# *Transcending the Commonplace: Spirituality in the Curriculum*

HARRO VAN BRUMMELEN
ROBERT KOOLE
KIMBERLY FRANKLIN
*Trinity Western University*

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the importance of including spirituality in the curriculum. It describes how the absence of spirituality in the curriculum has left a void in the official curriculum of public education in English-speaking Canada. The paper describes examples of programs that provide opportunities for students to explore life's ultimate questions of heart and soul. After considering some obstacles, it then proposes guidelines for including the spiritual dimension of human life in public education in ways that do not indoctrinate but allow students to investigate how individuals and cultures have addressed spiritual concerns and issues.

RÉSUMÉ: Dans ce papier, l'on découvre l'importance de tenir compte de la spiritualité dans le programme d'enseignement. Il y est expliqué comment l'absence de spiritualité a créé un vide dans le programme officiel de l'enseignement public du Canada anglais. Des exemples de programmes d'enseignement décrits dans l'article, fournissent aux étudiants les occasions d'explorer les dernières questions sur le cœur et l'âme dans la vie. Après avoir considéré certains obstacles, on y propose des lignes directrices pour apporter la dimension spirituelle de la vie humaine dans l'enseignement public, de façon à ne pas endoctriner les étudiants mais, au contraire, leurs permettre d'étudier la manière dont les êtres et les cultures se sont tournés vers des préoccupations et questions spirituelles.

Public schools in Canada generally exclude the spiritual or transcendent dimension of human life. They have bought into a brand of secularism that proscribes the consideration of spirituality as well as religion (Todd, 1999). While the exclusion of spirituality has often resulted from efforts to avoid sectarianism and reduce religious discrimination, its omission

*Journal of Educational Thought*
Vol. 38, No. 3, 2004, 237-253.

gives students the false impression that spirituality has never been an important part of the human experience. However, the eclipse of the spiritual dimension of life in the curriculum contributes to superficiality of educational purpose and meaning and, hence, to the impoverishment of students (O'Sullivan, 1999). The spiritual dimension of life can nourish students' educational context, experience, and understanding and thus enrich their knowledge and discernment.

Spirituality is a way of contemplating and encountering the fundamental mysteries of the universe. Spirituality prompts students to ponder the diverse ways humans have made sense of the world. When given the opportunity, students frequently ask challenging yet vital questions whose roots are spiritual: Why am I here? What should I believe? Does God exist and how do I know? Can I make a difference in the world? How do I respond to suffering, violence, and injustice? How do I maintain hope? Is there life after death? Without a vision that provides a bearing for searching for answers to their profound questions, students remain rudderless. It is no surprise, then, that John McNeil (1995) reports that a middle school teacher's question about her students' greatest concerns in life led the class to study a unit on death and dying. Similarly, teachers report that students' interest in units on spirituality or religion is surprisingly high (Todd, 1999). Spirituality helps students consider the questions of their inner spirits and then question their answers as they deepen their search for meaning and wholeness in their lives.

The scope of spirituality is broader than that of religion. Religion does not encompass all of spirituality. It is possible to be spiritual without being religious. Nevertheless, at its best, religious faith provides an evocative core for a person's spiritual life. It is therefore regrettable that teachers sometimes deflect students' inner questions because they invite religious responses. Both spirituality and religion can provide insight into people's motives and actions and alleviate prejudice. Both have inspired artists as well as scientists. Also, knowledge about religion is essential for understanding and living in a pluralistic society (National Council for the Social Studies, 1998; Kirman 2002; Douglass, 2002). Therefore educators must ask how, in a pluralistic society, the curriculum can transcend immediate proficiencies and include a search for truth and meaning that strives for a creative transformation of everyday life.

In this paper, therefore, we discuss the importance of including spirituality in the curriculum. We give examples of curricular approaches that overcome the spiritual void and provide opportunities for students to explore life's ultimate questions of heart and soul. After responding to some obstacles to teaching spirituality, we then propose guidelines for including the spiritual dimension of human life in public education in a non-indoctrinating way.

