In our last RE eNewsletter, Bob gave us an insight into how to track student progression in RE. This term, he's sharing his tips for how to encourage RE students to reflect on their own and other’s viewpoints.

In Religious Education, we look to encourage students to develop by giving them time to ask their own questions, and evaluate the different answers offered by faiths to the questions they are investigating. Tasks need to be challenging enough to get students thinking about the religious experiences and concepts they have learned.

When you prepare activities or tasks, ask yourself:

- Does the activity or task get students to hypothesise, to apply ideas to new situations, and to think from other perspectives? Make sure that ‘What if...?’ and ‘What about this situation, or part of life?’ becomes part of the lesson vocabulary.

- Am I encouraging students to compare different ways of understanding a topic within a religious tradition? Use questions such as ‘How different...?’ or ‘How similar...?’ to get a discussion started.

We also want RE students to develop the ability to understand reasons for beliefs and practices, be able to form their own, and justify them. Our lessons need to encourage the development and practice through discussion and debate.

When you hold class discussions, ask your students:

- ‘Can you explain in your own words what you think this person means when she/he says this or does that?’

- ‘Can anyone give another reason that a believer might have for doing this?’

- ‘Can anyone challenge this opinion or idea?’

- ‘Can anyone build on this answer, add to it, or improve it?’

Create plenty of opportunities to ‘think, pair, share’ in groups of twos or threes. Also, invite students to have more formal discussions in groups of fours and fives, where students might have to represent and argue for particular points of view or religious perspectives, using role play. Then, allow them to take a step back and review the arguments they heard, and evaluate whether each student’s own thinking has changed.

Lastly, we also want students to take the time to pause and reflect on the spiritual significance of the profound moral, theological and philosophical messages, answers and truth claims they encounter in RE. This way, students can be supported on their journey of clarifying their own perspectives.

When you plan plenaries or reflections, ask your students:

- To slow down the thinking, and break an idea down step-by-step

- ‘Does this topic/theme have something of significance for me and my life? Can I see a value in this that everyone can learn from?’

- ‘Consider whether anything we have learned today is compelling or convincing to you. Are you moved by what you have seen or heard in any way? What meanings do we take from this, if any?’

- To reflect on what questions the learning raises for themselves in their own lives and thinking about the world.

I hope that these questions will help you to engage your students in RE, help them stay curious and progress!

Best wishes,

Bob Bowie

RE Consultant