span is a reliable unit for measurement.
• Students search the internet or other sources to discover how a cubit or span was recorded in ancient times.
• Students discuss the probability of a contemporary ark being the exact same measurement as Noah’s.
• Students use the measurement activity on this website (http://www.rainforestmaths.com/) to explore ideas about length and non-standard units of measurement, some of which are in the Noah story.
• Provide and discuss rulers and tape measures and make them available to the students. Retractable tape measures are a valuable resource, but should be accompanied by a safety lesson before use, to avoid cuts and other accidents.

*Measuring items with retractable tape measures leads to discussions of length, width, number, comparative size etc., as well as the incentive to make one’s own tape measure.*
• Students use picture cards or plastic animals to describe them in mathematical terms of size: bigger; biggest; long; short; tall; and weight: heavy; light.
• Students brainstorm a possible list of the animals on Noah’s ark. Students independently or in a group count the animals on the list aloud.
• Students investigate the logistics of looking after all the animals on Noah’s ark based on the routines involved in looking after the class pet – if there is one e.g. 1 guinea pig that eats one carrot a day calculate the following: How many carrots would two eat in a day? How many carrots would they eat in a week?
• Students investigate How much space the guinea pigs carrots might take up? How might Noah get water to the guinea pigs?
• Read “Who Sank the Boat” by Pamela Allen. Re-read carefully, looking at the illustrations and discussing what it means to “balance her weight” etc. Give students plasticine to model their choice of animals. Pose the problem to the students: Noah had to fit lots of animals on the ark without making it sink. How could he place the animals carefully to fit as many animals on the ark as possible?
• Students in small groups use their plasticine animals and a boat (i.e. plastic bowl or water trough) to see how many animals they can get into their boat before it sinks. Students keep a tally using tally marks. Students then make a class graph to show how many animals different groups could fit into their boats.
• Students investigate symbols that relate to the Noah story e.g. the anchor, dove, rainbow, water. Students use website http://infants.reonline.org.uk to access a child friendly resource for investigating symbols used in religion. Students use some of these symbols in the class prayer space to invoke meaning, recall of the story and its links to current religious practice.

Routines and Transitions
  • Students sing Johnny works with one Hammer, substituting Noah for Johnny
  • Students move from place to place in pairs. Adjust songs you know to fit, e.g. The Ants go Marching One by One could become:

    The elephants go marching two by two hurrah, hurrah
    The elephants go marching two by two hurrah, hurrah
    The elephants go marching two by two
    Just as Noah told them to do
    And they all went marching up the ramp to the ark.

  • Students perform the daily routines involved in looking after a class pet.
  • Students play animal audios during transition times.
  • Students move like the animal, making a played animal sound or their own animal sound.
  • Students chart the weather each day for 40 days. Students make a duplicate chart to mark how Noah would have recorded the weather over his 40 days on the ark. Students compare the two charts.
Case study

Attributes and Quantities in Biblical Stories: Noah the Dreamer

Meet Jane Batham, an experienced teacher who has taught all levels of primary schooling. She is currently teaching at Our Lady of the Rosary School, Kenmore in a Year 1 classroom. When O.L.R. teachers were approached to trial this Resource material, Jane had just completed a unit that involved introducing her class to the Old Testament story of Noah. Her entry into the story is therefore different to the scenario suggested in this resource. It highlights the fact that there are many pathways to an end and that a creative teacher will always be alert to every opportunity to find these pathways.

Background

This unit is suitable for mid Year 1. The students are mostly in the Applying phase although some students are Making Connections and some are beginning Level 1 outcomes. Students were introduced to Noah via Libby Hathorn’s work of fiction, “The Great Big Animal Ask”. This particular story is about similarities and differences and only at the very end does it make the connection with the biblical story of Noah and the ark. It provided wonderful opportunities for enhancing students understanding of the story through processes such as comparing, matching and contrasting a variety of mathematical and religious attributes RE EMU (b). Other versions of the Noah story were also read including the biblical version of the Noah story from several Bibles. Apart from “The Great Big Animal Ask” my favourite fictional account was “Why Noah Chose the Dove” by Eric Carle. Through focussed teaching and learning the students explored the metaphorical meaning of the Noah story which took them beyond a literal interpretation of the story. Students learning about the messages in the Noah story were centred on the personal attributes of Noah as a man of deep faith. The learning provided opportunities for the students to engage with ways they could be like Noah as a person who: trusted God; cared for all of creation; prayed; listened to God; loved his family and animals; and stood up against bad choices that affected others.

The “Noah” story and related RE EMU activities became part of a larger integrated unit combining ideas about animals and exploring Life & Living outcomes from the Science syllabus as well as exploring concepts of difference and diversity from the Early Years Curriculum. Many of the Noah stories that were used had an alternative focus on the relationships between the animals and the characteristics of the animals. These stories became the basis of our Prayer Assembly which we presented to our whole school community. RE EMU (d)

Focused teaching and learning

- As a whole class the students listened to a variety of Noah stories and compared and contrasted the stories by looking at the beginning (introduction), middle (problem) and end (resolution) in each version of the story. Emphasis was placed on the metaphorical or symbolic meaning of the story rather than a strict literal translation of the story.
- Then the students listed, drew and counted all of the personal attributes and skills of Noah e.g. Noah was a good dad, Noah looked after his family, Noah loved God, Noah did what God asked him, Noah worked hard, Noah was a clever carpenter; Noah cared for all of creation, Noah was strong and stood up for what he believed.
- We also completed activities like a Then and Now Strategy to help students understand Noah’s attributes and how a father or person today could live like Noah. Character shapes of Noah and a contemporary parent and child were used to draw and label how a person of God would live their life like Noah today.
- After lots of discussion and further activities exploring the Noah story and its main religious messages, students made lists of the way people develop their faith or belief in God today.
- Students used Noah’s attributes in simple class prayers.
Integrated Unit Activities

Here are some of the activities we undertook while exploring Noah the Dreamer in an integrated unit. We began by reading a variety of versions of the Noah Story. We then brainstormed a list of some of the animals that Noah would have brought onto the ark.

