

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### Background

Parents are the primary educators of their children and are responsible for the formation of their children, but their community shares in that responsibility through its institutions. Thus, Catholic schools work closely with the home and the Church to educate students.

The *Alberta Human Rights Act* requires a school board to give notice to a parent or guardian when courses of study, education programs, institutional materials, instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion. All of the schools in this division are Catholic Separate Schools, the essential purpose of which is to fully permeate Catholic theology, philosophy, practices and beliefs, the principles of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church, in all aspects of school life, including in the curriculum of every subject taught, both in and outside of formal religion classes, celebrations and exercises. Every course of study and educational program, all institutional materials, instruction and exercises will at all times include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion.

The religious education of students of St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate Schools resides at the heart of our mission as an academic institution. Our schools must be safe and caring, providing high quality educational programs to help students achieve high standards, and they must do so within the context of Catholic living and teaching. The document *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997) states, "The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out." (11) All personnel of St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Separate Schools will therefore be mindful of their role as Catholic missionaries to their students; that they work in the name of the Church, alongside parents and parishes.

### Procedures

1. The provision of religious instruction is governed by Section 50, School Act.
2. All schools shall follow the Religious Studies Program designated by the Division and approved by the Archbishop of Edmonton.
3. The Principal ensures that religious studies occurs at all grade levels and/or years of school.
  - 3.1 All students shall take a religious studies course per grade.
  - 3.2 Instructional time for religious studies courses shall be:
    - 3.2.1 Elementary classes: 120 – 150 minutes per week
    - 3.2.2 Junior high classes: 75 – 100 hours per school year

- 3.2.3 Senior high classes: Three (3) or five (5) credits per course for: Religious Studies 15; World Religions 30 (pilot 2011/12); and at least one of Religious Studies 25 or 35 courses.

Service Hours may be a component of a Religious Studies course but cannot be counted as instructional hours for Credit Enrolment Unit funding.

Retreat Day hours can be counted for Credit Enrolment Unit funding only during the time of direct instruction at the retreat.

Reference: Section 50, 60, 61, 113, School Act  
Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12