

Development of a Big Idea – Martineau August 4 2015

Date: August 4, 2015	Grade: 6
BIG IDEA: Believing	
Our Shared Understanding: What does “to believe” mean? What does it mean to believe in something bigger than yourself? In the world of faith, in the teachings of the Catholic church, what does the value and act of believing mean? (Check out: Catechism of the Catholic Church, common understandings of “believe”, what does the religious education curriculum say about believing?) <i>I think to believe means to see something beyond yourself, to trust that something/someone can be, sometimes without physically seeing them but through recognizing the signs of their existence. I think believing is critical for human health – we need something, someone bigger than our small lives to push us beyond the boundaries of our human limitations in thought, action, and value and to give meaning to who we are and to call forth the best of who we are. There is a big difference between “beliefs” and “believing” – nouns and verbs, action and content. The act of believing involves having an experience or encounter, it means processing and owning that encounter, it means trusting sometimes in something that doesn’t seem to rationally make sense and that at the same time is what makes sense. Faith doesn’t have a corresponding word – i.e. faith, faithing – it is like the word faith encompasses the noun and verb of believe/beliefs.</i> <i>For us as Catholics we profess what we believe in the creed every Sunday. Creed – : a statement of the basic beliefs of a religion;</i> <i>: an idea or set of beliefs that guides the actions of a person or group; Origin of CREED:Middle English <i>crede</i>, from Old English <i>crēda</i>, from Latin <i>credo</i> (first word of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), from <i>credere</i> to believe, trust, entrust; akin to Old Irish <i>cretid</i> he believes, Sanskrit <i>śrad-dadhāti</i> First Known Use: before 12th century</i> <i>Dictionary: intransitive verb</i> <i>1a : to have a firm religious faith; b : to accept something as true, genuine, or real <ideals we believe in> <believes in ghosts></i> <i>2: to have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something <believe in exercise></i> <i>3 : to hold an opinion : think <I believe so></i> <i>transitive verb</i> <i>1a : to consider to be true or honest <believe the reports> <you wouldn't believe how long it took></i> <i>b : to accept the word or evidence of <I believe you> <couldn't believe my ears></i> <i>2: to hold as an opinion : suppose <I believe it will rain soon></i> <i>— be·liev·er noun</i> Practicing believer...it is expected that one practices, one lives out, what one believes. Those baptized as adults receive a copy of the creed as a sign of what they are agreeing to believe in and live out. Baptism is the ultimate saying yes to of what we believe. The religious ed curriculum: this is section one from the catechism (Profession of Faith). Focus is on: God’s self-revelation (Jesus, Scripture, apostolic tradition), Creed as a summary of Catholic belief and profession of faith, and the Church founded by Christ to be one, holy, catholic, apostolic. Interesting phrase: “students should have a genuine understanding of these teachings so that their learning is not simply a memorization of formulas but an intelligent articulation of their faith in a language that is appropriate to both the Catholic tradition and to their age and ability. (Martineau note: then the document	

becomes “narrow” saying : “the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in is written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. “

Common and Ongoing Student Misconceptions: What do you think are common misconceptions that students at your grade level have about believing or the role of beliefs? Where do they think beliefs came from, what do they misconceive about why people believe? Or what people believe in? Or why people believe?

Example: beliefs are something magical, if you believe in them good things will happen...they are things you need to believe in because people tell you to.

I think some students don't understand how doubt and belief are actually partners, with doubt pushing us to deepen our knowledge and practice, and with belief sometimes carrying us through patches of doubt ...I think grade 6 students may struggle with the relevance of a 2000 year old creed, some may link belief to one's head like a check list of things you know in your heart but don't necessarily live out...I don't think students hear enough about the “heart” level living of belief from people of all ages and backgrounds so it becomes limited to “holy roller” types.

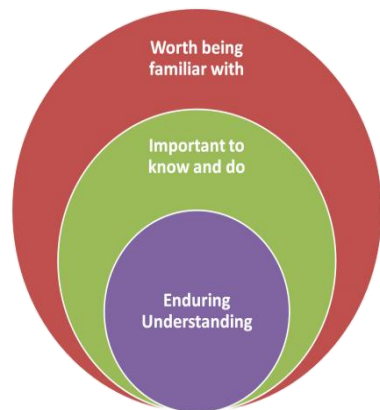
Essential Questions: What questions can be asked to help students at this grade level explore “believing”?

Example: (Gr. 6) What do you believe in your life? What values do you believe in? Why? How did you come to know them? Who or what sets out what people believe in?

Where do we see signs of people believing in something larger than themselves in our world? What is your theory of how people come to believe in something strongly enough to put their life on the line for those beliefs? What seems to help people remain committed to what they believe? What questions do you have about the meaning of life – do those seem to connect to believe/beliefs at all? If you were to summarize a top ten list of what you believe what would be on it and why? How are doubt and belief friends? Can they be? Who decides what is important for another to believe in, who figured out for example what the creed we profess needed to contain?

(Essential questions are open ended, call for higher-order thinking, raise additional questions, are thought provoking, contain important and transferable ideas, and require support and justification.)

Enduring Understandings:



The outer ring represents knowledge “**worth being familiar with**” for students. This is broad-brush, big-picture knowledge; think of it as contextual knowledge. The middle ring encapsulates knowledge and skills that are “**important to know and do.**” You can think of this ring as prerequisites for mastering the material. And finally, the smallest ring, the inner ring, represents “**enduring understanding**”—the fundamental ideas you want to students to remember days and months and years later, even after they’ve forgotten the details of the course.

What is it about believing that you think needs to have lasting value beyond the classroom and school?

What is it about believing that is counter-intuitive? (A counterintuitive proposition is one that does not seem likely to be true when assessed using intuition, common sense, or gut feelings.)

What about believing requires “uncoverage”?

What about believing arises from many and varied experiences and reflections on those experiences?

In response to this section I was drawn to the Hope Expectations for Junior in the curriculum and noticed the verbs and skills presented there:

“reflect on” the saving story of our faith and how we are to respond... I think an enduring understanding is placing value on the act of reflecting, of truly seeing and responding to what is around us...

“cherish” the scriptures as an encounter with God and with Jesus the living Word ...how does one fall in love with the Word? What needs to be uncovered is how to read and appreciate and value scripture and our encounters with God in that Word...from prayer to study – skills grade 6ers need to really fall in love with the Word versus just seeing it as something to look up and read because we are in religion class...

“actively seek” to find the face of God in scripture, creation, and particularly in the face of the other...I think grade 6ers forget about the active part of being a believer, they perceive it as an end not a process...for example confirmation may be seen as the sacrament that ends one’s formal commitment to learning about one’s faith.

“proclaim with confidence” a belief in the mysteries of the Catholic faith, the Creed....I don’t think we practice the how of this, it is an assumed skill or it is assumed that it won’t be really lived...

The counter intuitive I think for me may be the intimate link between doubt and belief, I think that needs uncovering at this level...

Check out: Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding by McTighe & Wiggins, The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High Quality Units by Wiggins and McTighe