Animal Sorts (Links to Science:LL1.2)

- Students sat in a circle. An animal card or plastic animal was handed to each child. Hoops were placed in the centre of the circle and students took turns to place their card/animal into the labelled circles. We repeated this activity a few times using different criteria for sorting (legs/no legs; fur/no fur; African animals/Australian animals – a number of students were from a South African background so this was a popular way of sorting.)
- After students were confident with simple sorts into two groups, we extended this thinking to three groups and then overlapped the hoops to create Venn diagrams.
- In the computer programme, Kid Pix, students used the line tool and fill cans to create a background showing land, water and sky. They used the stamp tool to sort animal stamps into appropriate areas.
- Students cut and pasted animal pictures into groups based on attributes such as number of legs and other attributes.
- Students began to classify animals according to their “family”: mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians…

Counting & Number

- Sets of animal counters with two of each kind were provided. The students were asked to count the animals in the set.
- Using animal counters or plastic animals, students matched pairs of animals. (This was used to assess understanding of one-to-one correspondence.)
- Conservation of number was also assessed at this point using the animal sets.
- Students were continually asked to pair animals and count in twos to maintain sets.

Measurement

- The students were asked to use picture cards or plastic animals to describe the animals in terms of size – bigger, biggest, long, short, tall, heavy, light etc. (It is important to ensure that pictures or plastic animals are “accurate” in that the picture of the elephant is in fact bigger than the picture of the mouse to avoid confusion.)

- The students used balance scales to weigh plastic animals or animals students had made from plasticine to determine lighter and heavier.

- Students used the “mass” activity on Rainforest Maths (http://www.rainforestmaths.com/) to explore ideas about comparing weights (Red and Yellow levels are suitable for year 1).

Balance & Thinking Skills, Data

- We read “Who Sank the Boat” by Pamela Allen. We read carefully, looking at the illustrations and discussing what it meant to “balance her weight” etc. Students were given plasticine to model their own choice of animals. The following problem was posed to the students: Noah had to fit lots of animals on the ark without making it sink. How could he place them carefully to fit as many animals on the ark as possible?
- In small groups, students used their plasticine animals and an “ark” (i.e. plastic bowl etc) to see how many animals they could get into their ark before it sank. Students kept a tally using tally marks. They then made a class graph to show how many animals different groups could fit into their arks.
Spatial awareness: What did the ark look like?

- We read an account of the Noah story which included details about the appearance of the ark. We discussed the size of the ark.
- Students constructed a collage of the ark using paddle pop sticks and/or matchsticks to show an ark which had 3 decks, a door in the side, a window and a roof. Once completed, students drew animals on their ark using crayon and painted the background with a blue wash to show the water.
- We discussed shapes seen in the ark picture and location language “in the side”, “on top”, “on the bottom deck” etc.

Addition

We also made rainbow maths facts sheets. I modeled this activity for the whole class, then each child was given a rainbow template to colour and asked to add the numbers 0-10 at the bottom of the page, one number beneath each section. By following the colour band the students could work out the number facts for the number 10.

Reflection

As you can see, we engaged in many maths activities centred on Noah. It was interesting to note that although we were often focused on other E.L.As and K.L.As, particularly Early Mathematical Understandings, many discussions ensued during all the activities undertaken to bring us back to the religious dimension of our study. Throughout the focussed learning activities and other integrated activities the students discussed the main religious messages in the story. They also discussed Noah as a person who loved God, how he was clever and hard-working, how he fed and looked after the animals and his family, how he was patient and worked out when it was time to let the animals off the ark. We decided that Noah always did his best, lived a good life and loved God. We decided that we could be like Noah too.
Getting Started:

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: *Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)*

Students explore patterns and repeated sequences in religious stories, songs and movements [RE EMU (a)]

Students compare and contrast attributes and quantities in environments in biblical times [RE EMU (b)]

Students explore positions, movements and directions related to religious stories, gestures, celebrations and prayers [RE EMU (c)]

Students in the early years often find it difficult to grasp a sense of time. They often feel as though they are waiting for long periods of time for special things to happen e.g. their birthday or the Exhibition. Waiting often affects the feelings of young children more than older people. Patience and getting used to waiting is part of life experience. Young students are also beginning to gain a sense of the value of money and the association between money and pay. What is fair and unfair is also an area of high interest to young children. The class decided to investigate how waiting made them feel. The biblical parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard was used to assist in the exploration of feelings engendered by waiting. It also provided an opportunity to see how students’ mathematical understandings and early numerate practices could be engaged to deepen their understanding of a biblical text.

Teacher Background

In Matthew 20:1-16, the parable of the Labourers and the vineyard, Jesus tells his disciples about the Kingdom of Heaven/God. For a lot of people this passage is upsetting for the same reasons that the workers in the parable are upset – it doesn’t seem fair. The owner of a vineyard has a lot of work to do. So, early in the morning he goes to what would be the equivalent of a modern day local temporary work agency and hires some workers. The number of workers he takes is not enough, so he goes back again to get more people in the middle of the day. This number is still not enough, so he goes back again to get more people in the middle of the day. This number is still not enough, so he goes back again very late in the day and gets more workers.

