



Making spirituality an intrinsic part of the curriculum



Contents

Introduction

Religious Education

Reading

Writing

Mathematics

Science

Art

Computing

Design & Technology

Physical Education

Geography

History

Music

PSHE

Modern Foreign Languages

Introduction

"Spirituality is like a bird: If you hold it too closely, it chokes, and if you hold it too loosely, it escapes."⁽¹⁾
Israel Salanter

Following the collaboration of headteachers from Birmingham Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (BDMAT) and Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust (LDST) in March 2024, we are pleased to share a collated version of intrinsic opportunities for nurturing spiritual flourishing across the curriculum.

At the heart of the Church of England's Vision for Education (2) is the ambition for adults, pupils, and students to flourish as unique, complete individuals, in body, mind and spirit. In the SIAMS framework (2023) (3) spiritual flourishing is implicit across the inspection questions. In effective Church of England schools, the spiritual dimension can be strikingly tangible in the culture, consciousness, and conversations of the school, as an outworking of a deeply Christian vision. Spiritual flourishing is explicitly referenced however, in the inspection questions about the curriculum and collective worship. The SIAMS annual report 2023 (4) has identified that 'the curriculum, in the majority of Church schools, does not include spirituality as a matter of routine. Ad hoc responses to awe and wonder are commonplace and are of value as far as they go; but planned opportunities for pupils to explore the spiritual aspects of subject matter remain less commonplace.' The intention of this collaborative work was to identify opportunities in each subject that might inspire practitioners to approach teaching and learning from a spiritual perspective, as well as through subject knowledge and skills, and pedagogical patterns.

The defining of spirituality is richly diverse. Wise schools establish a shared understanding of and language for spirituality in their own context, in which this work can be rooted. The offered curriculum opportunities connect with the statements of spirituality from BDMAT and LDST, which present starting points for schools embarking on or deepening this aspect of their educational offer in a Church of England school..

(1) Spiritual Development Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom October 2019 www.churchofengland.org/education

(2) Church of England Vision for Education Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good Autumn 2016

(3) Statutory Inspection of Church of England and Methodist Schools SIAMS Framework September 2023

(4) The Annual Report of the National Director of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist

Schools 2022 – 2023 Church of England Education Office

LDST statement on spirituality

Spirituality is a deep connection to ourselves, others, and the wider world, brought about by a sense of belonging and appreciation of the beauty and wonder of God's creation. It is a broader sense of personal and moral development; allowing an individual to explore the person they want to become.

Spirituality becomes the recognition that there is something much greater than oneself, which invites a response, bringing insight, reflection and meaning. It is our ability to be present and 'in the moment' allowing us to delight in the awe and wonder of all that we encounter and give us a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

BDMAT statement on spirituality

Our schools will give attention to the concept that we all have spirits that can be inspired, nurtured, and shaped by the choices and commitments we make. For many, 'spirituality' infers 'God,' for others it may be an awareness of mystery in the universe.

Spirituality can therefore be about our relationship with and knowledge of:

- God / mystery of the universe including awe and wonder
- Ourselves (e.g., emotional intelligence and self-respect)
- Others (e.g., love, friendship, and connection with others)
- Nature (e.g., joy in the natural world)
- Arts, culture, literature, and sports

For those with a belief in God, they see all of the aspects listed above as being connected with their faith. In BDMAT we expect our curriculum to be used to develop spirituality in all the forms above.

Spiritual development as an intrinsic part of the curriculum

Whatever understanding or language of spirituality schools work with, the intention is that these opportunities might inspire schools to consider how their curriculum contributes to spiritual flourishing in a way that is not just left to chance. That is not to devalue the many in the moment, awe and wonder opportunities that arise in classrooms, when something spiritually significant occurs. These should be embraced and treasured. Rather, we hope that this added dimension will assist classroom practitioners and school leaders in developing their own spiritual signposts in their curriculum planning. By finding a balance between 'holding spirituality too closely and too loosely', curriculum opportunities, both the planned and the spontaneous, for wonderment, wondering and self-discovery, nurture spiritual flourishing by offering everyone the opportunity to look inwards, outwards, and upwards.(5)

(5) Paul Rusby SIAMS QA team

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Religious Education

1. Nurturing the Spirit

Learning that each of us has a spirit that can grow and flourish through our experiences and relationships.