## *The Exclusion of Spirituality from School Programs*

Canada is a pluralistic, multicultural, and multi-religious nation. For many Canadians, including recent immigrants, spirituality and culture are closely intertwined. The spiritual dimension of their lives shapes how they view the world. Their spiritual scaffolding shapes not only their daily lives but also their hopes and dreams for the future. Leaders of religious minorities therefore often oppose removing teaching religion from schools. Writes a Sikh Temple Committee President, "Any attempt to purge Christmas [from schools] should be strongly condemned .... We should appreciate and respect each other's traditions, whether celebrating Christmas, Diwali, Hanukkah, Ramadan, or Vaisakhi" (Gill, 2002, p. A23). Yet textbook coverage of contemporary religion "seldom explains religion's role in shaping human thought and action" and "is uniformly scant, usually unsympathetic, and sometimes inaccurate" (Sewall, 1995, pp. 33 & 34).

Today, government-mandated curricula in Canada usually ignore spirituality and religion. In British Columbia, one force behind the curriculum's spiritual void is that its *School Act* states that public schools "must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles," and that "no religious dogma or creed is to be taught in a school" (British Columbia *School Act*, 2002, paragraphs 76 (1) & (2)). As a result, for instance, British Columbia's K-12 Education Plan omits any direct reference to spirituality and religion, and even its Personal Planning K-7 and Career and Personal Planning 8-12 curricula fail to make any suggestion that students' personal decisions and actions could be guided by underlying beliefs and values (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1994, 1995, & 1997). Similarly, not one of the learning outcomes in the British Columbia K-11 social studies curriculum recognizes that people have diverse spiritual backgrounds that shape their lives. Not even one subpoint outlined for study in grade 7 ancient world cultures recognizes that religion was a guiding force in those cultures. Science curriculum guides warn teachers that no religious

dogma or belief may be presented in the course of instruction, including reference to intelligent design, despite the fact that such questions often arise in research in cosmology (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 3; Davies 1983, 1999).

Most curricula assume that "secular" means the exclusion of all spiritual and religious concerns and disregard these aspects of life, restricting real freedom of religion in schools. Parker Palmer (1999) concludes, "the price is a school system that alienates and dulls us, that graduates young people who have had no mentoring in the questions that both enliven and vex the human spirit" (p. 6). Lois Sweet (1996), in her landmark study of religion in Canadian schools adds, "public schools must begin to examine ways to include the spiritual dimension of human existence in a non-indoctrinating way" (p. 33). She suggests a need to "undertake a critical examination of curriculums with a view to determining how best to teach worldviews that are sensitive to religious differences" (p. 34).

A recent decision by Canada's Supreme Court makes a similar point. It recently stated that secularism in British Columbia's *School Act* does not necessarily mean the exclusion of religion (*Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*, 2002):

> Religion is an integral aspect of people's lives .... What secularism does rule out, however, is any attempt to use the religious view of one part of the community to exclude from consideration the values of other members of the community .... The requirement for secularism ... simply signals the need for educational decisions and policies, whatever their motivation, to respect the multiplicity of religious and moral views that are held by families in the school community. (Para. 19 & 59)

The question that we therefore address in this paper is how spiritually deprived curricula can be moved beyond the illusion of spiritual and moral neutrality, and yet ensure that such programs respect students' multicultural and religious diversity.

## *Spirituality and Education*

A consensus on the meaning of spirituality does not exist. What *is* clear is that it involves questions of transcendence, mystery, value, and universality, and that the quest for spiritual transformation has always been a manifest aspect of human nature and culture. For the purpose of this paper, spirituality is defined as follows (Wright, 1998):

> *Spirituality is the developing relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is – or is perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth.* (p. 88)

Such spirituality usually involves "a transcendentally framed and morally directed way of life that faithfully aims to rebind the broken cosmos from generation to generation" (Schultze, 2002, p. 75). It puts human beings in touch and communion with the "beyond" of everyday life. While it often includes the divine, spiritual experience may also take place outside of religious traditions. Although religion is part of the spiritual dimension of life, spirituality is not exhausted by religion (O'Sullivan, 1999). For instance, spirituality may involve provoking imagination and intuition as well as critical thinking about cosmological and metaphysical awareness. Rachael Kessler (2000) prefers to use the term "soul," stating that this word calls attention to the inner life, the depth dimension of human experience, to the longing for more than a material and fragmented existence. In this sense, spirituality aims to illuminate meaning through story, allegory, poem, metaphor, image, symbol, or faith-related experience.