None of that causes anyone any problems. But, as usual, it is the wages paid that causes the trouble. The vineyard owner pays everyone the same. Of course he told everyone up front what they would make, and they agreed to it, but when they see what they are getting relative to everybody else, the ones who worked all day are upset that those who worked just an hour or two were paid just as much. Further, it seems that the vineyard owner was inviting trouble, since he gave out the pay starting with the last workers. It seems he wanted everyone to see what he was doing.

This particular parable comes right after the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Jesus ends the discussion about that man, who values money more than the Kingdom, with the statement, “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Matt. 19:30). This parable ends with the exact same thought in 20:16. We can assume, therefore, that they are related.

In both stories, money causes the issue. In the first, the Rich Young Ruler cannot give up his possessions in order to follow Jesus. In the second, we see that it isn’t only the rich who have money issues. Here day labourers are also all caught up in who is making what. They agree to a certain wage, but are no longer content with it when they start comparing their income to others.

The vineyard owner makes two points to the disgruntled workers: 1. “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?” and 2. “Or are you envious because I am generous?” (Matt. 20:15) Both are excellent points. In the first, our discomfort with this parable shows that we don’t really believe the money belongs to the owner of the vineyard. Our mindset says that when we work, we are entitled to a wage and that we are entitled to make more than those who work less. We consider the work to be ours once it is done.
That might be very good business sense, but it is not the sense of the Kingdom of God. When we look at labour through God’s eyes, we understand that everything is a gift. Even if the pay had been distributed according to the amount of work each had done, every worker would still own exactly the same amount...zero. Everything belongs to God, and God simply allocates resources as necessary for the work of God’s kingdom. The common wage for all reflects the spiritual reality that none of them owns anything anyway.

It also reflects the spirit of the Kingdom which values the work above any reward. If the workers are only in the vineyard to make a buck, then it seems unfair. But what if they actually loved the work? Suppose they enjoyed harvesting grapes, pruning vines, helping living things to grow? If they loved the work, then it doesn’t matter what the reward is...the work is its own reward, and those who have had the opportunity to do it all day are happier than those who only got to do it for an hour or two.

It begs the question of why we do God’s work. Are those of us who were born into a faithful home, and have tried to do God’s will all of our lives, just in it for the fire insurance? For the heavenly mansions and gold streets? Are we going to be upset because we had to do a lifetime of Christian charity when someone else lived a debauched life and snuck in with a deathbed conversion? If so, that doesn’t say much about the condition of our hearts. And that is what the vineyard owner is getting at with his second point: are you upset that I am generous? Most of us are upset with the thought of a generous God. At times we want God to be generous with us and stingy with everybody else.
Some Useful Resources for Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16)

Scripture and Other Sacred Stories

- *Matthew 20: 1-16*

Film (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)

- The Parables of Jesus DVD
- Shema DVD

Students’ Literature and Reference Books

- Embry M. *Homes and Families Growing up in Bible Times* Lion
- Currie N. Thomson J. *In the Beginning* Church House Pub.
- Strong, D. *The Vineyard and the Wedding*

Music

- 1, 2, 3, Jesus loves me ([http://www.biblestudycharts.com/CH_1-2-3-Jesus_Loves.html](http://www.biblestudycharts.com/CH_1-2-3-Jesus_Loves.html))

Websites

- [www.biblestudycharts.com/CH_1-2-3-Jesus_Loves.html](http://www.biblestudycharts.com/CH_1-2-3-Jesus_Loves.html)
- [www.rainforestmaths.com/](http://www.rainforestmaths.com/)
- [www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7316/coloringpages](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Plains/7316/coloringpages)
- [http://infants.reonline.org.uk](http://infants.reonline.org.uk)
Learning and Teaching Suggestions

The following learning and teaching ideas are presented within the appropriate Early Years Context for Learning. The ideas described here relate to the previously outlined possible scenario (the story of the Labourers in the Vineyard) and have been shaped by the models and frameworks listed at the beginning of this support resource. Particular reference has been made to the Model for Developing Religious Literacy (specifically, the Four Resources Model), and the Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework (specifically, the Roles for Lifelong Learners).

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16)

Focused Teaching and Learning

- Students listen to/view the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard – Matthew 20: 1-16. Students use a range of Bibles, storybooks and films to deepen their understanding of the story.
- Students discuss the beginning or introduction of the parable, the middle or problem part of the story and the interest twist at the end of the story. Students are encouraged to ask questions to make meaning of the parable.
- Students draw mind maps to illustrate their thinking about the story.
- Students re-read the parable. Students add new ideas, words, and imaginative drawings to the class mind maps.
- Students discuss any words or ideas in the story they do not understand.
- Students use Y charts 1 to discover how each of the five groups of labourers felt, sounded and looked as they were alternately left behind and then ultimately hired.
- Students use a Before and After Strategy 1 to discover how each of the five groups of labourers felt, sounded and looked as they were alternately left behind and then ultimately hired.
- Students reflect on the feelings they experienced when they were left out or left behind to wait.
- Students complete individual Y charts 1 using illustrations to express their understanding of how it felt to be left out or left behind when you also wanted to go.
- Students then apply these understandings to the feelings of the workers who waited all day and did not get work. Students role-play these workers using possible words and actions. The following stimulus questions may provide them with words and actions to use in their role-play activity. What do the students think would happen when the workers went home? How do the students feel when their mums and dads come home from work?
- Students discuss what it means to be generous. Students list and draw ideas e.g. sharing, caring, selfless etc.
- Students, with support, record some of the messages from the parable and draw meaning from what Jesus was trying to teach us.
- Students make a Generosity Chart. Students’ names head the list on the chart and students score a sticker or star on the chart each time they exhibit the attribute of generosity during the day. Students discuss progress at the end of each day. For example they may discuss the following questions: What things are easy to do? What things are hard to do? Do we do them at home as well?
- Students as a whole class sequence the story.
- Students use a large class clock and/or positional flash and number cards to mark the passing of the hours. Students add to the illustrations of each sequence.
- Students count to 12 out loud. Students clap as the teacher counts using the clock face numbers.
- Students engage in a music and movement session on counting to 3, 6, 9, 11 and 12. e.g. Walk in a circle and jump on every third beat. Skip in a circle and clap on every sixth beat.
- Students make and display a number line to 12.
Students make number cards marked 1-12. Students, as a whole class, make a number line from 1-12.