2. Big Questions in Life

Talking, thinking, and wondering about big questions like:

How did the universe begin?

What happens after we die?

What is good and what is evil?

What do people believe about God?

3. Important Values

Focusing on values that have always been important throughout history and thinking about how living out values such as British values and our school values can help to make the world a better place.

4. Understanding Religions and world views

Learning about important ideas, experiences, and beliefs in different religions and world views.

Seeing how these beliefs shape the lives of believers.

Thinking about our own beliefs and understanding and respecting the beliefs of people around us. .

5. Human Dignity

Thinking about how different religions and world views see the worth of people.

Considering how we relate to each other, nature, and God.

6. Spiritual Words

Learning and explaining the special words that describe spiritual experiences.

7. Time for Thinking

Making time in lessons to feel wonder, to wonder and reflect.

8. Positive Relationships and Community

Understanding the importance of good relationships and building a sense of community.

9. Developing Personal Views

Forming our own ideas and opinions on religious and spiritual topics and learning to respect those of others.

Reading

1. Reflection on Characters

Encourage readers to ponder similarities and differences between themselves and the characters in the text, fostering self-awareness and empathy.

2. Inspiration from the Text

Prompt readers to consider what aspects of the text inspire them, encouraging them to explore personal connections and sources of motivation.

3. Coping with Challenges

Stimulate reflection on how readers would cope with challenges depicted in the text, fostering resilience and critical thinking skills.

4. Response to Similar Situations

Encourage readers to imagine how they would respond to situations similar to those in the text, promoting empathy and critical thinking.

5. Emotional Connection

Invite readers to reflect on their own emotions and experiences prompted by the text, fostering emotional intelligence and self-expression.

6. Comparative Reactions

Prompt readers to consider whether they would react similarly to characters in the book, encouraging introspection and empathy.

7. Imagining Life in the Setting

Stimulate readers' imaginations by prompting them to envision themselves living in the setting of the book, fostering creativity and perspective-taking.

8. Personal Connection to the Story

Encourage readers to consider how they see themselves within the narrative, fostering a sense of identity and personal significance.

9. Inspiration for Action

Prompt readers to reflect on how the book inspires them to act for justice in their own lives, fostering motivation and empowerment.

10. Personal Transformation

Encourage readers to reflect on how the book has changed them, fostering growth and self-awareness.

11. Impact of Language and Vocabulary

Stimulate reflection on how the author's use of language and vocabulary inspires readers, fostering appreciation for linguistic creativity and expression.

12. Fascinating Words and Usage

Encourage exploration of fascinating words found in the text and how readers might incorporate them into their own language and writing, fostering vocabulary development and self-expression.

13. Resonant Illustrations

Prompt readers to identify parts of illustrations that resonate with them, fostering visual literacy and emotional connection.

14. Heart-warming Moments

Encourage reflection on moments in the book that warm or heal the heart, fostering empathy and appreciation for emotional depth.

15. Surprising Elements

Stimulate reflection on surprising elements of the text, fostering curiosity and critical thinking.



Writing

1. Self-Expression Through Writing

Encourage self-expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions through writing, providing a platform for personal reflection and spiritual exploration.

2. Engaging with Inspirational Texts

Encourage students to ask questions about texts that inspire their writing, fostering curiosity and deeper engagement with spiritual themes and ideas.

3. Diaries and Journals for Emotional Communication

Promote diaries and journals as a means of communicating emotions and experiences, allowing students to process and reflect on their spiritual journey.

4. Empathy with Characters

Cultivate empathy with characters in literature, encouraging students to think beyond themselves and connect with the experiences and perspectives of others.

5. Poetry as Spiritual Expression

Explore poetry as a form of spiritual expression, encouraging students to tap into their creativity and use language to convey deeper meanings and emotions.

6. Appreciation of Writing Skills

Foster an appreciation for students' own writing skills and the talents of others, celebrating the power of words to inspire, heal, and connect.

7. Emotional Connection with Writing

Encourage students to connect emotionally with pieces of writing, recognising the profound impact that words can have on the soul.

8. Connection Through Written Communication

Explore various forms of written communication, such as postcards, letters, and sonnets, as ways to connect with others and share spiritual insights and experiences.