Spirituality education, therefore, pursues a course that differs from both the modern and postmodern paths. The modern positivist instrumentalism common in schools today may help to increase the Gross Domestic Product, but it reduces the function of humans to their economic dimension. The overemphasis on benchmarked performance assessments restructures schools to become productive but narrowly task-oriented workplaces. Wisdom, thought, and careful deliberation are reduced to information and skill performance. On the other hand, postmodern radical constructivism easily leads to individualistic, self-centered freedom with personal but disposable worldviews (Wright, 1998). Thus modernists often dismiss the universal human quest for truth, for shared meaning, and the transcendent, while radical postmodernists personalize and relativize it in ways that eventually lead to unrestrained freedom and a rejection of the notion that communal values are essential for democracy to flourish.

The inclusion of spirituality education in the curriculum may help address the shortcomings of both extreme modernism and postmodernism. Such education can connect students with their deepest selves, with other humans, with the cosmos in its awe-inspiring complexity, and with the larger purposes, potentials, and powers that transcend limited personal concerns (Vokey, 2000). It encourages students to examine how questions about peace, justice, and goodness

can be better informed through both personal and collective quests of spirituality. Schultze (2002) points out that "religious traditions provide some of the best ways of expanding the margins of our knowing beyond the bounds of techno-correctness" (p. 162). Those traditions also allow people to "sojourn in a 'now' that is informed by wisdom from the past and directed by desires for a good future" (p. 206). To make authentic and compelling life choices, students need to consider inner beliefs and universal values. A UNESCO report on education points out the importance of this position:

> It is thus education's noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration on the Commission's part to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon. (Delors et al., 1996, p. 16)

Schools also fail to prepare students fully to live in Canadian society unless they understand how religion, one facet of spirituality, has been and is a crucial cultural component. Religious faith has inspired social reform movements and a pursuit for harmony and social and economic justice. However, it has also led to conflict and persecution. Religious literacy can promote appreciation of and respect for diverse worldviews and value frameworks. Excluding religion from the curriculum leaves the impression that it is irrelevant in modern life, and that no religion has persuasive truth claims. In effect, such curricula endorse a passive hostility towards all religious points of view. To promote religious tolerance, teachers must give students full opportunity to explore and express diverse spiritual and religious perspectives, views, and attitudes in an atmosphere of trust and respect.

## *Including Spirituality in the Curriculum: Promising Approaches*

The following examples demonstrate meaningful and defensible ways for public education to incorporate spirituality in its curriculum. We begin with a consideration of the teaching of worldviews and religions, and then broaden the spiritual scope to include the consideration of transcendence and life's "big questions."

### *Teaching about Worldviews and Religions*

Educators often assume that the most direct way to incorporate spirituality in the curriculum is to teach about religions. The First Amendment Center in the United States, backed by a broad array of educational, civic, and religious stakeholders, promotes the teaching about religion in an objective way. Like the Ontario Ministry of Education (1994), the Center recommends that religion be taught for awareness and insight into a diversity of religions. It adds that this should be done not for the practice or adherence to any religion, and without promoting or denigrating the ideals of any faith. The danger in this approach is that religion may be de-spiritualized if taught in a purely cognitive, rational way. However, the teaching *of* religion (not just teaching *about* religion), if done sensitively, can be a starting point for developing students' capabilities "for entering participatory relationships with the deep powers of the universe" (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 224). Since worldviews are often but not necessarily shaped by religious beliefs, the study of religious and non-religious worldviews will give students a broader understanding of what has motivated humans as they participated in and forged cultures.

