

# Curriculum Review – GodSpace Purple

Published by Burst Christian Resources © 2017 ISBN 978-0-85044-974-7 Reviewed October 2019 Version 1.0.  
RI Curricula are referred to by the Department of Education Qld as RI Program Materials

## Executive Summary

In 2019, the Multi-Faiths RI Peak Body Network commissioned an independent review of common curriculum materials used by Religious Instructors in Queensland Schools. The focus of the review was to assist Principals to be confident that curriculum materials comply with Department of Education Queensland policy requirements. This report is a review of the GodSpace Purple curriculum materials used by many Christian Religious Instructors, against 15 policy areas of focus. The review purpose and process is outlined in a separate document on the website [multifaithsri.org.au](http://multifaithsri.org.au).



[www.godspace.org.au/product/godspace-lesson-manual/](http://www.godspace.org.au/product/godspace-lesson-manual/)

## Outcome:

**GodSpace Purple is highly compliant with Department of Education Queensland policy.**

Each of the 32 lessons is organised around a key value such as trust, compassion, encouragement, getting along, responsibility, generosity, patience, inclusiveness, hope, integrity, wise choices. There are 5 versions of each lesson organised around the same idea and bible concept. These enable the instructor to choose activities that are appropriate for the ages and interests of their groups, and easily differentiate for student needs. The activities are diverse and highly engaging.

Quality colour magazines for students include engaging activities aligned to each lesson.

The instructor manual provides support for community members who may not be teachers to confidently engage with students and schools in respectful and sensitive ways.

There are a few lessons or activities in the 2017 edition where an instructor would need to exercise caution. For example:

- Some of the featured bible stories include a person being threatened with violence. This could cause distress for students who have lived with experiences such as domestic violence, trauma or war. Suggestions from other parts of the teacher manual are provided.
- A suggested prayer in lesson 19 encourages children to “help us to let others know about Jesus”. While this prayer does not contradict policy, given the historical sensitivity to this issue, instructors could be encouraged to leave out this phrase of the prayer.
- Some of the activity options refer to using food, or balloon activities that may not be suitable for children with allergies. Alternatives are included in the lesson materials, and the instructor is advised to consult with the school.

A lesson-by-lesson analysis and details about any areas of concern and recommendations are provided in this report to support RI teachers in complying with Department of Education policy.

Reviewer:

Dr. Jill Willis, Associate Professor of Education,  
Queensland University of Technology,  
Oct 19, 2019.

## Curriculum details

© 2017 ISBN 978-0-85044-974-7

GodSpace Purple is a one-year program for instructors. It is published by Burst Christian Resources that is affiliated with the Baptist churches of NSW and ACT.

### Lesson manual with detailed teacher instructions

- 224 pages, with a USB containing resources.
- 32 lessons.
- Each lesson is organised around a key value such as trust, compassion, encouragement, getting along, responsibility, generosity, patience, inclusiveness, hope, integrity, wise choices.
- There are 5 versions of each lesson organised around the same idea and bible concept. These enable the instructor to choose activities that are appropriate for the ages and interests of their groups.
  1. Explorers for ages 4 – 6
  2. Adventurers for ages 6 – 8
  3. Navigators for ages 8 – 10
  4. Voyagers for ages 10 – 12
  5. Combined large group
- Each one page lesson plan contains information for the instructor about
  1. An overview
  2. The bible focus
  3. Lesson aim
  4. Learning outcomes that are differentiated by age.
  5. Background teacher notes
  6. A choice of start up activities designed to take 3 – 5 minutes
  7. Whole group activities with clear scripts and instructions designed to take 8 – 10 minutes
  8. Concluding activities such as a prayer, song, craft, memory verse or activity from the student workbooks
  9. List of resources
  10. Teaching tips.