9. Performance and Writing

Engage students in performance as both preparation for and result of writing, promoting immersion in the text and consideration of audience, fostering creativity and confidence.

10. Sharing Passions and Taking Action

Encourage students to share their passions, opinions, and take action through words, such as through debates, advocacy writing, and persuasive essays, empowering them to make a positive impact in the world.

Mathematics

1. Patterns and Sequences

Explore the beauty and complexity of patterns and sequences in numbers and shapes, fostering a sense of order and interconnectedness.

2. Moment of Stillness

Encourage moments of stillness and reflection upon completing mathematical tasks, allowing students to appreciate the process and their achievements.

3. Scale and Magnitude

Discuss the scale of large numbers and objects, such as the number of stars in the sky or blades of grass, to instill a sense of wonder about the vastness of the universe.

4. Fibonacci Sequence

Introduce the Fibonacci sequence and its presence in nature, inspiring awe at the mathematical principles underlying natural patterns.

5. Infinite Possibilities

Foster curiosity and fascination with infinite and endless possibilities through open-ended investigations, encouraging students to explore how far mathematical concepts can go.

6. Shapes in Nature

Examine shapes found in the real world and in nature, helping students appreciate the natural occurrence of geometric forms.

7. Symmetry and Mirrors

Explore symmetry in nature and the use of mirrors, emphasizing the beauty and balance found in mathematical and natural patterns.

8. Exactness of Maths

Cultivate a sense of wonder in the precision and exactness of mathematics, such as the consistent sum of angles in a triangle.

9. Joy of Predictions

Experience the joy of making and testing predictions in mathematics, highlighting the excitement of discovery and validation.

10. Historical and Philosophical Context

Investigate the history of mathematics, the origins of numbers, and the development of the place value system, fostering an appreciation for mathematical evolution and its philosophical implications, such as the concept of time and the present moment.

Science

1. Spark Curiosity and Nourish the Heart and Mind

Cultivate curiosity in students and nurture both intellectual and emotional growth through engaging scientific exploration.

2. Awe and Wonder at Life's Scale

Develop awe and wonder at the vast scale of living things, from microscopic organisms to towering trees, fostering appreciation for the complexity and beauty of the natural world.

3. Appreciating the Beauty of the World

Provide opportunities for students to pause and appreciate the beauty of the world around them, fostering a sense of gratitude and reverence for nature.

4. Admiration and Respect for Work

Encourage students to admire and respect their own scientific work and that of their peers, recognizing the potential to inspire hope and positive change in others.

5. Reflection on Challenging Themes

Pause for reflection on difficult themes within science, allowing students to express their responses to challenging circumstances and develop resilient hope in the face of uncertainty.

6. Exploring Interdependence and Relationships

Explore the interdependence of all living things and the intricate relationships between different elements of the physical world, fostering an understanding of ecological interconnectedness.

7. Sense of Significance and Insignificance

Encourage students to contemplate their place in the universe, feeling both insignificant in the vastness of space and time, yet significant as unique individuals with genetic diversity.

8. Connecting with Spiritual Experience

Provide opportunities for students to connect with the spiritual aspects of scientific inquiry, recognizing the drive for understanding that transcends mere curiosity.

9. Exploring Global Scientific Discoveries

Prompt students to inquire about the impact of scientific discoveries from around the world on human lives, considering diverse perspectives and the evolving nature of scientific beliefs across cultures and time periods.

10. Awareness of Evolving Scientific Understanding

Foster awareness that scientific understanding is continually evolving, with new discoveries reshaping our understanding of the world, promoting humility and open-mindedness in scientific inquiry.

Art

1. Spark Curiosity and Nourish the Head and Heart

Create a classroom environment that encourages questions and discussions about art, fostering intellectual curiosity and emotional engagement.

2. Develop Connections to Self, Others, World, and God

Use art to explore personal identity, empathy towards others, appreciation of the world, and reflections on the divine, promoting holistic growth.

3. Experience Wonder and Awe

Introduce pupils to the works of renowned artists, enabling them to marvel at human creativity and technical mastery, inspiring a sense of awe.

4. Admiration and Respect for Art

Foster an environment where students respect their own creative efforts and those of their peers, understanding the potential of art to bring hope and joy to others.