As Nord and Haynes (1998) show, teachers can weave the study of worldviews and religions appropriately and responsibly into almost all subject areas. In history and social studies, for example, students can explore how the ideals and beliefs of people have affected various cultures, both positively and negatively. The study of literature can help students grow in their personal insights about reality and meaning. Books as diverse as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Lord of the Flies* lead to discussions of what is good or evil and the source of morality, values, and views of life. The differing worldviews of the Greeks, Chinese, and Arabs led to very different approaches to mathematics – and even different conceptions of what constitutes evidence or proof of a mathematical result (Howell & Bradley, 2001). The history of art and music manifests the roles of both religious and non-religious worldviews in shaping culture. Also, at the elementary level, students can study the meanings of holidays, customs, and basic beliefs of the major religions. Indeed, "properly considered, the study of family, community, various cultures, the nation, and other key themes and topics important in the early grades all require some discussion of religion" (Nord & Haynes, 1998, p. 63).

The teaching of religion is also important since adherents of particular religions – as well as adherents of no religion – often have

stereotypical views of other religions. The Islamic scholar Susan Douglass (2002) argues that "learning about the history, cultures, and belief systems of peoples who share the globe engenders respect and understanding" (p. 33) – as long as the study is not so superficial that it creates caricatures and that it gives current and not just historical coverage of major religions in a fair and balanced way. Schools do have to take into account their local context, and therefore the study of religion should also reflect the diversity of religious views held by families in the school community

Worthy of note is a religious study curriculum prepared by what was at that time the Protestant Committee of the Quebec Ministry of Education in 1991. The course consisted of three modules: a Biblical module, a phenomena of religion module, and a personal development module. The Committee emphasized that they did not choose the Bible to lead students toward or away from belief, but only to foster a spirit of openness and to help students examine academically "the values which underlie Western civilization" (Protestant Committee, 1992b, p. 16). The Committee designed its second "Celebration/World Religions" module to cultivate respect for all religious traditions, including aboriginal spirituality. The third module provided "a context within which the student may see moral and spiritual values brought into focus in the concerns of life and work" (Protestant Committee, 1992a, p. 14). Some of the topics dealt with peaceful solutions to conflict and concern for the vulnerable. Throughout, the program promoted the search for truth while not favouring any particular religious or ideological position. It recognized that all students must be free to weigh alternative points of view (p. 18). Here teachers could also show how postmodern ethics often deals with issues of personal existence without turning to spirituality or religion.

## *Nurturing a Sacramental Cosmology*

Thomas Groome's *Educating for Life* (1998) encourages teachers to adopt and nurture a sacramental cosmology – that is, awareness that each aspect of life manifests visible signs of invisible grace. Educators, he holds, should promote an attitude of gratitude to and reverence for the world. They must ensure that outlooks are not hardened and that students and teachers alike remain open to new learning. Teachers are to affirm that reality is good and can teach us a great deal about life. They are to bring to light the thousands of wonders and transcendent

signals in the ordinary things of life: seeing how symbols and metaphors reveal deep meaning; valuing beauty and the prophetic in awakening human consciousness; contemplating "the book of the world" with a gaze of faith that encourages seeking meaning and celebrating aesthetic surprise and awe; experiencing the ultimate mystery of the web of humanity, including love and friendship; exploring the intricate and consistent designs and patterns of science, and the inscrutability of the infinite in mathematics. As a Catholic Christian, he says that the epitome of a sacramental cosmology is "to see God in all things" (p. 126).

With such a cosmology, a flower, for instance, then becomes an icon, a window to unlimited possibilities of learning. It teaches us not just about its own physical reality but also about the reality of other living things. It teaches us about our relationship to life, our understanding of our own lives in relation to others, and our relations to the unknown or even the divine. In education, the ultimate horizon of such a sacramental cosmology is an unfathomable mystery that leads to contemplative wonder and appreciation, and is rooted in compassionate and loving relationships that embrace meaningful knowing.