Students then use number cards to create their own number line from 1-12 using the class number line as reference.

Students make or use sets of bought cards showing the numbers 1-12 in word, symbol, positional and picture form. Students sort, match and order the cards.

Students retell the story of the Labourers in the vineyard using the number charts from 1-12 to highlight the time of day. Students repeat the last words of the parable read by the teacher to reinforce the meaning of the parable. Students all together say: “The last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Students make an ideas map to draw and name the meaning of Jesus’ words that twist things around: the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

Students complete activities using their mathematical understandings of last and first.

Students discuss the fairness of the pay. Students enact the parable using play money in place of the talents.

Students use a Y charts or Feeling Faces Strategy to explore how the labourers felt about their pay.

**Play**

- Students, with support, make play money and money bags available for the students to act out paying wages.
- Students sew their own money bags for use in the classroom.
- Students play with a variety of clocks, egg timers etc in the play corner.
- Students make emotions masks from the Ideas and Emotions Strategy.
- Students use emotions masks to recall and retell the story of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
- Students make or use instruments to create music or sound effects to accompany the story e.g. the sounding of the hours; the rhythmic beat of the workers; the boss’ walk to town etc.
- Students use collage materials to make the characters from the story.
- Students use their characters to recall and retell tell the story.
- Students use a large box to create the scene of the story. The scenes could be of the boss’ house; his vineyards; the road to town; the town with a marketplace; and anything else the students want to add. Encourage the students to use this setting with their collage characters to recall and retell the story. If you have too many students wanting to use this at once, the class could place a time limit on its use by utilizing a timer of some kind.

**Real Life**

- Students set up an interest table of coins from various countries.
- Students create money bags, with assistance. Paper bags would do, but sewing small Hessian bags, perhaps with a parent helper, would be within the students’ capability.
- Students make a variety of instruments to tell the time e.g. candle clock, sundial, egg timer.
- Students engage in the feelings involved in waiting. Students plan an event to which the students can look forward – a liturgy, party, excursion or something similar for themselves, their buddy class, parents, or whoever is appropriate. Plan for it, make things for it, stage it. Students discuss the process, the waiting, the event and the students’ feelings when it’s all over.
- Students enact the story of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
- Students make a cloth for the prayer table decorated with symbols from the Labourers in the Vineyard story – grapes, vines, hoes, walking feet, helping hands, clocks, coins.
- Students make cloths for a celebratory meal centred on symbols such as grapes and vines from the Labourers in the Vineyard story.
- Students share grapes and grape juice for morning tea.

**Investigation**

- Students search online to find out about denarii, talents, shekels, minas, mites. (See teacher background.)
- Students investigate measures of time.
Students use a **Then and Now Strategy** to compare the use of clocks to tell time today, with clocks in the time of Jesus. Focus questions might be: *What did they use in Jesus’ day? Did they mark the hours in any way so that even the workers in the fields could hear? How did the outside workers know the time?*

Students plot the position of the sun during the day. Students check each day for a week to see if it’s in the same place at the same time each day.

Students investigate time-keeping over the ages, what was used, how it worked, how it was made.

Students experiment with spans of time. Focus questions might be: *Is it harder to wait until the eleventh hour for something you really need or want? Is it more satisfying if you have to wait? Is it better to get what you want quickly?*

**Routines and Transitions**

- Students, with support, set a timer to mark the hours or times of transition.
- Students establish a routine for when the timer rings e.g. all stop to say a short prayer. A different child could take turns to lead if you establish a simple format and response for the prayer. Alternatively, when the timer rings, all students could stop to clap the hours, pick grapes or count imaginary money.
- When the students line up get them to count off, 1, 2, 3.
- Vary the count off by using ordinal numbers 1st, 2nd, 3rd.
- Illustrate the timetable of the class, day. Divide the day into segments that the students identify and get the students to illustrate these. Caption and display this timetable.
Case Study

Patterns and Sequences, Movements and Directions, Attributes and Quantities in Religious Texts: Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

Meet Jane Nowland, a teacher at Our Lady of the Rosary School, Kenmore. Although Jane has taught a variety of year levels she prefers the early years. Jane is currently teaching a Year 2 class at O.L.R. During her engagement with this case study, Jane was ably assisted by Darren Graham, a fourth year Australian Catholic University student on practicum in her classroom.

The Learning Story

Religious Education was integrated into planning for the early years through the story of The Labourers and the Vineyard. For Jane and Darren this Bible story, its religious messages and connection with the mathematical concept of time was ideal. The messages in The Labourers and the Vineyard are about being patient; being thankful for what we are given; waiting and accepting God’s generosity and being generous.

Jane and Darren were planning an excursion to Currumbin Sanctuary as a culminating activity for a unit of work they had been doing. The students were very excited about going on a bus trip and about all the things they would see. They couldn’t wait and the inevitable question was asked again and again. “When are we going to Currumbin?”