### Student Magazines

- Quality colour magazines for students include engaging activities aligned to each lesson.
  - Explorers for ages 4 – 6
  - Adventurers for ages 6 – 8
  - Navigators for ages 8 – 10
  - Voyagers for ages 10 – 12
- The magazines have three cartoon characters – a kookaburra, dog and fuzzy the puppet who ask questions or make comments.
- The activities are highly visual and include joining the dots, drawing illustrations, completing mazes, and solving puzzles. Song lyrics are included.

# Lesson by Lesson Review

- Reviewed as compliant.
- Reviewers noted that while these activities are compliant, RI teachers would need to take additional care with these activities.
- Reviewers indicated that caution should be exercised and that this lesson or part of the lesson may cause compliance concerns.

- Sections of this lesson were not compliant.
- N/A Not applicable.
- \* Updates in new edition have addressed the issues raised.

Unit	1			2				3				4				5				6				7				8				+					
Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32					
1. Appropriate age and lesson time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
2. Supporting a cooperative arrangement. No leaving of materials	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
3. No proselytizing or promotion of outside school activities and publications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
4. No activities or content that would cause harm to a child (physical, psychological or emotional well-being)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
5. Supports and promotes a safe, supportive and disciplined learning environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
6. Responds to diverse learning needs – level and age	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
7a. A safe physical and cyber learning environment - supports wellbeing	?	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
7b. Fosters behavioural strengths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
7c. Builds positive relationships (peers, staff, parents, community) and promotes positive social interactions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
7d, e. Encourages inclusivity, diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
8. Safe supportive environment, free from bullying, discrimination, harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
9. Responsive to school behaviour plan, safe supportive and disciplined learning environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10. Smart choices - healthy food and drink	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	?	?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
11. Consistent with Code of School Behaviour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Risk - suggests undertaking an assessment and identifies where risk assessment is needed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Promotes responsible care and use of animals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
14. Does not include activities using items that may cause allergic reactions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Supports effective communication between students, parents communities that is inclusive and valued	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Review Commentary

## Strengths

**1. The teacher handbook is detailed and well designed.** The lessons are clearly outlined with each one including options for activities that are engaging and have clear outcomes. Differentiation activities are easily accessed as there are activities designed for the same topic for learners across four age ranges.

**2. The teacher handbook provides practical advice to support community representatives in their roles.**

Guidelines (p. 2) give advice on how to be inclusive, and respectful of students and the school. The lesson plans also give teachers 'hot teaching tips' for each lesson that give advice to instructors about how to teach with sensitivity:

- a. "Preface [a bible verse with] "The Bible says..." (p.54).
- b. "The use of a smile, a nod and moving closer towards the person being spoken to, takes no time to do, promotes a positive tone and encourages on-task behaviour when used intentionally. However, avoid standing too close or holding eye contact too long. Remember, we are seeking to provide a safe, positive environment." (p. 74).
- c. "Always be courteous and respect their [the student's] right to their own opinion. Limit discussion that may not be interesting to others" (p. 88).
- d. "When using magazines or newspapers with your group, go through them first and remove anything that the children's parents might not want them to see, or that might cause them distress (eg. Pictures of an accident)" (p. 132).
- e. Teacher's Notes that says...'Be aware that schools often have rules about 'sharing' and may discourage the sharing of food and possessions at school. Be prepared to encourage children to give things like smiles, sympathy and encouragement - that don't break the rules.'