5. Respect for the Spiritual Journey of Creation

Highlight the resilience and endurance required in the artistic process, helping students appreciate the spiritual dimensions of creating art.

6. Moments of Stillness

Incorporate moments of quiet reflection to help students appreciate the beauty and joy in art, cultivating mindfulness and inner peace.

7. Art as Self-Expression

Expose students to a diverse range of art samples, encouraging them to see art as a powerful means of expressing their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

8. Responding to Deeper Meanings

Provide opportunities for students to explore and respond to the deeper meanings in art, using their creations to raise awareness of social justice issues.

9. Curiosity and Fascination

Develop students' ability to ask insightful questions about art, such as the artist's thematic choices, the medium used, and their own responses to the work.

10. Keep Eyes Open and Sow Spiritual Seeds

Encourage students to remain observant and openminded, using art to cultivate a sense of spirituality and resilience in facing life's challenges.

Computing

1. Explore Moral Dilemmas

Discuss ethical questions related to technology, such as the implications of AI and robotics in daily life. For instance, ask students if they are comfortable being served in a café by a robot and why.

2. Contemplate Possibilities and Limits

Encourage students to ponder whether anything is impossible with technology. Facilitate discussions on the potential and limitations of technological advancements.

3. Technology's Impact on the World

Examine how technology transforms societies, economies, and environments, fostering an understanding of its broad impact on the world.

4. Imagine Future Advances

Stimulate students' imaginations by exploring potential future technological developments and their implications for society and spirituality.

5. Questioning Reality

Engage students in philosophical discussions about the nature of reality, especially in the context of virtual and augmented realities created by technology.

6. Global Exploration Through Technology

Demonstrate how technology can be used to explore and experience various parts of the world virtually, expanding students' horizons and fostering global awareness.

7. Technology and Human Connections

Investigate whether technology brings people closer together or creates divisions, encouraging students to reflect on their own experiences with digital communication.

8. Emotional Impact of Technology

Reflect on how technology affects emotions and mental health, discussing both positive and negative aspects.

9. Nourishment Through Technology

Explore how technology can nourish the mind and spirit, such as through educational tools, spiritual apps, and creative platforms.

10. Influence on Thought and Behaviour

Discuss how technology shapes opinions, actions, and choices, encouraging students to be mindful of its influence on their decision-making processes.

Computing

11. Comparing Technological Relationships

Reflect on how individual relationships with technology differ and what factors contribute to these differences.

12. Service to Others and the Planet

Consider how technology can be used to serve others, improve the environment, and enhance spiritual practices, discussing examples and potential applications.

13. Technology and Divine Connection

Explore the idea of technology as a medium for spiritual connection, such as through online worship services, meditation apps, and religious communities.

14. Community Impact

Analyse how technology impacts communities, both positively and negatively, and how it can be used to promote inclusivity and social cohesion.

15. Promoting Inclusivity

Discuss ways technology can promote inclusivity, such as through assistive technologies, online education, and accessible design.

16. Serving the Underserved

Investigate how technology can be leveraged to serve underserved populations, improving access to resources, education, and healthcare.

17. Fostering Creativity

Highlight how technology can be a tool for creativity, providing platforms and resources for artistic expression, innovation, and problem solving.



Design & Technology

1. Reflective and Creative Imagination

Encourage pupils to be reflective and creative, using their imagination to explore and develop innovative ideas.

2. Inspired Insight and Development

Foster inspiration and the use of personal insight in developing design ideas, promoting thoughtful and purposeful creation.

3. Purpose of Technological Achievement

Reflect on the purpose and impact of human technological achievements, considering their broader significance and implications.

4. Aesthetic Appreciation

Appreciate and reflect upon the aesthetic qualities of materials and design, understanding the beauty and functionality of different elements.

5. Relationship with the Natural World

Reflect on the aesthetic and functional relationship between building designs and the natural world, promoting harmony and sustainability.

6. Innovation and Inspiration

Encourage creative thinking and innovation, highlighting how these can be inspirational and transformative.

7. Positive Impact on Self-Confidence

Reflect on how creating and designing positively impacts self-confidence and fosters a sense of achievement in oneself and others.

8. Awe and Appreciation of Food

Cultivate a sense of awe and wonder about the origin of food and the processes involved in its production.