Jane and Darren responded by taking the opportunity to discuss how we feel when we have to wait for something we really want. The students were asked to think of something they wanted and used an individual Y chart to reflect on something they wanted and had to wait for, how they felt before they received it and how they felt after they received it.

We took the opportunity to use a poster as a visual aid to help the students count down to the event. Each day, one of the students changed the number on the poster to reflect the number of days the students had to wait.

Nick responded that he wanted the Star Wars Play Station because he could play it on the weekend. He felt sad because he knew he wasn’t going to get it. He didn’t get it because mum said he needed it for Christmas.

Bella wanted a chocolate bar because she loves chocolate. She was sad and angry before she received the chocolate bar, but very happy when she got the bar. She felt good about herself.

Molly wanted to do dance after school. She was very excited beforehand because she knew she was going to do it. She was very happy afterwards because she loves dance.
We introduced and then read several versions of The Parable of Labourers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16). Our favourite was from the Big Book, The Vineyard and the Wedding by Dina Strong.

We talked about how the labourers would have felt when they were picked and how they would have felt when they were not. The students were able to relate to the experience as a result of considering their own feelings on the Y chart while waiting for something they really wanted.

We discussed how the labourers would have felt when they were paid.

This led to a discussion of how generous the land owner was. We posed the questions:

- What is generosity?
- How was the land owner being generous?
- What was Jesus telling us in this parable?
- How can we act generously?
- What would this look like?

As a result of this investigation we made a Generosity Chart and encouraged the students to use it freely. The chart used bunches of grapes to symbolise generous acts. The children were told if someone acts generously towards you, come and take a bunch of grapes from the bottom, open the window and place them on the grapevine. At the end of each day we will open the window and see how many bunches of grapes are on our vine and who was generous and what they did.

Each day we discussed why the grapes had been placed in the window. This was very meaningful for the students and reinforced many positive behaviours both in and out of the classroom.

We re-read First, Middle Last from the Big Book The Vineyard and the Wedding.

Following the re-reading of the story the students were asked, “How do you think the land owner told the time?” They began to realize that watches and clocks as we know them were not invented at the time. The class decided to investigate the following questions:

- What do we know about time?
- What do we want to know?
- How can we find out about time?

They discovered, via books and the internet, that people used obelisks, sun dials and water clocks to measure time. The students were particularly interested in the obelisk as some of them recognized it as a shape they knew from seeing it on television in stories about ancient Egypt or modern stories set in Washington D.C. It was decided that the class would build its own sun clock using an obelisk. We began by making individual obelisks out of paper, with limited success. Hoping for a better result, we sourced large sheets of cardboard, measured and cut them into four long thin triangles all the same size and then measured and cut a square base to fit on the bottom. We taped all the pieces together to make an obelisk. This was taken outside.

The students immediately began to comment on the shadow cast by the obelisk. During our research we had discovered that we needed to mark a circle around the obelisk, situating it at the centre and then mark the movement of the shadow on the circle at regular intervals. This would give us the time – or so we thought. We used a compass to draw the circle in chalk on the asphalt. We then marked a line on the circle where the shadow was situated and wrote the time next to it. During the day we re-visited our ‘clock’ on the hour and marked where the shadow fell and the time. This first effort at clock making was not entirely successful. We did, however, discover that we needed to know true north to record time more accurately.

Once we had accessed a compass and marked north, south, east and west on our circle, we were ready to begin again. The next day we marked 12.00 on the circle when the shadow hit due north at noon. Now each time we visited the clock, the obelisk’s shadow had moved as we predicted. The next day we repeated this process and saw that the obelisk’s shadow fell in almost the same places at the same time as it had the day before.
We then had a cloudy day which raised the question of how to tell the time without the sun and this led on to discussions about water clocks and hour glasses. We also wondered how all this related to the workers in the vineyard because they wouldn’t have had access to even a sun dial. We decided that they would tell the passing of time by the position of the sun in the sky and by the lengthening and shortening of their own shadows.

We revisited this parable once the excursion was over. The students loved drama so we asked them to recall and retell the story, write a script with assistance, and act out the parable. We then shared this and our other experiences of studying the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard with the students’ parents. Students were particularly interested in Jesus’ statement, *the last shall be first and the first shall be last.* The class unpacked this message in terms of the concepts of waiting; being patient; not pushing ahead of others; thinking about others, not just ourselves. We also discussed the way Jesus turned people’s ideas upside down and made them think about their lives and what they were doing.

To remind us of the bible stories we read, we made a mural of the students’ drawings which we situated behind the prayer table. In this sample you can see the influence of the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard through the words recorded, analogue and digital clocks, money, grapes, grape leaf and vineyard. The boat and camel pictures are a reflection of Noah, which we had read previously.
Getting Started:

Spatial Understandings in Prayer and Celebration

Students use spatial understandings to design and/or participate in simple prayer and liturgical celebrations to enhance meaning [RE EMU (d)]

This section of the support resource provides ideas and strategies for incorporating prayer and celebratory action with some of the scripture stories previously explored – Noah the Dreamer, Joseph the Dreamer and the Labourers in the Vineyard. It has not been designed to resemble a teaching and learning sequence. It focuses on the importance of developing students' religious and mathematical understandings of spatial awareness, timing, positioning and movement in simple prayer and liturgical celebrations. Students will experience how this knowledge and awareness enhances religious prayers, celebrations and rituals.

Teacher Background on using Lectio Divina with Young Learners

A simple process for leading Lectio Divina with young children is provided below. Choose a Bible passage for the group. Sit in a circle. The teacher reminds the group, “Don’t worry if there is some silence while we do this. Our goal is to listen, share, and reflect – not to discuss”. Also, remember that the teacher’s comments are not the authoritative word on the passage. All the children’s reflections will be listened to and valued.