**3. The lessons are engaging with a variety of interactive learning activities.**

- a. The lessons encourage students to take practical and positive action to help others. For example, lesson 16 finishes with the *encouragement challenge* given to the children asking them to find 1-2 people to encourage in the next week. 'Who Can You Help' which asks the children to think about whom they might be able to help during the week and what they can do to help.
- b. Lesson 25 - Voyagers uses the 'UN Declaration of Rights' highlighting the first right, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.' to begin the discussion about how the poor should be treated and what we can do to help them.
- c. Lesson 3 - The lessons model good choices, encouraging discussion about class rules and consequences for bad choices in not adhering to rules.
- d. Each lesson contains numerous options for the teacher to select from depending on the diversity of each class. There is good choice in all lessons to cater for students with a disability, gifted and talented students and EAL students. Whilst each one has the same lesson objective the activities and resources are clearly aligned with age appropriate material and pedagogies.
- e. Students are given the opportunity to share and discuss and raise questions. They are taught to work together and respect each other and other's differences. There are a number of activities based on empathy and "walking in someone else's shoes" These are done in a sensitive way eg in Lesson 5 when it asks children to imagine being sick or not being able to walk. There are lessons focussing on people with disabilities (lesson 5), the poor in society (lesson 25). Lesson 12 is one example of teaching acceptance and how we need to accept others for who they are regardless of difference. In lesson 14 there is an activity on respecting each other's differences. There are a number of social and emotional intelligence activities incorporated throughout. One

example is in Lesson 8 where it looks at the idea of not judging a book by its cover and getting to know the real person.

- f. The lessons and materials are very thoughtful and encourage all students to participate in supportive and caring classroom environment. In every lesson there is an opportunity for children to interact with their peers in discussing, role-playing and creating. One of the hot teacher tips (p.106) discusses using a speaking ball and helping children to learn to listen to each other respectfully and allow everyone a turn to share and contribute to the discussion.
- g. Lesson plans are clearly scaffolded. All lessons are planned for an indoor classroom with no specialist equipment needed. The usual resources that children would have and regularly use in their classrooms are used such as glue, scissors, pencils, crayons. They are low risk.

## Cautions

1. Lesson 9 - **References to violence inappropriate for age group:** The lesson focuses on teaching the value of integrity and respect, and choosing to follow God's way even when others do not. It draws on the bible story of King Saul hunting for David, and David choosing not to hurt Saul even when he had the perfect opportunity (1 Samuel 24: 1-12; 1 Chronicles 11: 1 – 3). Instructions in the teacher handbook (p 69) refer several times to Saul wanting to kill David. The topic has a high likelihood of causing psychological harm for young students that the lesson is targeted at, ages 5 – 6. Policy requires curriculum to support student wellbeing (see policy criteria 4, 6 and 7).

### Recommendations for instructors:

- a. Check with the teacher to see whether there are students in the group who have additional sensitivity to violence through experiences such as domestic violence, trauma or war. If this is the case, do not use this lesson.
- b. If using the story, include the advice that is outlined in the Navigators (ages 8 – 10) teacher notes, to preface the story with "Today's story happened 3000 years ago. It was in a time when people weren't good at using their words to solve problems. People killed their enemies. One of the people in this story, Saul, had been chasing the other, David, trying to kill him." (p. 71).
- c. Alter the use of "kill" to "hurt".

### Recommendations for publishers:

- d. In the next edition, review the chosen story and address the concerns above. These concerns have been addressed in the 2020 edition.

2. Lesson 19 - **References to violence inappropriate for age group:** The lesson focuses on teaching the value of responsibility. It draws on the bible story of Paul's nephew hearing about a plot to kill Paul, so the nephew told the local commander who helped Paul to safety (Acts 23: 12 – 24). Instructions in the teacher handbook (p 133) refer several times to religious leaders wanting to kill Paul. Illustrations in the student Explorer workbook also refer to men wanting to kill Paul. The topic has a high likelihood of causing psychological harm for young students that the lesson is targeted at, ages 5 – 6. Policy requires curriculum to support student wellbeing (see policy criteria 4, 6 and 7).

### Recommendations for instructors:

- a. Check with the teacher to see whether there are students in the group who have additional sensitivity to violence through experiences such as domestic violence, trauma or war. If this is the case, do not use this lesson.
- b. Alter the use of "kill" to "hurt" and focus on the positive outcomes when Paul's nephew took action to tell someone.

### Recommendations for publishers:

- c. In the next edition, review the chosen story and address the concerns above. These concerns have been addressed in the 2020 edition.