Groome (1998) suggests that teachers who intentionally adopt such a cosmology will find that it "inevitably permeates their teaching and encourages a similar outlook in learners" (p. 151). They will educate in ways that promote voice, visibility, and vitality. They will encourage a sense that life is gracious, meaningful, and worthwhile, encouraging creativity and generativity. They will ask questions that awaken students' consciousness about life. They will invite contemplation and critical thinking about what was, what is, and what might be, whether that be about human suffering, justice for the poor and oppressed, ecological sensitivity, or envisioning a new future.

### *Transcendence and Creativity as Gateways to the Soul*

The views of Rachael Kessler (2000) overlap with Thomas Groome's in that she also wants teachers to nurture openness to mystery. She believes that this best takes place in a classroom learning community that transcends prejudice and stereotypes through open and honest communication. In such a setting, she suggests that teachers invite students to share stories of transformational moments in their own lives, and to share the stories of others through literature, poetry, and art. Teachers also invite students to share and meditate on things that they cannot explain in life, including human suffering. For Kessler,

transcendence involves rising above the everyday dimensions of life and their usual limitations. She believes that this can be done not only through quiet reflection and visualization, but also through athletic, academic, and artistic performances that take students to new levels. Adolescents in particular, she holds, need ecstatic experiences as they mature, and if the spiritual potential of such experiences is ignored, opportunities for evocative and meaningful growth are lost.

One important way for students to reach for such transcendence and nourish their spirit is through creativity and imagination. Creativity connects and nourishes the body, mind, heart, and spirit. It inspires, illuminates, and verifies. It brings about new insights, new beginnings, new possibilities, and new hope. "Creative expression – the opportunity to move laterally through symbol and metaphor, representing thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a non-linear way – can be one of our most important allies in inviting the soul of young people into the classroom" (Kessler, 2000, p. 114).

Teachers need to welcome the unknown and provide time for immersion in an experience. Creativity and imagination allow students to know the world and know themselves in a more profound way than if they only manipulated concepts and skills. In science, for instance, students can use a jeweler's loupe to observe the detail and wonder of the natural world, draw the world observed within the loupe, and write descriptive poetry in response (Ruef, 1992). Grade 9 mathematics students can become delightfully energized as they explore the wonders of the Fibonacci sequence. They can extend and apply their new mathematical insights imaginatively in art and in science, discovering something of the astonishing mystery of the design of the universe. Creative self-expression based on amazement and delight in the wonder of our world replenishes the soul in life-giving ways and can do so in all subject areas.

### *Life's Big Questions*

Incorporating life's *big questions* is another promising approach that is a natural fit with curricula that adopt a conceptual lens leading to enduring understanding through the exploration of guiding questions. Neglecting such big questions in school classrooms will not make them disappear. Indeed, disregard will contribute either to students leading a shallow, consumer-oriented life, or will convince them that school has

little relevance for life's real issues and questions. With our students, we need to explore questions that lead to enduring understanding:

- Who am I? What's the purpose and meaning of my life? How can I experience fulfillment?
- What should I believe? Does a God exist and how do I know?
- How do I deal with loneliness, suffering, and death?
- How can I connect meaningfully with others and reach out to them with compassion and justice?

When incorporating life's big questions in the curriculum, teachers pose questions themselves, but also invite and stimulate students to raise questions. In mathematics they ask, "How can we be sure of anything?" In science they wonder, "What is the origin of the universe and what is life?" In the arts they process questions that enable them to express their thoughts and innermost feelings and how these affect and transform them. In social studies they ask "Can justice help us deal with compassion for other humans and with responsibility for the common good?" In literature they help their students to delve into themselves. They wonder with them about ultimate ethical and spiritual concerns in life, about their deepest convictions, and their hopes and fears. In all this, they do not impose their own views on students, but help them pose and answer "questions that are worth asking because they are worth living, questions worth wrapping one's life around" (Palmer, 1999, p. 8). Life cannot be lived with true vitality and worth without a consideration of such questions. They touch the heart of our existence, including our spiritual selves.