It is good to begin the session with a song the children know. The song can be followed with a prayer or a moment of silence. After this, the teacher reads the passage for a first time. Then the teacher says: “When I read the passage again, listen for what you notice or like about the passage – a word, or phrase, or bit of advice”. The teacher reads the passage a second time, which is followed by thirty seconds of silence.

After each child has had the chance to say what they like about the passage, the teacher says, “Now listen again, and this time listen for what God is telling you in this passage”. Then the teacher reads the passage a third time. And again the reading is followed by thirty seconds silence.

After the silence, each child may share what he or she thinks God is saying in this passage. This sharing is done without discussion, questions, or responses from the other children or teacher. (If a child doesn’t want to share, he or she can remain silent.)

The teacher invites each child to thank God for something in the passage that is helpful to their lives. After that is done, the teacher invites each child to pray briefly about a need in their life. The teacher closes the session by leading a final song or by closing in prayer.

Lectio Divina: Noah the Dreamer

RE and Mathematical Understanding of Spatial Awareness, Time and Patterning in a Prayer Setting

Prior to introducing Lectio Divina to young students, they need to be given the opportunity to become familiar with Bible stories being read or told to them. Teachers need to choose stories carefully and to lead the students in exploring the context of the story and the main message for us. Many good versions of scripture stories are available in story cards, student bibles or big books. Fruitful discussions can result from interacting with illustrations. It is recommended that teachers also show students the adult bible and show them the actual location of the story. Teachers need to read the excerpt and also look at some background information from a Bible Commentary. The website http://www.biblegateway.com/ is a good tool for this if a Biblical commentary is not available. Students must be taught about reverence for the Bible as it is a sacred book telling us the story of God and God’s people in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). The Christian Scriptures (New Testament) are focussed on Jesus and how Jesus came to show us how to live as Christians. Teachers are challenged to lead the students in making connections between the bible readings and their life experiences. A good question to ask is “What is this story/words/reading telling us about how we should behave/act/live?” Each child will need a sheet of paper and a pencil/oil pastel.
1. **Readiness:**

Set the scene. Light a candle. Lead students in a stilling exercise focusing on breathing. Pass the bible around the circle in silence. Move in groups to tables or comfortable places on a floor mat while reflective music is playing.

2. **Reading:**

Explain to the students that you are going to read to them from the bible. Stress that it is very important that they listen carefully. Invite them to sit quietly and comfortably on their chair and to gently close their eyes. Read the story or passage. Do not show any illustrations. Leave a short space for silence after the reading.

3. **Reflect:**

Explain that you are going to read the story again and that you want them to think about the story and the message it has for them. What is the story telling you? Ask them to think of one picture/image that they see in their mind as they listen to the story. When the reading of the story is finished, make sure there is space for silence. Ask students to choose a picture or image and draw it in silence. Students can share their drawings and ideas with the person next to them, their group, their teacher or the class.

4. **Respond:**

Students can share their descriptions of their drawing with an adult. The adult can scribe captions for the artwork. It is a good idea for the adult to make a quick record of the students’ description so that they can be accurately scribed at a later date. Alternatively students can be encouraged to write their own message or prayer. It will probably be difficult to do this with the whole group but with music playing and adults moving around to assist students, there will be a fair chance of this happening. It may be necessary to do this in two sessions as long as the sessions are close together. The students’ drawings could be used as a basis for a more developed piece of artwork, e.g. provide water paints to go over the drawing as a wash.

5. **Rest:**

Use a signal e.g. Tibetan bell, rain stick, words, reflective music, to bring the students to silence. Ask them to look carefully at their artwork and to think about how much God and Jesus loves each of them. Take an imaginary photo of your work and let it rest in your heart. Say a little prayer together e.g. Jesus, thank you for listening to us. We know that you love us very much. Help us to be good friends and to listen to you. Amen

**NOTE:**

- Sacred art could be displayed in the classroom.
- Sacred art and prayers could be made into a Big Book.
- Sacred art could be displayed as a focus for a prayer ritual or liturgy.
- Sacred art could be shared with Buddy class or taken home to share with parents.
- Sacred art and prayers could be laminated and made into prayer mats to be used at rainy day eating times.
- Sacred art and prayers could be used as the basis of a class liturgy.
- Sacred art and prayers could be displayed one at a time on the prayer table and used as the basis of daily prayer.
Once the students have had the opportunity to pray in this way, parents could be introduced to the method by incorporating it into a liturgy shared with them. As not all adults are comfortable drawing, it is important to offer them the opportunity to note a word or phrase instead of drawing if they prefer. It may also be prudent to assure parents that they will not have to share their thoughts with the group as many find this intimidating on this kind of occasion. Encouraging the students to share with their individual parents will suffice.