9. Wonder and Mystery in Achievement

Develop a sense of awe, wonder and mystery when studying both the natural world and human achievements, fostering a deeper appreciation for creation.

10. Creative Expression and Reflection

Encourage pupils to express their innermost thoughts and feelings creatively, using reflection and questioning (such as "why?", "how?", and "where?") to deepen their understanding and learning.

Physical Education

1. Emotion in sport

Teach pupils to handle the emotional and spiritual aspects of winning and losing games, fostering resilience, humility, and personal growth.

2. Inspiration from Athletes and Teams

Draw inspiration from the dedication, perseverance, and achievements of athletes and teams, encouraging pupils to strive for their personal best.

3. Sense of Belonging

Promote a sense of belonging and community through team sports, highlighting the spiritual value of unity and collective effort.

4. Physical Response and Endorphins

Explore the spiritual and emotional benefits of physical activity, such as the release of endorphins and the resulting feelings of joy and wellbeing.

5. Global Connection

Emphasize the sense of global connection fostered by international sporting events like the Olympics and the World Cup, highlighting the unity of humanity through sport.

6. Common Language of Sport

Appreciate sport as a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

7. Platform for Powerful Messages

Utilise sport as a platform to address and promote powerful social messages, such as combating racism and promoting equality and justice.

8. Expression Through Dance

Encourage the expression of emotions and ideas through dance, emphasizing its interpretive nature and the absence of right or wrong in creative expression.

9. Spiritual Lessons from Physical Challenges

Highlight the spiritual lessons learned from physical challenges, such as perseverance, discipline, and the pursuit of excellence.

10. Holistic Development

Foster holistic development by integrating physical, emotional, and spiritual growth through participation in physical education and sports activities.

Geography

1. Promoting Wonder and Fascination

Foster a sense of wonder and fascination with the physical and human world by exploring diverse landscapes, ecosystems, and cultures.

2. Moments of Stillness

Encourage children to experience moments of stillness and contemplation in their local environment, fostering a deeper connection with nature.

3. Reflection on Natural Disasters

Provide opportunities to pause and reflect on natural disasters, allowing pupils to express their emotions and thoughts, and understand the resilience of affected communities.

4. Respect for Different Communities

Teach respect and understanding for communities different from their own, promoting empathy and global awareness.

5. Exploring Personal Feelings

Encourage pupils to explore and reflect on their own feelings about the people, cultures, places, and environments they study, deepening their emotional and spiritual engagement.

6. Interconnectedness of Life

Highlight the interconnectedness of all life and the natural processes that sustain life on Earth, fostering a sense of responsibility and care for the planet.

7. Making a Difference

Inspire pupils to believe in their potential to make a positive impact on the world, nurturing a sense of hope and empowerment.

8. Value of Stewardship

Emphasise the importance of stewardship and how students can contribute to the wellbeing of the planet, promoting sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.

9. Impact and Justice

Reflect on the long and short-term impacts of human actions on the environment, linking these reflections to the value of justice and the importance of making ethical decisions.

10. Spiritual Connection to Geography

Foster a spiritual connection to geography by exploring the beauty, complexity, and sacredness of the Earth, encouraging a profound appreciation for the natural world and its inhabitants.

History

1. Reflect on Our Time in Life

Encourage pupils to reflect on their current place in history, understanding the present in the context of the past.

2. Recognize Something Wider

Help pupils recognize the broader historical context beyond themselves, asking how historical events and figures make them feel and what lessons can be drawn.

3. Influence of Significant Individuals

Explore the lives of significant historical figures and reflect on how their actions and values might influence pupils' aspirations and personal development.

4. Critical Thinking and Big Questions

Promote critical thinking by encouraging pupils to ask big questions about the past, finding deeper meanings and lessons.

5. Imagination and Empathy

Use imagination to appreciate and empathize with the experiences of others in history, reflecting on similarities and differences with their own lives.

6. Immersion in the Past

Create opportunities for pupils to become immersed in historical periods, fostering a deeper understanding and connection to historical events and cultures.

7. Changing Values Over Time

Examine how values and societal norms have changed over time, encouraging pupils to reflect on the evolution of human thought and behaviour.