- 3. Lesson 19 - **Encouragement to the students to share what they know.** The lesson focuses on teaching the value of responsibility. It draws on the bible story of Paul's nephew hearing about a plot to kill Paul, so the nephew told the local commander who helped Paul to safety (Acts 23: 12 – 24).

The suggested prayer for Explorers includes "Dear God, please help us to share what we know about Jesus with other people, and to use what we know to help others. Amen" (p. 133), and for Adventurers "Dear God, please help us to use our knowledge to help others. Especially help us to let others know about Jesus. Amen" (p. 134).

**Recommendations for instructors:**

- a. While these prayers **do not** contradict policy, given historical sensitivity, the prayer could just focus on the students asking God to use what they know about Jesus to help others.

**Recommendations for publishers:**

In the next edition, review the prayers in light of historical sensitivity.

## Considerations

### 1. Instructor sensitivity when referring to differences to encourage inclusivity:

- a. Lesson 21 – The lesson focuses on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego not bowing down to a gold statue of the King, and being thrown into a furnace, but not being scorched (Daniel 3: 1 – 30). In the lesson materials for upper primary, there are references to "Daniel's friends were given an ultimatum: give up on your God, worship a statue – a false god – or die!". There is also material for a discussion on "Are there still idols – Yes some people have statues, but also everyday things can be idols" and a game "bow down – no way" (pp.150 -151). Instructors should consider when and how they speak about religious cultural differences as students will have peers whose religious practices will include statues.
- b. Lesson 12 – The lesson focuses on Jesus accepting all people by focussing on the conversation Jesus had with a Samaritan woman (John 4: 3 -3-, 39 – 42). In the teacher's background briefing, there is reference to the historical context, and how Jesus' inclusive actions were so dramatic because "most strict Jews felt contaminated by contact with non-Jews". This information is not directed to students, but consideration should be used by instructors in how they speak about historical cultural differences.
- c. Lesson 5 - Adventurers student magazine includes a crossword clue number 4: Lame man couldn't do? Happens when crippled. "Lame" and "crippled" are historic terms that are not contemporary inclusive school language. Instructors can discuss how we now use other terms such as "man who couldn't walk".
- d. Lesson 13 - The Explorer student magazine includes a comment from the dog "That's amazing – most people didn't like Zacchaeus". This phrasing could be rephrased to "Zacchaeus didn't have many friends" to discourage exclusive language.

**Recommendations for instructors:**

- a) Become informed about the cultural backgrounds and practices of students within the school.
- b) Use the recommended instructor script outlined in the Navigators lesson 20 p.143:  
"Different families do things in different ways, and different countries may have different customs. Those customs can be just habit, or there could be strong reasons for them. People's faith or religion can make them want to do or not do things. Adults and kids who trust God try to please him wherever they are and in whatever they do".
- c) Highlight that where there are cultural differences, people can misunderstand and judge others. Highlight that Jesus didn't judge others by their cultural differences.
- d) Ground the discussion in the historical bible story.

**Recommendations for publishers:**

Reconsider use of non-inclusive language such as "lame" and "crippled" in crossword clue.

**2. Activities that include references to using balloons may be of concern to students with sensory difficulties or allergies:**

- a. Lesson 1 – Navigators on page 19.
- b. Lesson 18 - Navigators on page 129, and
- c. Lesson 19 - Voyagers on page 135 include an option for a *Memory Verse Team Challenge* that involves bursting balloons containing parts of the memory verse inside. Some children are frightened by the sound of balloons bursting and bits of broken rubber could cause a hazard.

**Recommendation for instructors:** Voyagers lesson 18 on page 130 and Combined/Large Group on page 131 have a better option called '*Memory Verse Teams*' that does not involve using balloons.