## *Hurdles to the Teaching of Spirituality*

As our examples suggest, it is possible to include spirituality and religion in the curriculum in meaningful and non-indoctrinating ways. However, we recognize that incorporating spirituality even as a small portion of the curriculum will not be without difficulty or controversy. The learning outcomes in curriculum guides generally steer clear of the spiritual dimension of life, with teachers being pressured to focus their classroom programs on the content of high stakes standardized tests. Moreover, most teachers are ill equipped to address spiritual questions and issues, feel uncomfortable doing so, and therefore reluctant to participate in the teaching of spirituality and religion. Therefore, to teach spirituality responsibly, pre-service and in-service professional development needs

to pay much more heed to its curricular significance, and this will need to be done on a long-term basis (Vokey, 2000).

Moreover, as soon as spirituality or religion is taught in the curriculum, some people will be concerned about bias. Persons of diverse religious traditions worry that teachers, especially those without religious faith, promote the view that any one religious commitment – or no commitment – is as good as any other. Others fear the promotion of bias when, for instance, teachers discuss native spirituality. Fundamentalist as well as liberal Christians may oppose spirituality in the public school curriculum. Some fundamentalists fear an anti-Christian, anti-religious bias and strive to impose their worldview on everyone in the schools. Some liberals gloss over secularism's nihilistic and relativistic views of human existence and therefore believe that spirituality should be limited to the private part of life (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 626).

Such objectors uphold a restricted view of the role of education or even demonstrate intolerance in that they are unwilling to put up with the fair presentation and consideration of a diversity of views within the curriculum, including spiritual ones. Their concerns do illustrate that the basic difficulty of teaching spirituality in the curriculum is that there is no one widely accepted approach:

> The educational dilemma is how to teach spirituality in a cultural context in which spiritual truth matters, in which the power and influence of pathological spiritual traditions are recognized, yet in which there is no consensus as to which, if any, truth is ultimately real and authentic. (Wright, 1998, p. 92)

Worldviews – whether religious, areligious or antireligious – give rival comprehensive visions of life, aspects of which are mutually exclusive. Some people feel so strongly about their own worldview that they do not want their children exposed to views that contradict their own faith and values. Yet the avoidance of spirituality in public education has implicitly led to the indoctrination of a positivist, materialistic, and secular worldview where empiricism and rationality encompass the whole of a meaningful life. Too often, meaning is defined in terms of an efficiency in meeting performance standards and attaining specific skills that impoverishes the human spirit.

Canada is characterized by increasing cultural and religious pluralities. Within that context, public education must avoid promoting one particular religious or areligious point of view. Teachers may not

present or advance a position unfairly vis-à-vis other positions, or curtail students' growth toward rational, social, and emotional autonomy. Admittedly, it takes special effort to present different viewpoints fairly without letting one's own belief or unbelief affect what content is chosen and how it is taught. To counter objections to including spirituality in public education curricula, teachers must explain diverse views without any of them being favoured and without coercing students implicitly or explicitly to accept any particular one. At the same time, students must feel free to express their views openly and without real or perceived repercussions.

Although it is neither possible nor desirable for teachers to remain totally neutral, they must be as fair as possible to all positions discussed and presented in class. Pedagogically it is wise for them not to present their own views on spiritual issues and the reasons for them until students have fully investigated and conveyed their personal response. Yet as Warnock (1996) has argued, it is important for teachers to show how they have reached personal conclusions. Students need to see how adults, as role models, come to grips with basic and controversial questions about life. If teachers neglect to reveal that they have a position students may well interpret their attempts at remaining totally neutral as indifference.