8. Evolution of Religious Beliefs

Appreciate the evolution of religious beliefs and their impact on history, understanding how faith has shaped and been shaped by historical events.

9. Connection to Sensitive Issues

Connect with sensitive historical issues or beliefs, allowing pupils to engage with and reflect on both positive and negative aspects of the past.

10. Emotional Response to History

Encourage pupils to allow themselves an emotional response to historical events, fostering a personal and spiritual connection to the study of history.

Music

1. Expression through Movement

Encourage the expression of spirituality through movement to music, allowing students to connect with their inner selves and express emotions freely.

2. Emotional Response to Music

Explore imaginative responses to how music makes us feel, encouraging students to connect with the spiritual and emotional dimensions of music.

3. Exploration of Instruments

Engage in the exploration of different musical instruments and their unique sounds, fostering an appreciation for the diversity and richness of musical expression.

4. Presence in the Moment

Encourage students to be fully present and absorbed in the moment when creating or experiencing music, facilitating a deeper connection to the spiritual aspects of the musical experience.

5. Delight and Joy in Music

Help students find delight and joy in music and sound, recognising their ability to uplift and inspire the soul.

6. Communication Through Sound

Explore the power of sound as a means of communication, allowing students to express themselves and connect with others on a spiritual level.

7. Reflection on Musical Pieces

Encourage students to reflect on the emotional impact of music, considering how different pieces can evoke various feelings and perspectives, fostering empathy and understanding.

8. Mindfulness in Music

Promote mindfulness and stillness when listening to music or sound, encouraging students to fully immerse themselves in the present moment and appreciate the beauty of the auditory experience.

9. Connection with Nature's Sounds

Encourage students to listen to and reflect on the sounds of nature, recognising the spiritual connection between music and the natural world.

PSHE

1. Relationships and Love

Teach children about love, empathy, and the importance of loving oneself and others, fostering a sense of connection and spirituality.

2. Developing Attitudes and Reflection

Encourage children to ask big questions and reflect on the impact of their choices, nurturing a sense of responsibility and a positive vision for the future.

3. Awareness of Feelings

Help children understand their feelings and how they change in response to their environment, empowering them to reflect, channel emotions, and develop coping strategies.

4. Keeping Safe and Caring for the Environment

Use awe and wonder to teach children how to care for their surroundings, reflect on different situations, and make independent decisions to keep themselves and others safe.

5. Body Awareness and Self-Acceptance

Promote self-acceptance, awareness, and uniqueness by teaching children about their bodies and how we are all made in the image of God, fostering a sense of spiritual connection and respect for oneself and others.



Modern Foreign Languages

1. Cultural Understanding and Empathy

Promote empathy and spiritual connection through the study of diverse cultures and languages, fostering a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and values.

2. Exploration of Spiritual Concepts

Explore spiritual concepts and beliefs present in foreign languages and cultures, encouraging reflection on the interconnectedness of humanity.

3. Language as a Tool for Connection

Use language as a bridge for spiritual connection, allowing students to communicate and connect with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

4. Mindfulness in Language Learning

Incorporate mindfulness practices into language learning, encouraging students to be present and focused during language study, fostering a deeper spiritual connection to the learning process.

5. Expressing Innermost Thoughts and Feelings

Encourage students to express their innermost thoughts and feelings in a foreign language, facilitating self-reflection and spiritual growth through linguistic expression.

6. Appreciation of Linguistic Diversity

Foster an appreciation for the diversity of languages and linguistic expression, recognising the beauty and richness of human communication as a spiritual experience.

7. Exploration of Sacred Texts and Literature

Study sacred texts and literature in foreign languages, allowing students to explore spiritual themes and teachings from diverse cultural perspectives.

8. Connection to Global Community

Promote a sense of belonging to a global community through language learning, encouraging students to see themselves as part of a larger spiritual and cultural tapestry.

9. Reflection on Language Origins and Evolution

Reflect on the origins and evolution of language, considering the spiritual significance of language as a tool for human expression and connection throughout history.

10. Service and Cultural Exchange

Engage in service projects and cultural exchanges facilitated by language learning, allowing students to cultivate compassion, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness with others around the world.

Explore the possibility that each individual possesses a spirit that can be nurtured through our experiences and relationships. Consider how this can inspire our actions and choices – the way we live.