Prayerful Dramatization: *Labourers in the Vineyard*

**RE and Mathematical Understanding of Time and Number in a Re-enactment of a Bible Story**

Divide the students into five groups, one for each group of labourers. A boss and a foreman could also be chosen and a musician appointed to chime the passing of the hours. The students could colour stones to be laid as a path from the vineyard to the town. The musician could drum a rhythmic beat each time the boss goes to town. Students could use prepared masks from the Ideas and Emotions Strategy to identify and express feelings associated with the reading of the Labourers in the Vineyard and/or use their faces and bodies to convey meaning. You will need to investigate vineyards with the students to ascertain what jobs the labourers might be doing so that they can choose actions.
**The Labourers in the Vineyard** (Matthew 20:1-16)

This short play could be used or adapted to reinforce the students’ understanding of the story. It could be used as a way of presenting this Gospel story in a class liturgy. Similarly, a series of paintings could be used to tell the story once it had been broken into its component parts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrator</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Thinking about the Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When Jesus lived on earth, he told lots of stories. One day, he told a story about a man who went out one day to hire workers for his vineyard.</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong> walks from his vineyard to town. <strong>The foreman</strong> could go too.</td>
<td>How do you think the boss would feel at the start of a beautiful day? How do you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of workers were lined up in town waiting for a boss to ask them to work for him. Some of the workers were big and strong. Some of the workers were small and weak. Some of the workers were sick but had to go to work because they had no money.</td>
<td>Workers are divided into five groups and line up in the town.</td>
<td>How would you feel if you were big and strong? How would you feel if you were small and weak? How would you feel if you were sick? (All students participate here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The boss</strong> chose some workers and promised to pay them one denarius for working for him all day. They said, “Yes!”</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong>, “I’ll give you one denarius if you work for me.”</td>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong> Shout for joy like you would if you were lucky enough to be chosen – “Yes! Yahoo!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of the workers were left behind.</td>
<td>The workers left behind look sad and unwanted.</td>
<td><strong>Groups 2-5</strong>. How would you look if you weren’t chosen? How would your body look and move?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After three hours <strong>the boss</strong> came back and chose some more workers. He promised to give them money too.</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong>, “I’ll pay you fairly if you work for me.”</td>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong> Wow. How lucky is that. We thought he would only choose the strongest workers. Show how happy you are. <strong>Groups 3-5</strong> How do you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After six hours and again after nine hours <strong>the boss</strong> came back again.</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong>, “I’ll pay you fairly if you work for me.”</td>
<td><strong>Groups 3 and 4</strong> Here he comes again. Stand up straight and look healthy. Yes, we’re hired. Let’s go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After eleven hours <strong>the boss</strong> came back AGAIN and chose more workers. He promised to give them money too.</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong>, “Why are you standing around doing nothing? I’ll pay you fairly if you work for me.”</td>
<td><strong>Group 5</strong> Can you believe it? He’s chosen us, the sick ones. He’s a kind man. Our families will eat tonight. Let’s go and get to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of the day <strong>the boss</strong> asked the foreman to call all the workers so he could pay them.</td>
<td><strong>The Boss</strong>, “Call all the workers so I can pay them.” <strong>The foreman</strong> calls the workers.</td>
<td><strong>Groups 1-5</strong> You’ve finished work for the day. You’re going to be paid. How happy are you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Religious Education Support Resource for the Early Years

**The boss** asked the foreman to get the workers to line up starting with the workers he hired last.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Boss</th>
<th>The workers line up from Group 5 to Group 1.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Foreman, get the workers to line up starting with the workers I hired last.” Foreman “You heard the boss, line up.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The boss gave the foreman the money and he paid the workers who had come last one denarius. These were the poorest and sickest of the workers and because they had only worked a short time they didn't expect so much money. When they saw how much the last group had been paid all the other workers were overjoyed because they thought they would get lots more because they had worked longer. But when their turn came they were also paid one denarius.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The foreman pays the workers who were hired last one denarius, then he pays the other workers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The foreman pays the workers who were hired last one denarius, then he pays the other workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the boss made a mistake? He's paid you for a full day’s work. What do you say? What do you do? Show how you feel?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Groups 1-4**

What are you feeling when the last group to be hired is paid? What do you say? What do you do? Show how you feel? What happens to those feelings when you are paid the same? What do you say? What do you do? Show how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Boss, “Mate, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for one denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Are you jealous because I am generous?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Groups 1-5**

Workers go off in different directions to their homes.

| Students could follow up by making an illustration of the people who we should love and for whom we should feel compassion by using the **Piecing It Together Strategy**. Students are given a large, blank puzzle piece and cut out pictures of all kinds of different people from magazines – include elderly, disabled, students, mixed ethnic backgrounds, the well dressed and the poor, the well fed and the starving. Students then fit their puzzle pieces together to form a large display of “People who need our help”. They could then draw around their hands, cut out, paint or colour them and make a border of their helping hands to fit around the puzzle. |

The teacher could write a prayer with the students based on the Labourers in the Vineyard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>e.g. Thank you God for giving us the blue sky.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All: Thank you God.

Thank you God for giving us healthy bodies, enough to eat.
Praying using a Story Sequence: *Joseph the Dreamer*

**RE and Mathematical Understanding of Spatial Awareness, Positioning, Movement and Direction, Attributes and Quantities**

Once a story has been read and discussed with the class, ask the students to tell it back to you in sequence. This is simply done by asking, “What happened next?” until you reach the end of the story. Write the sequence as captions, then ask the students which of them would like to illustrate each segment. Illustrations could be painted at the easels or drawn or painted at tables. It doesn’t matter if several students choose the same segment as long as all segments are covered. Once the illustrations are complete, sit the students in a circle. Then begin the story and once again ask, “What happened next?” The students stand and show their illustration at the appropriate time, telling what happened in their segment, until the story is complete. A short prayer may also be incorporated into each segment to make the connection to the students’ lives. e.g. choose a simple prayer template. For the story of Joseph the Dreamer, for example, while holding aloft a painting of Joseph’s brothers throwing him down the well, the child would describe the segment and then pray the following:

Child:  "Lord help us to be kind to our brothers and sisters. Lord hear us.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to be strong like Joseph when times are hard.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to forgive others in my family when they hurt me.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to not to carry grudges about the bad things that have happened to me.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord open my heart and mind to dream like Joseph.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to learn not to boast and show off and be humble as Joseph did in his life.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to be patient.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to stand up for the right thing and not give in to others like Joseph.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”
Child:  “Lord help me to show love to my family.”
All:  “Lord hear our prayer.”