**3. Some activities refer to using food that may be regarded as "red" foods:**

- a. Lesson 7 – Navigators on page 57 under Start up activity option suggests bringing some hot cross buns and Easter eggs to show. There is a note to check with the school if children can eat them later.
- b. Lesson 8 - Adventurers on page 64 under Start up activity option suggests using the tasting of a sugarless cake to illustrate the point that something that looks good on the outside is not necessarily good at all. Even though there is a note to instructors to 'always check with the school or parents if there are any food intolerances', the eating of cake is typically 'red' food that is not encouraged in Queensland schools.

**Recommendation for instructors:** There are two other choices of activities to use instead of red food options.

**4. Some activities require additional instructor care and sensitivity**

- a. Lesson 3 – Explorers pg 29. Warm up activity option involves labelling one side of the room yes and another no, and children have to choose an answer to questions by running to either side of the room.

**Recommendation for instructors:** Younger children would need additional instructions to do this safely.

- b. Lesson 6 – Explorers pg. 49. Story of a boy who had died, and Jesus helped bring him back to life. Also Lesson 31 - Combined/Large Group on page 217 use '*Perspectives on Prayer Scenarios*' from the lesson tools on the USB. Scenario 3 is about a Grandma who has died and may upset some children.

**Recommendation for instructors:** If there are students who have recently experienced bereavement, consider how to tell the story in lesson 6, or omit the scenario for lesson 31.

- c. Lesson 8 page 67 for combined/Large Groups. This lesson starts with a welcome and prayer time.

**Recommendation for instructors:** Make clear that the children don't have to participate in the prayers, but can choose to sit quietly to respect those who want to pray.

- d. Lesson 14 - Voyagers pg. 104 talking about degrees of tidiness in the Start up '*Discussion: What Are You Like?*' The phrase 'I wouldn't even notice if the place looked like a bomb hit it.' Could be insensitive if students from refugee backgrounds were in the class.

**Recommendation for instructors:** Use a different term like a huge wind had swept through the place.

- e. Lesson 26 - is about Bishop Harrington in Uganda and his heart for teaching people to share what they have to help those around them in need. The 6 min YouTube story would be inappropriate to play to younger grades, which talks about a war, its consequences and refugee camps.

**Recommendation for instructors:** The modified story suggested in the Navigators lesson is more appropriate than the YouTube clip, as is the PowerPoint of the story with cartoon figures. Both are on the USB stick provided with the manual.

## Policy Compliance

The curriculum materials are highly compliant with the 15 policy areas of focus identified in collaboration with the Department of Education policy advisors, drawn from:

- The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006.
- The Department of Education's Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment Procedure
- P-12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework
- Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework
- Inclusive Education Policy
- Statement of expectations for a disciplined school environment
- Smart choices - healthy food and drink supply strategy for Queensland schools
- The Code of School Behaviour
- Managing Risks in School Curriculum Activities
- Animal Use in Queensland state schools
- Smart choices - healthy food and drink supply strategy for Queensland schools
- Parent and Community Engagement framework

The curriculum materials offered many opportunities for students to consider issues and develop values that are identified as desirable educational goals within the Australian curriculum. Some of the strengths of the curriculum in helping students develop as responsible, caring and global citizens are outlined below.

The activities that were noted as considerations and flagged as blue in table 1 are explained in detail. Activities requiring instructor caution have been noted with an orange flag and more detail explained above. These cautions could be addressed by the publishers in future editions, and easily adapted by instructors to ensure current policy compliance. Recommendations for instructors are included for each of the considerations or areas noted for caution.

Chapter 5 - Section 76 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 requires that materials are for Year 1 students or older ages. While the GodSpace manual does have lessons for kindergarten ages 4-6 (Explorers), these lesson materials may support Year 1 instructors to differentiate their activities. They would not necessarily imply that RI classes would be conducted with Prep students.

## Overall Comment from the review team:

GodSpace is a well considered resource that aims to provide clear scaffolding and appropriate pedagogies for non-trained teachers (ie volunteers in school classrooms). The lessons are appropriate for primary-school children and are clearly differentiated into the different age groups in a primary school. The lessons provided ample opportunities for all children to get involved and contribute through discussions, reflections and activities.