## *A Curriculum Framework for the Teaching of Spirituality*

The promising approaches described above, the issues raised in the previous section, and the pedagogical needs of students at different ages lead us to propose the following guidelines for the teaching of spirituality in public education:

- *Students must be respected as individuals of worth and dignity whose insights into questions of existence and the transcendent must be earnestly considered and given sensitive and perceptive response.* Although teaching involves asking probing questions, freedom of response enhances a sense of worth as well as respect for diverse positions.
- *The curriculum must introduce students to a diversity of worldviews and spiritual options*, "allowing them critical access to alternative traditions so that informed insight and wisdom may flourish through the development of spiritual literacy" (Wright, 1998, p. 97). The inclusion of a diversity of worldview perspectives will alleviate the

perception of many minorities that schools are currently indoctrinating their children into a modernist liberal worldview.

- *Elective courses in spiritual and religious meaning should be offered in middle and high schools. As well, all students must learn about different worldview and religious traditions when studying cultures or cross-disciplinary themes in subjects such as social studies and literature.*
- *The basic presuppositions, beliefs, and implications of any worldview or religious tradition being studied must be brought into the open in as fair a way as possible.* Teachers need to reveal the tensions and disagreements among different traditions in an atmosphere of respect for different standpoints and traditions (Cooling, 1990).
- *Students must be helped to see that particular values common to most traditions contribute to the good of humankind.* Values held in common by most traditions include truth, justice, loving-kindness, forgiveness, compassion, peace responsibility, and prudent care of reality (Lewis, 1945/1967).
- *Students must consider how for many people the transcendent can and does lead to transformation.* All major religious traditions except Buddhism believe that a Transcendental Reality (called "God" in English) is the essence of the Being whom they worship, while Buddhists neither affirm nor deny the presence of God (Ashraf, 1997).
- *A sense of mystery, imagination, and awe must permeate the curriculum.* Teachers can align development of spirituality with imaginative and inspired opportunities for glimpses of the transcendent and the mysterious. Creating space through multiple modes of investigation, knowing, and expression can lead to creative personal and corporate inquiry and personal transformation.

Within these contours, education about and into spirituality can engender an attitude of concern and respect for others. It can develop loving and meaningful "I-thou" relationships with those who hold to different worldviews and religious traditions from our own. It can help students realize how religious traditions define a consequential and all-encompassing way of life, and allow them to respond in a personal but justified way. It can also inspire an ongoing commitment to the creative pursuit and expression of truth in the face of life's ultimate mysteries. Our curricular examples and the foregoing framework show how

individual teachers and even school systems can overcome hurdles and deal with spirituality in public school settings in meaningful ways.

## *Conclusion*

For Canadian youth, the spiritual dimension of life is a significant and evocative one. If taught sensitively and responsibly, it helps them feel and discern the extraordinary in the ordinary, and the profound in the commonplace. It encourages them to strive for wisdom and creativity in their quest for truth, goodness, and beauty. It challenges them to develop an awareness of and responsiveness to the need for respect, compassion, hospitality, and justice, both within their personal networks and within the global village. It inspires them to consider the mystery of the transcendent and the divine. It assists them in coping with the high points, the turning points, and the low points of their life's journey. Allowing the curriculum to include a spiritual quest may not be simple or painless, but it can contribute to nurturing children's souls and kindling their spirit:

> Those who understand curriculum as theological text understand education as wedded to the most profound issues of the human heart and soul. (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 659)

## REFERENCES

Ashraf, S. (1997). The Islamic response: Faith-based education in a multi-faith multicultural country. In J. Shortt, & T. Cooling (Eds.), *Agenda for educational change* (pp. 269-279). Leicester, UK: Apollos.

British Columbia *School Act*. (2002). Victoria, BC: Queen's Printer.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1994). *The kindergarten to grade 12 education plan*. Victoria, BC: Province of British Columbia.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1995). *Personal planning K to 7: Integrated resource package*. Victoria, BC: Province of British Columbia.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1996). *Physics 11 and 12: Integrated resource package*. Victoria, BC: Province of British Columbia.

British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1997). *Career and personal planning 8 to12: Integrated resource package*. Victoria, BC: Province of British Columbia.

*Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36*. (2002). Supreme Court of Canada SCC 86.