**Arranging the Prayer Table/Space to reflect the class’ current focus**

Prayer may be enhanced by making the class prayer space reflect the current class focus. These examples reflect a focus on Noah. The students may add to the display, access the story in the relevant books and manipulate the pieces. In this way, incidental prayer is encouraged and class prayer given a focus.
Some General Learning and Teaching Suggestions for Incorporating Prayer and Celebration into the Current Class Focus

These prayer and celebration suggestions are not specific to this support resource but have been provided to enhance the prayer and worship element of the religious life of the school and can be used across all of the Early Years Learning Areas.

Play

- Provide a range of bibles in the reading area for students to access in an incidental way.
- Provide a range of books retelling bible stories in a variety of styles.
- Provide a range of stories related to the Christian messages under discussion.
- Display posters and art works based on religious themes or illustrating life in Jesus time.
- Encourage students to use the collage materials to make props for retelling religious stories.
- Encourage the students to use class computers to write and illustrate prayers.
- Encourage the students to use stamps on the computer to make prayers based on symbols. This is an option for students who feel they cannot participate otherwise, because they can’t write yet. Stamps such the dove, anchor, boat, rainbow, animals, could be utilized.
- Encourage the students to use the prayer space at any time.
- Encourage the students to make and place items relevant to the prayer space in the prayer space. At group time the child concerned could explain the item they have added to the class.

Real Life

- Set up a prayer space with the students. Involve them in decisions about what the space will contain. Change the display to reflect topics under discussion.
- Label items in your prayer space to encourage word recognition and to afford the students the opportunity to copy words onto their own work.
- Visit the Church to investigate symbols and items related to the liturgical season displayed there.
- Ask your Parish Priest or APRE to speak to the students about symbols displayed in the church.
- Ask the students to pay particular attention to symbols used in a whole school liturgy, assembly or gathering which the class attends. List the symbols when you get back to the classroom. Incorporate these symbols into your daily prayer when appropriate. These could include the Sign of the Cross, candle, pictures, actions, responses, garments.
- Visit the church and practice appropriate behaviours e.g. using the holy water font, making the Sign of the Cross, genuflecting, kneeling, sitting quietly, making correct responses to prayers.
- Involve the students’ families in prayer by inviting them to pray with you in the classroom, at assemblies and liturgies.
- Involve the students’ families in prayer by sending home material to be shared. This could be in the form of a prayer book to which each family adds a page via an overnight borrowing system. Each day the new addition can be integrated into morning prayer.
- Plan and execute a prayer celebration with your class.
- Choose symbols for a class cross. These can be based on the Class Vision or be a reflection of a topic being discussed. Construct the cross.

These cross samples were provided by O.L.R. School, Kenmore. Each cross was designed by an individual group and the symbols chosen for each reflects the particular Vision of that class, staff or parent group in the school. The crosses were used within classrooms and at whole school prayer gatherings and assemblies throughout the year.
Investigation

- Investigate symbols for use in prayer. ([www.request.org.uk/infants/reonline/symbols/symbols01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/infants/reonline/symbols/symbols01.htm) is a very user friendly site for Early Years students.)
- Investigate celebrations. Why do we have them? What do we celebrate? Can prayers be celebrations?
- Investigate prayer spaces. These need not always be indoors. Set up a prayer space outdoors with the students. Choose a quiet spot, perhaps somewhere the students can stretch out to look up at the trees, clouds and sky. If possible, use natural materials gathered from the playground to decorate the space, for example: a cross made of sticks or flowers from the garden.

Routines and Transitions

- Establish prayer routines with the class. Make a list of the times you pray as a class – at the start of the day, before meals, incidentally, at play time, at the end of the day or whenever. Use symbols to illustrate your list if students are not yet reading worded text.
- Sing a special helping song as you tidy away each day.
- Teach and sing a sacred song or prayer as you go to break times each day.
- Make time each day for students to acknowledge each other’s good works during the day.

Focused Teaching and Learning

- Access [http://www.request.org.uk/infants/reonline/symbols/symbols01.htm](http://www.request.org.uk/infants/reonline/symbols/symbols01.htm) with the class and investigate the symbol section. Discuss the symbols and their meanings with the students.
- Choose relevant symbols to use in your prayer space.
- Practice using the Sign of the Cross, genuflecting, kneeling and other signs, gestures and movements the students may encounter.
- Practice using prayers that require responses so that students are able to respond and feel part of the community e.g.

  Leader: The Lord be with you.
  Response: And also with you.
  Leader: Peace be with you.
  Response: And also with you.

- Discuss liturgical seasons with the class. Incorporate this knowledge in your prayer space.
- Discuss prayer. Ask the students what they think prayer is.
- Establish prayer routines with the class.
Some Useful Resources for Incorporating Prayer and Celebration into the Current Class Focus

Scripture and Other Sacred Stories
- Genesis 37: 1-50 Joseph
- Genesis 6-9 Noah
- Matthew 20: 1-16 Labourers in the Vineyard

Film (available from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education)
- Catholic Basics for Kids DVD

Literature
- Leoni L., Matthew’s Dream
- Jones L. Mister Pip

Music
An extensive range of CDs devoted to Christian music and songs suitable for use with students is available for borrowing from ResourceLink, Brisbane Catholic Education or for purchase from any Christian bookshop.

Websites
- http://www.request.org.uk/infants/reonline/symbols/symbols01.htm
- www.dltk-bible.com
- http://www.request.org.uk/infants/buildings/building00.htm