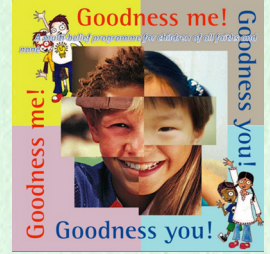


# INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE

## SUPPORT MATERIALS - GMGY - BELIEFS & RELIGIONS



### WHAT IS INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE?

Hill (2013) defines productive inter-faith dialogue as a process of careful listening and sharing of religious beliefs, values and rituals. It is a sincere and respectful exchange among individuals about their religious journeying and searching. It should be a time for honest exchange and mutual learning, a time where trusting relationships can be established.

The GMGY curriculum develops this definition to include those of a non-religious belief. For this reason, the process of dialogue in the strand Beliefs and religions is called 'inter-belief dialogue' in order to incorporate the beliefs of all children, both religious and non-religious. The GMGY curriculum recognises that all children have life experiences which can contribute to dialogue about Beliefs and religions. Non-religious experiences and religious experience are treated with equal importance and worth when exploring the elements.



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### HOW DO I PREPARE CHILDREN FOR INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE?

**Creating a respectful learning environment is very important and teachers need to establish ground rules before entering into inter-belief dialogue (Ipgrave, 2004).**

In order to nurture a respectful environment it is important to explicitly teach the skills for respectful dialogue (see 'The GMGY Learning Environment') prior to engaging in inter-belief dialogue during a GMGY lesson. One way of achieving this is if teachers ask their pupils to identify the ways they like to be spoken to. This discussion elicits lists of behaviours that are respectful, fair, kind, and empathetic

*We respect all beliefs and opinions that are respectful of others.*

during dialogue.

Together, teacher and pupils conclude that treating others the way you want to be treated is the best code of conduct, and they agree that this code will

dictate the behaviours that are appropriate for their GMGY dialogue. The teacher and the children can work together to create a list of ways in which to show respect in a dialogue. Once the teacher feels that the children are prepared to engage with the lesson content and once the rules of respectful dialogue have been established, the pupils will then be ready to engage in inter-belief dialogue.

Teachers can strengthen intrinsic motivation by recognising and positively reinforcing positive engagement skills when they see them. When students make the connection between their respectful engagement and feeling good about themselves, intrinsic motivation is enhanced and respectful engagements will continue to occur.

### HOW DO I BECOME A ROLE MODEL OF RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE IN MY CLASSROOM?

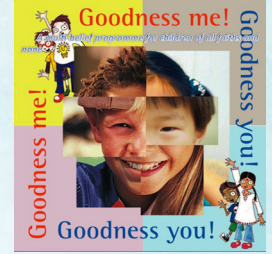
The teacher is recognised as the facilitator of inter-belief dialogue and as such it is important that the teacher be a model of respectful dialogue to the children. It is important that before the Beliefs and religions lessons, teachers consider how much they know about the religious and non-religious backgrounds of their pupils and reflect on how their own religious or non-religious understanding may be challenged by that of their pupils.

A reflective practitioner will reflect upon their own teaching in order to attain the desired classroom culture of respect. The following guidelines from the research of Miller and Pedro (2006) aim to assist teachers in reflecting upon their current practice.

*'In order for teachers to foster respect among students, teachers need to reflect on their own values and biases, consider the contexts of student lives and ponder what it is they are teaching their students.'*  
(Miller & Pedro, 2006)

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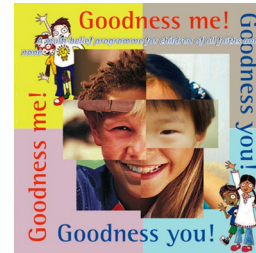
### THE RESPECTFUL CLASSROOM INVENTORY FOR TEACHERS

1. I am polite to pupils.
2. I am polite to parents.
3. I am polite to the adults in the school community.
4. I set the tone for tolerance and acceptance of people, behaviour and ideas.
5. I set high expectations for all my pupils.
6. I engage in ongoing monitoring of pupils' behaviour.
7. I convey respect when pupils are speaking in class.
8. I speak directly to my pupils to show respect and to help them to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
9. I establish guidelines for treating one another with courtesy, allowing others to maintain their sense of dignity and appreciating other's individuality.
10. I work effectively with all my pupils regardless of ability.
11. I encourage respect and the importance of working well with others.
12. I enforce and follow-through on the behaviours of individual pupils who do not follow these guidelines.



# INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE

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### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER DURING INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE?

During inter-belief dialogue teachers should embrace the knowledge of their pupils. Pupils are viewed as experts in their own belief experiences. The teacher is the facilitator of the child's voice and the role of the teacher as the facilitator is to help and support the conversation to continue in a respectful manner, ensuring all children who wish to participate have an opportunity to do so.

Teachers do not have to be experts in every religion and belief; instead they can embrace the rich knowledge and experience of their pupils. Teachers, of course, may supplement the children's dialogue with additional information but their primary role is one of encouraging respectful dialogue through listening, questioning and supporting children's expression of their experiences.

### WHEN DO I FACILITATE THE DIALOGUE?

Inter-belief dialogue happens in the Beliefs and religions strand. The dialogue may arise during the lesson when children are learning about an element and wish to share their experience of this element. Inter-belief dialogue may also happen when children present their Family Project to their peers. The children's experience of religion outside of

school is recognised in the context of the Family Project. It may also occur in other strands, other subject areas and in informal settings.

*An inclusive religious lesson is one which provides a structure within which differences can meet, listen to and learn from each other.' (Ipgrave, 2004)*

Research notes that 'pupils should be given opportunities to express and develop their own religious understanding within the lesson' (Ipgrave, 2004). The teacher is the facilitator of this expression and understanding in a GMGY lesson. Pupils from non-religious backgrounds should have equal opportunities to express their belief/life experiences as their religious peers. The Family Project and the presentation components of each Beliefs and religions lesson ensure that the child's experience of religious and non-religious concepts inform the lesson and the learning.

### WHERE CAN I START?

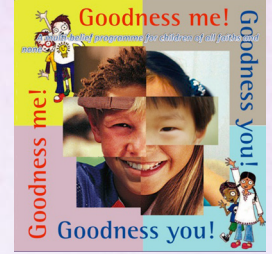
Children will begin their inter-belief dialogue during the presentation of the Family Project. Below are some additional suggestions of how to incorporate and promote inter-belief dialogue in your classroom. Some of the suggestions can be particularly helpful if there is a low level of religious diversity present in your school.

#### **Use of interactive technology**

Skype or email can be used to make connections with other Community National Schools. If there are no representatives from a religion or a belief that you are learning about you might like to make a connection with the

# INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE

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same class level in another CNS school and they can share their Family Projects via skype or email. This enables children to encounter diversity that may not be present in their own school and to engage in inter-belief dialogue with children from other religious and non-religious backgrounds.

### Belief circles

Belief circles are an inter-belief dialogue methodology which have been developed by Dr Patricia Kiernan (2017). A belief circle might look like this:



### Instructions:

This activity can be done at the end of an element to revise the element.

1. Children sit in a circle in groups of six. The spinner is placed in the centre of the group.
2. One child spins the arrow and whichever topic it lands on will be the subject of the discussion.
3. Once the topic has been decided by the spinner the children pass around the talking object and each child says one thing they found interesting and asks one question they still have about the topic.
4. One child writes down the questions.
5. At the end of the activity, when everyone has had a turn, the children discuss the questions that have arisen. Questions that remain unanswered can be kept for further research by the children.

Please note: It is important to make children aware that they do not have to speak during this activity and can pass the talking object to the next person without saying anything.

# INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE

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The following rules accompany this methodology:

1. Everybody is invited to speak but nobody is forced to speak.
2. Silence is a valuable form of participation and communication.
3. Everybody speaks about their own views: 'I think' or 'I believe' or 'I feel'.
4. Everybody is invited to speak for an equal amount of time.
5. Everybody in the group gets a turn to talk (clockwise rotation with the talking object).
6. Everybody agrees to listen actively to the person who is talking and not to interrupt.
7. Nobody criticises or ridicules another person's beliefs.
8. Nobody tries to convert other people to their personal beliefs.



# INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE

## SUPPORT MATERIALS - GMGY - BELIEFS & RELIGIONS



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