Cooling, T. (1990). Religious education. In L. Francis & A. Thatcher, (Eds.), *Christian perspectives for education* (pp. 242-252). Leominster, UK: Gracewing.

Davies, P. (1983). *God and the new physics*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Davies, P. (1999). *The fifth miracle: The search for the origin and meaning of life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Delors, J., *et al.* (1996). *Learning: The treasure within. Report of the International Commission on Education for the 21st century: Highlights*. Paris: UNESCO Publications.

Douglass, S. (2002). Teaching about religion. *Educational Leadership, 60*(2), 32-36.

Gill, B. (2002, Dec. 24). Sikhs urge respect for everyone's religion. *The Vancouver Sun*, p. A23.

Groome, T. (1998). *Educating for life: A spiritual vision for every teacher and parent*. Allen, TX: Thomas More.

Howell, R. & Bradley, W.J. (2001). *Mathematics in a postmodern age*. Grand Rapids: Erdmans.

Kessler, R. (2000). *The soul of education*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Kirman, J. (2002). *Elementary social studies: creative classroom ideas*. Toronto: Pearson.

Lewis, C.S. (1965). *The abolition of man*. New York: Macmillan. (Original work published 1947)

National Council for the Social Studies. (1998). *Study about religions in the social studies curriculum: A position paper*. Silver Spring, MD.

McNeil, J. (1995). *Curriculum: The teacher's initiative*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.

Nord, W. & Haynes, C. (1998). *Taking religion seriously across the curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Ontario Ministry of Education (1994). *Education about religion in Ontario public elementary schools*. Toronto: Queen's Printer.

O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Palmer, P. (1999). Evoking the spirit in public education. *Educational Leadership, 56*(4), 6-11.

Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (1995). *Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*. New York: Peter Land.

Protestant Committee. (1992a). *Protestant educational values*. Sainte-Foy, Quebec: Çonseil Supérieur de l'Éducation.

Protestant Committee. (1992b). *Protestant moral and religious education program*. Sainte-Foy, Quebec: Çonseil Supérieur de l'Éducation.

Ruef, K. (1992). *The private eye: (5X) Looking / thinking by analogy*. Seattle: The Private Eye Project.

Schultze, Q. (2002). *Habits of the high-tech heart*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Sewall, G. (1995). Textbooks and religion. *The American School Board Journal, 182*(9), 32-34.

Sweet, L. (1996). *The fourth 'R': religion in our classrooms*. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

Todd, D. (1999, November 27).Teaching religion can open up vast new worlds for students. *The Vancouver Sun*, p. A15.

Vokey, D. (2000). Longing to connect: Spirituality in public schools. *Paideusis, 13*(2), 23-41.

Warnock, M. (1996). The neutral teacher. In W. Hare & J. Portelli (Eds.), *Philosophy of education: Introductory readings* (2nd ed., pp. 139-148). Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

Wright, A. 1998. *Spiritual pedagogy*. Abingdon, UK: Culham College Institute.

*Harro Van Brummelen* is Professor and Dean of the School of Education at Trinity Western University. He teaches courses in curriculum studies, issues in culture and education, and the dynamics of educational change. Most of his articles and books deal with curriculum, many focusing on how worldview thinking and ideologies affect curriculum development and implementation.

*Robert Koole* is Director of Curriculum for the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia. He teaches courses in social studies pedagogy and curriculum at Trinity Western University. His current research and development work focuses on the structure, curriculum, and pedagogical strategies of effective high school education.

*Kimberly Franklin* is Assistant Professor and Director of Professional Education Programs in the School of Education at Trinity Western University. She teaches courses in curriculum studies and language arts pedagogy and curriculum. She is currently working at Simon Fraser University on her dissertation about diversity leadership and the choices beginning teachers make with regard to integrating their spiritual identity with their professional identity in public education settings.

*Authors Address:*
c/o School of Education
Trinity Western University
7600 Glover Road, Langley
British Columbia
CANADA V2Y 1Y1
EMAIL: vanbrumm@twu.ca
Kimberly.Franklin@twu.ca
koole@twu.ca